

**Exploring critical issues faced by
Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.**

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Table of Contents

List of tables	VI
List of figures	VII
Acknowledgments	VIII
Declaration	IX
Abstract	X
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the research	1
1.2 Research gap and questions.....	9
1.2.1 Research gap	9
1.2.2 Research question.....	14
1.3 Research objectives.....	14
1.4 Methodology.....	15
1.5 Scope of research	16
1.5.1 Scope	16
1.5.2 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).....	17
1.6 Research findings.....	18
1.7 Research contribution.....	20
1.7.1 Theoretical contribution	20
1.7.2 Contribution to Entrepreneurial practice	21
1.8 Research Limitations.....	22
1.9 Structure of the thesis.....	23
1.10 Conclusion	24
Chapter 2 Literature Review	25
2.0 Introduction	25
2.1 Concepts related to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship.....	26

2.1.1	Definitions and classifications	26
2.1.2	Entrepreneurial competencies and characteristics	33
2.1.3	Shadow or hidden economy.....	35
2.1.4	Changing immigrant trends	36
2.2	Theories of immigrant entrepreneurship.....	39
2.2.1	Cultural theory	39
2.2.2	Middleman minority cultural theory	42
2.2.3	Ethnic enclave theory	43
2.2.4	Blocked mobility or disadvantage theory	47
2.2.5	Human, social, and financial capital theory.....	49
2.2.6	The theory of mixed embeddedness.....	53
2.3	Challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs	56
2.3.1	General challenges faced by entrepreneurs	57
2.3.2	Challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs.....	58
2.4	Competencies of immigrant entrepreneurs.....	64
2.4.1	Cross-cultural communication	67
2.4.2	Cross-cultural intelligence	70
2.4.3	Cross-cultural acculturation.....	72
2.5	Concepts underpinning the research	90
2.5.1	Mixed embeddedness approach	90
2.5.2	Co-ethnic enclaves and networks.....	92
2.5.3	Cross-cultural competencies	96
2.6	Research gap from theoretical perspective.....	102
2.7	Conclusion.....	103
Chapter 3	Methodology	107
3.0	Introduction	107
3.1	Research paradigms and philosophy.....	107

3.2 Research approach	111
3.3 Research strategy	112
3.4 Research choice	113
3.5 Sampling.....	114
3.6 Data collection.....	119
3.7 Data analysis.....	121
3.8 Interview protocol.....	125
3.8.1 Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions	126
3.8.2 Phase 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation.....	127
3.8.3 Phase 3: Receiving feedback on the interview protocol.....	128
3.8.4 Phase 4: Piloting the interview protocol.....	130
3.9 Pilot study.....	131
3.9.1 Samples of the pilot study	133
3.9.2 Interview process of a pilot study	136
3.9.3 Reflection of the pilot study.....	136
3.10 Full-scale study	140
3.11 Qualitative rigour	144
3.12 Ethical considerations	146
3.13 Limitations of this research	147
Chapter 4 Results and discussion	150
4.0 Introduction	150
4.0.1 Data Coding and analysis	150
4.1 Mixed Challenges	155
4.1.1 Individual Level	155
4.1.2 Socio-cultural level	179
4.1.3 Institutional level.....	207
4.2 Mixed Strategies	225

4.2.1 Individual level	225
4.2.2 Socio-cultural level	258
4.2.3 Institutional level.....	274
4.3 Conclusion.....	288
Chapter 5 Conclusion	297
5.0 Introduction	297
5.1 Contributions to the immigrant entrepreneurship literature.....	298
5.1.1 Insight into the common challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face in the U.K.....	298
5.1.2 Role of ethnic enclaves in supporting immigrant entrepreneurship.....	300
5.1.3 Insight into the cross-cultural capabilities that aid immigrant entrepreneurs in their acculturative process	302
5.2 Discussion of key findings	303
5.2.1 Co-ethnic networks and enclaves.....	303
5.2.2 Challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.	304
5.2.3 Acculturative challenges.....	306
5.2.4 Solutions and strategies	307
5.3 Limitations and Future research	308
5.3.1 The limitation of self-perception.....	308
5.3.2 The specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. reduces the sample size	308
5.3.3 Other considerations.....	309
5.4 Recommendations.....	310
5.4.1 Recommendation for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs.....	310
5.4.2 Recommendations for future research.....	312
5.5 Conclusion.....	313
Appendix 1. Ethics approval confirmation letter	315
Appendix 2. Participant invitation letter.....	316

Appendix 3. Participant information sheet	317
Appendix 4. Research participant consent form	320
Appendix 5. Interview protocol (for pilot study)	322
Appendix 6. Interview protocol (for final study)	326
Appendix 7. Sample transcripts from the interview with interviewee [I-11F]	331
List of references	347

List of tables

Table 1.1 - Entrepreneur and Graduate Entrepreneur figures for Chinese entrepreneurs	4
Table 1.2 - Recent studies on immigrant entrepreneurs	13
Table 1.3 - SME definition in the U.K.	18
Table 2.1 - The four stages of acculturation	75
Table 2.2 - Extant literature	100
Table 3.1 - Sampling method related to immigrant entrepreneurship.....	116
Table 3.2 - Interview protocol phases and purposes	126
Table 3.3 - Activity checklist for interview protocol	129
Table 3.4 - Screening of participants.....	130
Table 3.5 - Participant's information sheet for the pilot study of this research.....	135
Table 3.6 - Interview questions	139
Table 3.7 - Participant demography	141
Table 3.8 - Completed list of interviewee participant's information sheet	142
Table 4.1 - Overview of Data Structure (A)	152
Table 4.2 - Overview of Data Structure (B).....	153
Table 4.3 - Preliminary conceptual framework (underpinned by the mixed embeddedness framework).....	155
Table 4.4 - Mixed strategies.....	287
Table 4.5 – Conceptual framework	295

List of figures

Figure 1.1 - Tier 1 Entrepreneurs percentage (Chinese).....	5
Figure 1.2 - Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurs percentage (Chinese).....	5
Figure 2.1 - Hofstede 6 cultural dimensions: the U.K. vs. China	41
Figure 2.2 - The levels of embeddedness of an immigrant entrepreneur	54
Figure 2.3 - A model of the acculturation process	73
Figure 2.4 - The U-curve model.....	76
Figure 3.1 - A step-by-step process of NVivo qualitative analysis.....	124
Figure 4.1 - The embeddedness framework.....	154

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.



Mei-Feng, Wu

Abstract

Despite the significant contributions of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. (Lin, 2015), their unique challenges and how they manage these challenges have not been well documented. Extant literature notes that facing challenges hinders acculturation, negatively affects an enterprise's growth (Zolin et al., 2016) and causes stress to the migrant. Immigrant entrepreneurs with limited cross-cultural competencies face additional challenges (Mathews et al., 2015). Furthermore, per literature, co-ethnic enclaves can assist new immigrants by offering financial and advisory support and bringing new opportunities (Zhang et al., 2016; Zolin et al., 2016). Extant literature chronicles local language skills (e.g., Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Sui et al., 2015) and cross-cultural intelligence (Aslam et al., 2016; Alon et al., 2016) are essential for easing the acculturative journey of immigrant entrepreneurs.

An exploratory qualitative enquiry for extracting rich contextual data (Babin et al., 2019) using a mono method, semi-structured interview methodology was applied to capture diverse viewpoints. An exploratory, investigative research strategy is best suited when little prior research is available on this topic (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). Purposive sampling was used along with the snowball method to get suitable respondents (Saunders et al., 2016) till the point of data saturation was achieved (Saunders et al., 2017). In total, 25 interviews were taken until no further information was gathered. Resultant data were coded to recognise themes (Belotto, 2018).

The findings of this research made a significant theoretical contribution to the extant literature on this subject area which has been relatively unstructured so far (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020). Moreover, current literature does not explicitly address the point of view of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and their challenges, which were covered comprehensively in this research. The findings of this study indicated that, despite the documented importance of cross-cultural competencies in literature, Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. displayed low levels of local language skills and cross-cultural awareness, which increased their challenges.

Moreover, contrary to extant literature (Sullivan & Ford, 2014), ethnic enclaves did not offer adequate entrepreneurial support, business opportunities or networking prospects for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. as per the results of this study. It was theorised that ethnic

enclaves could potentially be losing their importance as financial and business support structures for newly incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs because of the lack of support being available to them (Kye, 2018).

This lack of support could also be because ethnic enclaves are no longer limited to highly concentrated ethnic business centres in the middle of cities. They have begun to spread out to suburbs due to city centre real estate limitations, making them less unified and easy to access. Further research was recommended for assessing the current role of ethnic enclaves due to these research findings that indicated that ethnic enclaves are no longer the support structures for immigrants as they were earlier (Kye, 2018).

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In recent years there has been growing recognition of the vital links between immigration and entrepreneurship, and this research area has garnered a sizable amount of attention, especially since the 2000's (Brzozowski, 2015; Chreim et al., 2018; Dabić et al., 2020; Nyakudya, 2019). Immigrant entrepreneurs are vital for the host countries' economy and socio-economic revitalisation (Dheer, 2018; Ojong & Mhandu, 2019; Sui et al., 2015; Zhu et al., 2019). However, adapting to a new culture challenges new immigrant entrepreneurs (Gurău et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2019), particularly when there is a considerable cultural distance between the home and host countries (Salgado & Bastida, 2017).

Cultural distance is the degree of difference between countries when shared values and norms are compared (Huang & Crotts, 2019). Individuals' professional and personal attitudes and behaviour are considerably shaped by their cultural values and norms (Schmutzler et al., 2019). Immigrant entrepreneurs who arrive in their host country with limited cross-cultural competencies find it harder to bridge the cultural gap per extant literature (Mathews et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2019). Existing literature on the role of co-ethnic communities and co-ethnic networks has indicated that the support of co-ethnic networks can assist new entrepreneurs by offering financial and advisory support and bringing new opportunities (Dabić et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2016).

This empirical research identified the challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs faced in the U.K. and how they were currently resolving them using their cross-cultural competencies and support from co-ethnic networks. Chapter 1 provides a synopsis of the thesis below. It first outlines the research background, identifies the research gap, defines the research problem and explains the research aims and objectives. Next, research methods were briefly summarised, followed by an overview of the theoretical contributions and research limitations.

1.1 Background to the research

As the concept of entrepreneurs spans disciplines such as economics, management, and social sciences, it is difficult to arrive at a singular definition for the word entrepreneur, primarily as literature interchangeably uses the words entrepreneurs and business owners (Fitzgerald &

Muske, 2016). These previous studies may have failed to consider the unique complexities of these partially entwined terms. Recent studies have documented an entrepreneur to be the fundamental actor in entrepreneurship, while a business owner is simply a person holding the financial proprietorship of a business (Hatthakijphong & Ting, 2019). While business owners and entrepreneurs share many characteristics, the distinct key variance differentiating them is their risk-taking and innovative abilities (Bird & Schjoedt, 2017).

Business owners often deal with known products and tested services, while the focus of entrepreneurs is on innovative products and services (Hatthakijphong & Ting, 2019). Due to the difference in the level of innovation of the core business, the risk undertaking of the business owner becomes much lesser than that of an entrepreneur. Furthermore, business owners often experience steady profitability and low growth rates, while entrepreneurs can face unpredictable growth and profitability (Bird & Schjoedt, 2017). Extant literature often uses these two terms interchangeably due to the similarities between the roles, responsibilities and experiences of business owners and entrepreneurs; therefore, despite their differences, relevant earlier research using either of the terminologies was referenced (Fitzgerald & Muske, 2016); however, the term entrepreneur was exclusively used in this research for the sake of consistency.

Historically, simple definitions were given to an entrepreneur, such as “*an individual who establishes and manages a business for the principal purpose of profit and growth*” (Carland et al., 1984, p. 358). However, such a simplistic definition cannot cover the holistic picture of an entrepreneur's role as it encompasses risk-taking, innovating, exploiting opportunities and allocating resources (Acs et al., 2017). Essentially entrepreneurship is the process that an entrepreneur undertakes in determining and exploiting lucrative opportunities (Gedik et al., 2015). However, despite the paucity of appropriate definitions, extant literature reviewed on entrepreneurship indicated that the financial and social contributions made by entrepreneurs could not be contested, especially while taking into consideration the increased employment opportunities, contribution to economic growth and innovation brought by them (Dabić et al., 2020; Dheer, 2018).

With a significant rise in immigration globally, international migration has become commonplace in most countries (De Haas et al., 2019; Wesselbaum & Aburn, 2019). The increased interest in immigrant entrepreneurs has been in part because of the increasing numbers of migrating populations that engage in entrepreneurial activities in their host countries. Immigrant entrepreneurs may thus be defined as a country's recent migrants who get

into entrepreneurship (Shinnar & Zamantılı Nayır, 2019). Extant literature indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs drive socio-economic progression in the host economy (Ngota et al., 2019) as they are highly entrepreneurial (Bolzani & Boari, 2018), and this phenomenon is essential for the continued existence of contemporary immigrant communities (Akin et al., 2017).

Liu et al. (2015) noted that the benefits to the host country because of immigrant entrepreneurs are more than just a source of physical capital or their contribution towards its Gross Domestic Product; immigrant entrepreneurs were also responsible for local job creation, offering unique services or products and they also made a noticeable impact towards increasing the country's diversity (Ojong & Mhandu, 2019). Additionally, according to an empirical study by Riva and Lucchini (2015), if all individual and/or environmental factors were equal, immigrant entrepreneur-owned businesses would have better chances of survival than native-owned equivalents.

Such resilience was attributed partly to their propensity for hard work and lack of suitable employment alternatives. Consequently, they have a greater need to succeed in entrepreneurship as it is their only means of economic survival (Vandor & Franke, 2016a). Besides, immigrant entrepreneurs have been known to be hyper-productive and consequently are highly valuable as net contributors to the U.K.'s economy (GEM, 2017). Therefore, it can be said that immigrant entrepreneur-owned organisations help maintain economic stability in their host countries. In short, immigrant entrepreneurs have not only significant economic but also note-worthy socio-economic impacts on their host country.

Immigrant entrepreneurship is a well-known phenomenon in the U.K., and a rising number of these immigrant entrepreneurs belong to the Chinese ethnicity. There are currently over 456,073 migrant entrepreneurs in the U.K., representing 155 countries, according to CFE/DueDil (2014).

Currently, there are four routes by which immigrants may enter the U.K. and set up a business (GOV.UK, 2019):

- 1) Tier 1 (General entrepreneurs)
- 2) Tier 1 (Graduate entrepreneurs)
- 3) Family (partner or spouse)

4) Long-residence route to permanent residence.

Of these options, 1 and 2 need to meet special requirements and are considered direct routes for entrepreneurs. While options 3 & 4 have fewer requirements, these routes take a longer time and can be considered secondary routes for immigrant entrepreneurship.

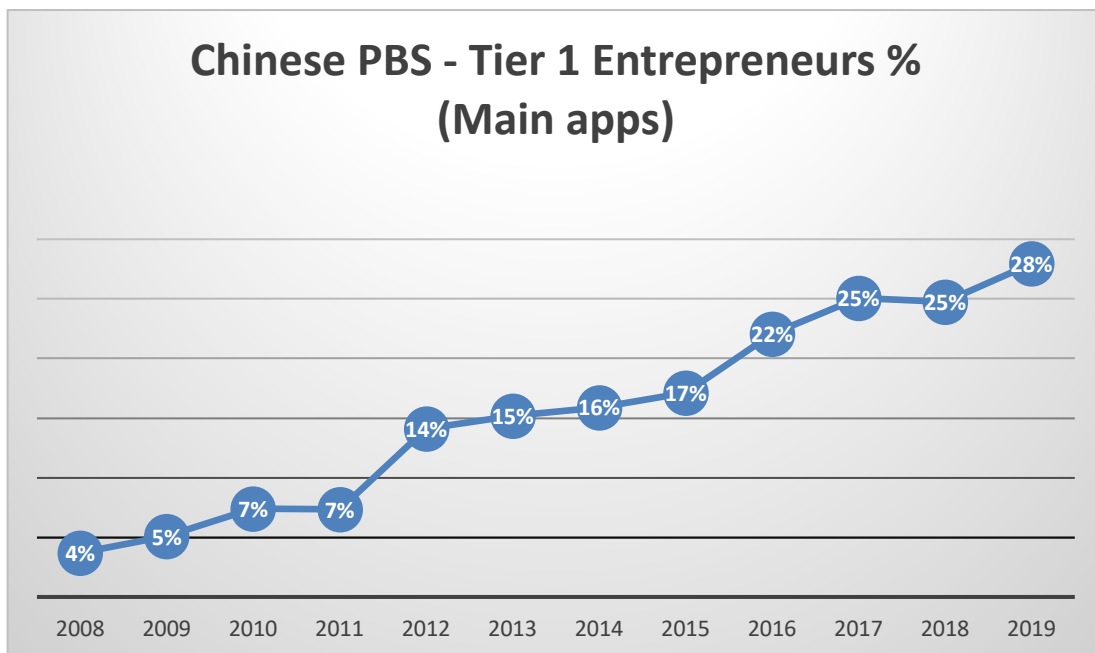
The Office for National Statistics noted that the U.K. received 8,778 Tier 1 Migrant applications between 2008 – 2019; of these, 1,705 or 19% were of Chinese ethnicity (see Table 1.1) (HomeOffice, 2020). Moreover, of the 1,193 Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur applications, 312 or 26%, were from Chinese applicants for the same period (see Table 1.1) (HomeOffice, 2020). The yearly breakdown indicates that the number of Chinese entrepreneurial applicants for both Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa and Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur visa has steadily risen each year (see Figures 1.1&1.2) (HomeOffice, 2020).

Table 1.1 - Entrepreneur and Graduate Entrepreneur figures for Chinese entrepreneurs

Year	Chinese PBS - Tier 1 Entrepreneurs (Main apps)	Total PBS - Tier 1 Entrepreneurs (Main apps)	%	Chinese PBS - Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurs (Main apps)	Total PBS - Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurs (Main apps)	%
2008	1	27	4%	0	0	0%
2009	6	118	5%	0	0	0%
2010	14	189	7%	0	0	0%
2011	31	421	7%	0	0	0%
2012	99	701	14%	0	0	0%
2013	177	1166	15%	2	13	15%
2014	173	1087	16%	23	175	13%
2015	157	918	17%	24	129	19%
2016	179	812	22%	39	169	23%
2017	244	974	25%	71	225	32%
2018	285	1152	25%	97	313	31%
2019	339	1213	28%	56	169	33%
Total 2008-2019	1705	8778	19%	312	1193	26%

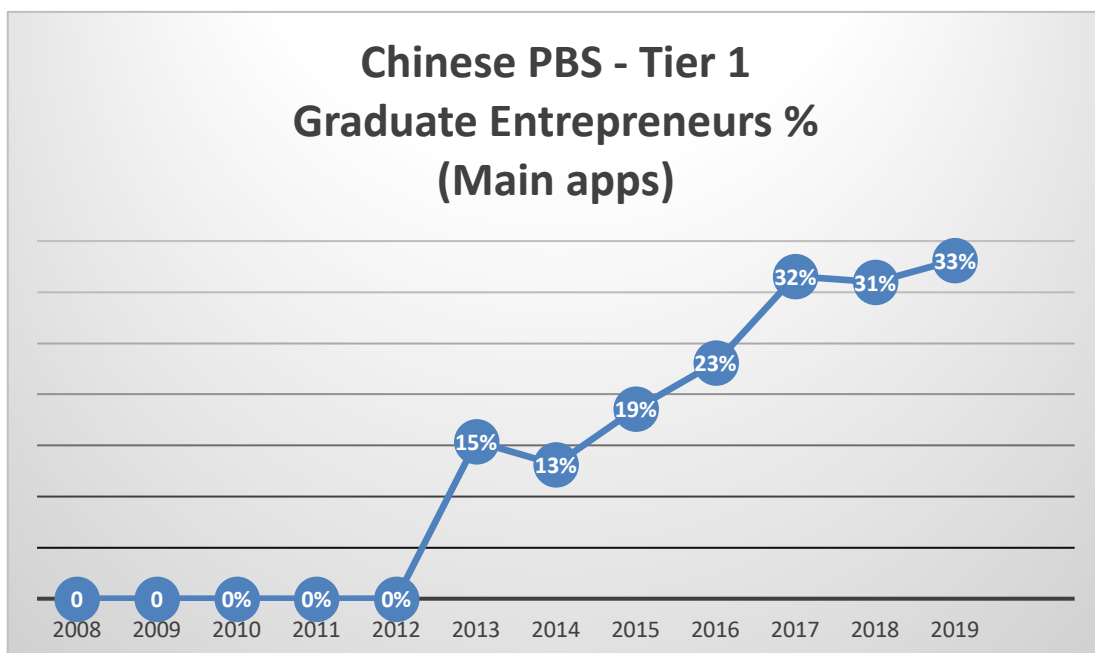
Source: HomeOffice (2020)

Figure 1.1 - Tier 1 Entrepreneurs percentage (Chinese)



Source: HomeOffice (2020)

Figure 1.2 - Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurs percentage (Chinese)



Source: HomeOffice (2020)

The Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) immigration category has been designed to benefit non-EEA citizens who want to set up, actively manage and/or invest in businesses in the U.K. The Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa is available to individuals who want to set up a business in the U.K. The

applicants must belong to countries other than those in the European Economic Area and Switzerland, be above 16, have access to £200,000 investment funds, and fulfil basic English language requirements. The individuals eligible to apply for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa must be officially endorsed as having a genuine and credible business idea by the Department for International Trade. Moreover, a higher education institution in the U.K. needs to endorse that they hold a UK-recognised bachelor's, master's degree, or a PhD. They only need to show £945 in savings if applying from within the U.K. or £1,890 if applying from overseas. These applicants also must belong to countries other than those in the European Economic Area and Switzerland and display basic proficiency in English (GOV.UK, 2019).

Another route for entrepreneurship in the U.K. is available to individuals who have arrived in the U.K. as dependent spouses. This visa is first given for 2.5 years and is extendable. To apply as a spouse, both the individuals need to be over 18 years of age, the sponsoring partner needs to be a citizen or permanent residence of the U.K., and both the partners need to have the intention to live together in the U.K. permanently. The partners should be married or be engaged and planning to marry within 6 months or have been living together in a relationship for 2 years prior to the application. Moreover, knowledge of English and financial ability to support self and dependents without relying on public funds needs to be displayed (GOV.UK, 2019). This visa is an easier route to entrepreneurship as no stringent rules are applied for the availability of finance; however, this route is a workaround rather than being a direct route for entrepreneurs.

Another route is a long residence which leads to a permanent residence for the immigrant. The immigrant should be a legal resident in the U.K. for 10 continuous years to be eligible to apply for permanent residency with less than a total of 540 days absence within the 10 years. Moreover, they must not violate the terms of their U.K. visa, pass the life in the U.K. test, and prove that their English levels are adequate (GOV.UK, 2019).

Recent industry reports indicate that immigrant entrepreneurs established 14.5% of total companies in the U.K., accounting for one-seventh of all job creation in the SME sector (CFE/DueDil, 2014). The research conducted by Kremel (2016) provides evidence that immigrants are more inclined to start a company compared to non-immigrants. This is evidenced by the fact that 17.2% of migrants had their own enterprises compared to only 10.4% of the native population. There are nearly half a million immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.

currently. Of these, a substantial percentage belong to the Chinese ethnic background, which ranks fifth highest among the 155 countries represented in the study, making Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs a significant population of the total immigrant entrepreneurs (CFE/DueDil, 2014). According to this study, Chinese immigrants were only behind those from Ireland, India, Germany, and the USA. As per the most recent census, the current number of immigrants of Chinese nationality in the U.K. is 124 thousand, which is relatively similar to the 121 thousand Chinese immigrants recorded by the CFE/DueDil report in 2014 (Statista, 2021). So it can be estimated that the numbers of immigrant entrepreneurs would have correspondingly changed.

Interacting between two diverse cultural contexts is challenging (Huang & Crotts, 2019). It requires an increased need for additional competencies for easier acculturation, as well as an ability to recognise and act upon lucrative opportunities (Vandor & Franke, 2016b). Previous studies have identified the importance of experience and cognition (Gruber et al., 2013); however, the role of competencies has been under-addressed in literature (Bird & Schjoedt, 2017). It has been noted in extant literature that the success of international businesses often depends on the ability of the immigrant to learn the local language and culture (Ferraro, 2021).

In academic literature, cross-cultural competencies have varied and sometimes contradictory definitions. This could be because cross-cultural studies have been studied in many professional fields like psychology and anthropology and encompass multiple academic approaches. The United States Army Research Institute, which conducts ongoing research in the area of cross-cultural competence, define it as a combination of cognitive, behavioural, and affective/motivational constituents which allow an individual to effectively adapt to culturally diverse environments (Abbe & Gouge, 2012).

Socio-cultural adaptation of an individual includes their cultural learning and acceptance, language skills and bicultural flexibility; they can also include adaptability of social skills and local practices, adjusting to the local business practices and the individual's learning skills (Presbitero, 2016). Crucial cultural adaptation subsets are psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Demes & Geeraert, 2014).

Other competencies that individuals benefit from having are a positive attitude which links to the individual's motivation and emotional management capabilities. Individuals' attitudes relate

to how they perceive the host country's culture. A positive attitude relates to acceptance, while a negative attitude leads to rejection. Ng et al. (2017) noted that retaining a positive attitude toward both the home and host country cultures is a crucial cross-cultural competency. Similarly, research indicates that entrepreneurs' attitudes are linked to their individual intentions, which, further on, is related to their entrepreneurial behaviour (Omoredede et al., 2015). Therefore, a positive attitude of immigrant entrepreneurs, for example: valuing the differences in people of a different culture, is a significant indicator of their involvement in the learning process, which helps in acculturation. Similarly, other empirical studies suggest that immigrants displaying positive attitudes experience lesser complications during socio-cultural adaptation (Wu & Mak, 2012).

Entrepreneurship literature also has studied the role of emotion as it can guide the individual's entrepreneurial activities (Cardon et al., 2012). Emotions can include both positive (happiness and hope) and negative (anger and fear) constituents (Su et al., 2020). Positive and negative emotions directly impact the entrepreneurial process by directing effective changes that influence the individual's behaviour and actions (Tur-Porcar et al., 2018). Especially in dynamic and unpredictable entrepreneurship environments, emotions may be the tipping point which alters the balance during decision-making and influence the entrepreneur's risk perception and preferences (Su et al., 2020).

In the cross-cultural context, emotional management helps manage conflicts relating to cultural differences. Therefore, Omoredede et al. (2015) suggest that cross-cultural competencies include perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions. Management of emotions consists of being aware of personal emotions and the ability to resolve emotional conflicts by managing frustration of failed social interactions in a different culture with patience (Omoredede et al., 2015).

Despite the proven importance of cross-cultural competencies, extant research thus far has focused mainly on the impact of national culture in acculturating (for example, Hofstede, 2011) rather than on the individual competency of the immigrant to acculturate into another culture or the availability of support systems that may be advantageous to them during this process. Moreover, such knowledge was fragmented and limited in extant literature. This is despite the fact that there has been increasing recognition in the literature that lower levels of individual competencies limit the adjustment of immigrant entrepreneurs in their host country (Achidi

Ndofor & Priem, 2011) and have a negative impact on the success of their business (Zolin et al., 2016). This research attempted to bridge this theoretical gap in the literature.

1.2 Research gap and questions

1.2.1 Research gap

To date, several studies have investigated cross-cultural competencies and acculturation, but such research has been mainly from the perspective of psychologists, anthropologists and sociologists (for example, Chen & Zhu, 2020; Doucerain, 2019; Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018; Yang et al., 2011). There has also been much research from the viewpoint of expatriates (Baruch et al., 2016; Bonache & Noethen, 2014; Shi & Wang, 2014); however, there are sizable gaps in enquiry from the specific perspective of immigrant entrepreneurs (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020). These gaps in literature have not been covered despite the steady increase in self-initiated immigration numbers over the past years and a corresponding increase in entrepreneurship linked with self-initiated immigration (CFE/DueDil, 2014).

There is sufficient documented evidence that immigrant entrepreneurs are crucial for making societal and economic contributions to the host society and that the integration of the immigrant entrepreneur themselves is crucial for the host society (Kemeny, 2017; Vissak & Zhang, 2014). A majority of prior related research has also been conducted from the perspective of expatriates rather than that of immigrant entrepreneurs (Arseneault, 2020; Tahir & Ertek, 2018; Vijayakumar & Cunningham, 2016; Wang et al., 2017). Expatriates have been identified as executives and managers who are sent on offshore assignments in the host countries by their organisations.

On the other hand, immigrant entrepreneurs are primarily self-motivated individuals who pursue economic advancement (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013). The difference between expatriates and immigrant entrepreneurs is that expatriates often have the support and financial backing of large organisations. In contrast, immigrant entrepreneurs have to manage alone in the host context without much external support other than family and/or friends (Baruch et al., 2016; Bird & Wennberg, 2016).

Due to this lack of external support and financial backing, challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs can be fairly different from those faced by expatriates. Therefore prior research based on expatriates does not cover the specific challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face. This research covers these gaps in extant literature by focusing on the specific context and challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs face.

As the information is mainly fragmented, there was a requirement for a comprehensive framework to address this gap in knowledge. Due to the scarcity of immigrant entrepreneurs' literature on challenges and cross-cultural competencies, some literature on expatriates was also studied during the course of the literature review for this research (Bonache & Noethen, 2014; Shi & Wang, 2014). This empirical research addressed the existing gap in theoretical knowledge by adding to the body of literature on the subject of challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, the role of ethnic enclaves in supporting them and the personal competencies that aided acculturation from the perspective of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.

The research gap was identified by perusing the extant literature related to immigrant entrepreneurs. A methodical review of 67 journal articles by Malerba and Ferreira (2020) and another systematic review of 45 journal articles which was undertaken by Aliaga-Isla and Rialp (2013) were the starting base for studying the literature; this covered a plethora of research conducted between 1985 and 2020; all the significant studies and journal articles on the subject of immigrant entrepreneurship were reviewed across several disciplines, and these were used as a base to initiate the literature review for this research and form a robust theoretical grounding of the subject.

Malerba and Ferreira's (2020) study attempted to recognise issues around strategy and how these strategies were used by immigrant entrepreneurs to create, grow and enable their businesses to survive. This study identified 7 core subjects that were covered in the 67 studies: i) Opportunity recognition and business creation processes, ii) Ethnicity influences on immigrant entrepreneur strategies, iii) Adaptation and survival strategies, iv) Multicultural and breaking-out strategies, v) Governmental and support organisation policies vi) Differences between immigrants and non-immigrants as entrepreneurs, and vii) Internationalisation strategies and transnational business.

While Aliaga-Isla and Rialp (2013) primarily focused on 1st generation entrepreneurs, this term refers to immigrants who were born abroad, migrated when they were adults and who own businesses in their host country (Ndika, 2013; Smans et al., 2014). The differences between 1st, 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants are discussed in detail below in section 1.6, the scope of research. This current research similarly addressed the challenges of those immigrants who have spent only a short duration of time in the U.K. (1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs) rather than focusing on 1.5 or 2nd generation immigrants who would have completely different issues and motivations for becoming entrepreneurs; thus, suitably contributing to the small body of literature currently available in the research niche in immigrant entrepreneur research which addresses the specific context of 1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs.

The perusal of extant literature established that research scholars commonly used multiple perspectives to explore the phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurs globally. The empirical studies had both regional and individual contexts, and broadly the objectives for these studies spotlighted immigrant characteristics, gender-based challenges and motivations of immigrants from different countries (for example, Basahal, 2020; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Murzacheva et al., 2020). It was noted that the most prominent cultural shocks were experienced early in the immigration journey, even though the process of acculturation began as soon as there was any contact between two diverse cultures.

Aliaga-Isla and Rialp's (2013) and Malerba and Ferreira's (2020) studies identified that the majority of research was focused on the North American region, while there was also some research based on the contexts of Europe (the especially Netherlands and Germany) and Oceania. However, there was little research from the U.K., especially from the context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Only four studies from the U.K. were featured in their reviews (for example, Basu, 2011; Inal et al., 2013; Stoyanov, 2018; Villares-Varela et al., 2018).

In addition to having a completely different research focus, these U.K.-based studies were also currently fairly old, making them relatively out-of-date. Thus it could be considered that there was a significant paucity of relevant and recent literature on the chosen subject of this research. Moreover, most of the studies evaluated during Aliaga-Isla and Rialp's (2013) review were quantitative in nature. The authors concluded that there was a paucity of qualitative studies, especially theory-building in immigrant entrepreneurs' research. This indicates a significant

gap in qualitative research on the context of challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.

After a thorough examination of recent studies, during the literature review process for this research, similarities and trends were noted in the objectives of prior research on immigrant entrepreneurs. The most common themes identified were motivation, specific challenges faced by female immigrant entrepreneurs and characteristics of immigrant entrepreneurs that contributed to their success (see table 1.2). However, none of these researches was from the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs or was based in the U.K. This indicated a significant gap in the literature that needed to be filled with empirical qualitative research on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. This research was able to identify and fulfil this niche research gap. The focus areas from recent literature have been outlined below based on the region of study:

- **North American Region:** The studies reviewed on this subject were mostly based in the North American Region, and the most common research objectives were characteristics of immigrants from different ethnicities (Verheul et al., 2012). Key research themes in these studies examined the immigrants' human, social and business capital and their experiences as entrepreneurs (for example, Santarelli & Tran, 2013; Stam et al., 2014). Furthermore, some studies analysed the consequences of social space on ethnic solidarity and breaking out (for example, Allen & Busse, 2016), while others were interested in assessing challenges specific to women entrepreneurs (for example, Wang, 2019).
- **European Region:** Immigrant entrepreneurs' studies reviewed from this region were concentrated mainly in Germany and the Netherlands. The themes for research that emerged from this region had some similarities with the research from the North American region. For instance: concepts regarding women entrepreneurs (for example, Villares-Varela & Essers, 2019; Yeröz, 2019) and social and economic factors that hindered or helped immigrant entrepreneurs were analysed (for example, Efendic et al., 2016). Only a few significant studies were based in the U.K. These studies were based on immigrants' social identity interactions in the host country (Stoyanov, 2018) and patch-working strategies of immigrant entrepreneurs (Villares-Varela et al., 2018), clearly indicating a notable gap in recent immigrant entrepreneurs' literature from the

U.K. and especially from the perspective of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, which this research bridged.

- **Oceania region:** Characteristics of immigrants in Australia was a key theme for research in the journal articles reviewed, along with their propensity and motivations for entrepreneurship (Soydas & Aleti, 2015) and the female immigrant entrepreneurs' perspectives (for example, Collins & Low, 2010). Most Chinese immigrant-based research took place in the Australian context (for example, Yang et al., 2012). Yang et al.'s (2012) research attempted to identify the various kinds of ethnic network resources available to Chinese immigrants' to establish how these resources interacted with transaction costs in Australia.

Some more of the recent research on immigrant entrepreneurs that was perused during this research study have been summarised in Table 1.2 below:

Table 1.2 - Recent studies on immigrant entrepreneurs

Author	Main Focus
Dimitratos et al. (2016)	The motivation of immigrant entrepreneurs
Peroni et al. (2016)	Influence of education and background on entrepreneurial propensity
Munkejord (2017)	Networking among female immigrant entrepreneurs
Vinogradov and Jørgensen (2017)	Opportunity identification between native and immigrant entrepreneurs
Rametse et al. (2018)	Motivation and capabilities of established immigrant business
Pruthi et al. (2018)	Ethnic ties, motivations, and home country entry strategy of transnational entrepreneurs
Chreim et al. (2018)	Immigrant entrepreneurship from the female perspective
Wang (2019)	How gender, interacting with race and ethnicity, plays a role in women's entrepreneurship
Villares-Varela and Essers (2019)	Explores the influence on migrant women entrepreneurs of transnational trajectories in the Netherlands and Spain their social positions and business strategies.
Salamanca P and Alcaraz (2019)	Analysed the behaviour of high-skilled migration to the United States
Peterson and Crittenden (2020)	customer orientation of Mexican-American entrepreneurs in the context of enclave theory, firm performance, and immigrant generation

A review of the body of literature on the subject illustrates that there is no comprehensively compiled research on challenges encountered by immigrant entrepreneurs, and there has been little focus on resolving these challenges (Nel & Abdullah, 2015). Moreover, the context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. has been ignored despite the emergent prominence of immigrant entrepreneurs in their host societies, the growing importance of Chinese immigrants, and the investments they bring into the U.K. (Rees et al., 2020). This research, therefore, aimed to understand not just what challenges were being faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. but also proposed to discover solutions to these. Based on the identified research gap in the literature, the following research question has been identified:

1.2.2 Research question

It was identified that there was a dearth of academic literature regarding the challenges faced by 1st generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. There was also little data on whether the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs could use co-ethnic networks and cross-cultural competencies to manage these challenges during their acculturative process. Furthermore, the role of ethnic enclaves in providing support to face challenges was found to be dated and not from the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. A crucial gap in research was identified, and the following research question was identified.

What challenges do Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs coming to the U.K. face, and how can they better resolve these challenges?

This research question was suitably addressed during this empirical research which helped to significantly add to the body of current research in immigration entrepreneurship studies.

1.3 Research objectives

The research aim is an overarching, specific phrase that identifies the research purpose, while the objectives are the key sections that outline how the research aim will be achieved. This research aimed to investigate what challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face in the U.K. and understand how they can use their cross-cultural competencies, cross-cultural intelligence, and co-ethnic networks to overcome these challenges. In order to fulfil this goal, the research question was further subdivided into three specific research objectives, which are discussed

below. These objectives were derived from a detailed study of extant literature by identifying gaps in theoretical knowledge that this study aimed to fulfil.

- **Objective 1:** To identify the challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face in the U.K. and how these challenges impact their ability to acculturate.
- **Objective 2:** To identify how Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs currently operate in the U.K. and manage these challenges using cross-cultural competencies and intelligence.
- **Objective 3:** To identify the role of co-ethnic networks and enclaves in overcoming these challenges.

1.4 Methodology

The exploratory qualitative methodology was best suited for this research based on the research question and objectives. It allows the researcher to dig deeper into a subject that has had little prior academic interest and gather rich data. It also allows the researcher to explore related and interesting themes that arose during the interviews (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, prior research on this subject had been primarily quantitative in nature, and a qualitative enquiry was needed to fill the gaps in extant literature by addressing the 'what' and 'why' questions rather than the 'how many' questions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). The researcher chose to employ a mono-method due to sampling challenges and higher demand for resources for analysing and reporting mixed-method research (Flick, 2017). This research aligned constructivism with a relativist ontology.

A constructivist epistemology fits best with research that relies on human perception and social experiences (Fosnot, 2013), while relativism links to triangulating a reality which is challenging to comprehend by comparing and contrasting individual participant's perceptions with those of other research participants to arrive at a single reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By aligning with an interpretivist approach, this research attempted to understand how beliefs shaped the worldview of humans (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). An inductive research approach was used to explore a phenomenon deeply and identify themes and patterns from the findings to form a conceptual framework.

Prior researchers state that social sciences research can be exploratory when there is only little theoretical information available on the research subject (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019), as was the

case with this research subject as almost no prior research on Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. was available in extant literature. While a plethora of studies outlined challenges faced by immigrants, these researches did not focus on the specific situation of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the British context. Therefore, the methodology selected for this research was an exploratory research methodology to investigate this social phenomenon.

If conducted with transparency and self-reflection, exploratory research can produce insightful, valid findings that expand the theoretical knowledge of the subject area (Reiter, 2017). For this purpose, semi-structured interviews were employed (Saunders et al., 2016). Data were collected until saturation was reached, and it was estimated that no further unique opinions could reasonably be collected by continuing the interviewing (Fusch & Ness, 2015). A total of 25 interviews were conducted to obtain rich and varied findings. Research samples were identified using a combination of purposive sampling/selective sampling along with the snowball method. The methodology used and the reason behind the methodological choices was discussed in further detail in Chapter 3.

1.5 Scope of research

1.5.1 Scope

The scope for this research included only entrepreneurs owning small to medium-sized businesses; it did not include business managers, large business owners, or expatriate managers employed by multinational enterprises. Furthermore, these immigrant entrepreneurs were of Chinese ethnicity and 1st generation immigrants. Extant literature defines 1st generation immigrants as those who have migrated to a new country. In contrast, 2nd generation immigrants are children of immigrants born and/or brought up in the host country (Soydas & Aleti, 2015). Xu et al. (2019) further divide the 1st generation of immigrants into three parts based on age on arrival in the host country.

They note that the age of arrival has a direct link with the cross-cultural capabilities displayed by the immigrant entrepreneurs' and that intergenerational differences may be observed even within the 1st generation of immigrant entrepreneurs. Their findings have been consistent with those of other researchers (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013). The 1st generation is subdivided as 1.5 generation (immigrated between ages 6 and 12), the 1.25 generation (immigrated between ages

13 and 17) and the 1st generation (immigrated as adults postage 18). Whereas any individual born in the host country or arriving before age 6 is generally considered to be 2nd generation immigrant (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013).

This research solely concentrated on 1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs who have emigrated from their home country China to a culturally diverse nation, the United Kingdom and those who engaged in entrepreneurship after arriving in the U.K. Furthermore, the research concentrated on the competencies of immigrant entrepreneurs because entrepreneurship has been described as a process shaped by entrepreneurs' activities (Dabić et al., 2020). Therefore their personal competencies shape the utilisation of opportunity structures, the creation of an enterprise and ultimately, the growth of the enterprise (Bird et al., 2012).

Moreover, cutting through the long-standing political ambiguity and confusion on who can essentially be termed as culturally Chinese, this research used the overarching term 'Chinese' to refer to any individual belonging to the Greater China Region. This included people representing Mainland China and Taiwan because individuals from this region share a common ethnicity and therefore have a shared cultural heritage (Cheung, 2017). As people from these countries are ethnically and culturally similar, they are therefore likely to face similar challenges and have comparable perspectives. The sample consisted of a total of 25 interviewees, of which 12 were from Taiwan, while 13 interviewees were from Mainland China to get a variety of perspectives as people from these countries may face similar challenges but not have similar perspectives towards those challenges.

1.5.2 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly playing vital roles in the growth and innovation of the global economy (Rodríguez-Pose & von Berlepsch, 2014). SMEs' success is crucial for a country's economy because the significant bulk of businesses operating within any economy comprises SMEs (Domi et al., 2019). SME definitions are commonly based on the number of organisational employees, total sales, or loan size. Of these, the number of employees is most commonly used as a decisive factor in categorising organisations. However, total organisational sales can also be considered a precise parameter for defining an SME (Berisha & Pula, 2015). The U.K. has a standard definition (see table 1.3) for what

organisation qualifies as an SME; this definition includes all organisations having between 1 to 250 employees or a total turnover of less than £50 million (Berisha & Pula, 2015).

Table 1.3 - SME definition in the U.K.

Company category	Employees	Turnover
Micro	<10	<£2 million
Small	<50	<£10 million
Medium-sized	<250	<£50 million

Source: Berisha and Pula (2015)

The challenges faced by small, medium, and large organisations differ as per a report by Wasp Barcode Technologies, which conducted a survey of over 1,000 business owners, senior managers, and executives across industries in the USA to compile the State of Small Business Report which stated that while all organisations reported growing revenue as a crucial problem, firms with under 50 employees also reported challenges concerning cash flow, employee healthcare and raising capital as their top business challenges which were not noted by larger organisations (Chargebacks911, 2016). For this research, organisations with less than 50 employees (including small and micro-organisations as defined in the U.K.) were considered to ensure that the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs had comparable experiences. This choice had been made keeping in mind that the challenges faced by small organisations could significantly differ from the challenges that larger organisations encounter.

1.6 Research findings

This study's findings clearly underscore the common challenges affecting Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. Existing literature has fragmented advice on the range of challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face in their host countries. Moreover, many of these studies were from the context of expatriates rather than immigrant entrepreneurs facing different challenges. This study uncovered layers of challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs face in a diverse culture and created a comprehensive framework of the strategies that could be applied to counter these challenges. Moreover, this study combined the existing theories related to immigrant entrepreneurs to come up with a hybrid solution that had interwoven concepts of the mixed embeddedness framework with those of co-ethnic enclave theory and the human and social capital theory.

The intersection of these theories and literature on cross-cultural competencies and acculturation formed the basis for building a conceptual framework to address the challenges identified during this study. Challenges arising from lack of communication skills most significantly impacted the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and were found to be the fundamental reason why Chinese immigrants experienced other challenges such as the inability to understand rules and regulations and difficulty in acquiring finances (Ngota et al., 2018).

The study also found that the immigrant entrepreneur's low competency in the local language and low cross-cultural intelligence negatively affected their acculturative process because their ability to function in the host language was crucial for their interaction with the host natives (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). The acculturative process begins when there is contact between two cultures; however, immigrants with low language competency and lack of cultural awareness are hesitant to initiate or sustain any contact with the host country's nationals.

Significantly, the findings of this thesis assessed that there were changes in the role that used to be played by co-ethnic enclaves and networks in easing the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs. Earlier research had noted that ethnic enclaves were vital for easing challenges for immigrants. However, this study's findings challenge the assumption that ethnic enclaves positively supported immigrant entrepreneurs in facing any challenges (Kye, 2018).

This study found that ethnic enclaves did not help bring social embeddedness, which is considered essential for bringing opportunity structures to the immigrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). In the extant literature, ethnic enclaves had been attributed as economic power centres which brought economic contacts in addition to employment opportunities for the immigrants and helped them build social networks, as per Hack-Polay (2019). On the contrary, the results of this study provided empirical evidence that the ethnic enclaves are losing their importance as most of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported that ethnic enclaves were of little benefit for them professionally as the interviewees did not receive tangible economic or opportunity benefits from being embedded in the socio-cultural level of ethnic networks and associations.

However, this crucial finding does not diminish the importance of the other co-ethnic individuals' role in their lives. Some interviewees reported socialising exclusively or predominantly within ethnic communities as they were unable to connect personally with local

individuals due to language and cultural challenges. An auxiliary finding of this exploratory research postulates that despite the strong academic focus on the importance of cross-cultural and language training and general preparedness, in the real world, there was little focus on this essential aspect which contributes heavily to cross-cultural entrepreneurial success.

The findings also suggested that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs commonly practised using creative and innovative methods to alleviate the challenges. Moreover, the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs suggested that maintaining a positive work attitude, respect for the other cultures and having a flexible demeanour toward other cultures was crucial because effectively conducting business mattered more than dwelling on the cultural differences the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs experienced in the U.K.

1.7 Research contribution

The study made important contributions to academic theory on immigrant entrepreneurship. These contributions can also help future academic researchers form a research base for their own studies. Moreover, shedding light on challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. also helps incoming and newly arrived immigrant entrepreneurs to make informed decisions as they will have contextual and practical information. Chapter 5 demonstrated these contributions in greater detail; however, the overall contributions are noted below:

1.7.1 Theoretical contribution

The extant literature on immigrant entrepreneurs is fragmented and does not provide a comprehensive framework to address the challenges they face in the host society or the support structures available to them in the host country, such as ethnic enclaves. As exploratory research, this empirical study attempted to answer 'what, how, when and why' questions (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) and was able to push the boundaries of existing knowledge and therefore build up the existing body of knowledge on immigration entrepreneurship.

The most noteworthy contribution of this empirical research was identifying a prominent discontinuity in ethnic enclave studies by providing empirical evidence that contradicts the existing body of knowledge on the role of ethnic enclaves in supporting immigrant entrepreneurs. The knowledge of the role of ethnic enclaves is dated and no longer relevant in

current times as per the findings of this research. Moreover, the literature does not address the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Challenges faced by people of a particular cultural background in another country can be very different from challenges faced by people of another cultural background in that same country. By filling theoretical gaps in the literature, this research pushed the existing boundaries of literature on challenges that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face in the U.K.

This research furthermore provided a more embedded and structured theoretical foundation on the importance of personal competencies in overcoming these challenges and comprehensive knowledge of their role in aiding acculturation. This research corroborated with existing research on the need for human capital and competencies such as communication which help newly arriving immigrants acculturate into their host society (For example, Nel & Abdullah, 2015; Selmer & Luring, 2015). Confirmative studies are crucial for strengthening an argument or an existing theory.

This research was able to add theoretical knowledge on the topic of cultural intelligence and acculturation. Fragmented information from across literature was pulled together to provide a guide for effective acculturation, which can help individual entrepreneurs practically and academically inform researchers. The acculturation process begins when there is contact with an individual or a group from a diverse culture, and inevitably over time, the culturally diverse individuals begin to adopt some of the values and norms of the other culture (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). This study noted that having lower personal competencies, especially those concerned with communication skills, proved detrimental to the acculturative process.

Although these findings are especially relevant in the context of immigrant entrepreneurs of Chinese ethnicity, the results may also be relevant up to a certain degree to immigrant entrepreneurs of other ethnicities who are in the U.K. These contributions will be discussed in greater detail in the upcoming chapters.

1.7.2 Contribution to Entrepreneurial practice

In addition to the significant contributions made by this thesis in the theoretical sphere, the results of this study will also be helpful to individual immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. The

key competencies required by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are identified in this thesis which they can use to make improvements. This thesis also identified solutions to the challenges commonly faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Therefore, this can prove valuable information for individual entrepreneurs who can use the process to prepare themselves better before immigrating to the U.K.

1.8 Research Limitations

All research is somewhat restricted by the scope of its study, and this thesis is no exception. The sample base for this study was limited to 1st generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who were born overseas and moved to the U.K. as adults to pursue entrepreneurship. As the findings were gathered exclusively from the specific context of 1st generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs currently owning only small-sized enterprises in the U.K. therefore, the results of this study have limited generalisability to other ethnic contexts or even for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs having large-sized organisations. Moreover, the 2nd generation of immigrants was not considered in the sample base as their challenges might be different due to the differences in their competencies in coping with the complexities of the local culture and language. A screening process was undertaken to ensure that the respondents were 1st generation Chinese entrepreneurs running their own small-sized enterprises in the U.K. This process is described in detail in chapter 3 on methodology.

As little research exists on this topic specific to the context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K., there were limited resources for forming a literature base and a body of information during the literature review part of this research. Nevertheless, there is plentiful research available on expatriate managers, which could be partially relied upon. However, due to the level of support available to expatriates from their organisations and the differing motivations for migration, there may be limitations on the theoretical underpinning. There is also some literature on immigrant entrepreneurs of various ethnicities who have chosen to settle in other countries such as the United States of America or other European countries like Germany or Sweden, which could be used. However, as the context changes, there could be issues in extrapolating the results of those studies into this one.

Moreover, a large proportion of available expatriate literature in the Chinese-British context is based on the model of British expatriates in China rather than those of Chinese expatriates in

the U.K. This non-availability of pertinent prior literature created some limitations for this research due to issues with the generalisability of their research findings. Finally, due to limitations of time and resources, this research only elected to employ the mono method, which does not permit data triangulation.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

This thesis has been organised into 5 chapters that systematically and comprehensively examine each research question to address the four main objectives of this research. The brief summary of each chapter follows:

Chapter 2 – Literature Review: A detailed review of relevant literature was undertaken to identify the research problem. The various concepts relevant to immigrant entrepreneurship were critically discussed, drawing on literature across the overlapping subject areas of immigrant entrepreneurs, international business, and cross-cultural management. The chapter helped to identify and formulate relevant questions that guide the empirical study that followed in this research to fill the research gap that was identified from the literature review.

Chapter 3 - Methodology: This chapter explains the research methodology selected to carry out this empirical, exploratory study along with the research design, suitability of the method, philosophical underpinning of the researcher, sample base to be used in the study, pilot study, method of data collection and analysis and finally the validity and reliability of the results.

Chapter 4 – Findings and discussion: The findings from the in-depth qualitative enquiry were documented, especially chronicling the issues faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K., the methods they used to overcome the challenges and the role of co-ethnic enclaves and co-ethnic networks. The findings were analysed in detail by juxtaposing the derived results of this study with the documented extant literature on this subject for comparison.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion and recommendation: The conclusions were drawn based on the analysis from chapter 4 to assess if the empirical study successfully answered the research aim and objectives. The study's limitations were discussed in detail, and recommendations were made based on the research findings. Recommendations were also included for further research. The results of this research filled crucial gaps in existing academic literature;

moreover, these results can also be helpful to individual immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter laid a foundation for the thesis and provided a synopsis of the empirical research undertaken for this thesis. The research background was delineated, and the importance of immigrant entrepreneurs was briefly discussed. The aim and objectives of this research have been stated and were based on the research gap identified during the literature review phase of this thesis. The academic and practical contributions of this study were also elaborated upon, along with the study's limitations. Finally, the overall structure of the research was presented. The next chapter recapitulates the thorough literature review that was undertaken of the extant literature that is pertinent to this research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

A thorough review of the extant academic literature was conducted to build a solid grounding of knowledge of the subject being researched. By analysing prior research on the subject, gaps in literature were identified, which aided in the justification of the selection of this research topic by placing it in context with extant literature on this subject area. Duplication of existing research could also be avoided by conducting a literature review. Furthermore, the researcher was able to find crucial concepts linked to immigrant entrepreneurship, which helped in understanding the main theories that impact the current research. The first section of this literature review began with an introduction to the concepts of entrepreneur, entrepreneurship, and immigrant entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, a literature review in this subsection was used to evaluate whether there were differences in immigrant and co-ethnic entrepreneurship concepts. Common terminology and concepts such as entrepreneurial competencies, shadow economy and changing immigrant trends were also discussed. The next subsection gives an overview of the various theories of immigrant entrepreneurship: cultural theory, ethnic enclave theory, blocked mobility/disadvantage theory, human, social and financial capital theory and mixed embeddedness theory. A thorough critical analysis of each of the theories was conducted to gain an understanding of each of the theories. It is followed by the introduction of the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs as per current literature and reviewing of the extant literature on the acculturation of immigrating individuals.

Cultural intelligence and individual competencies, which eases adaptation, were addressed in detail in the following subsection. The competencies which can assist an immigrant entrepreneur in acculturation into the host cultural context are a core focus area for this research. The main concepts discussed in this section are cross-cultural intelligence and competencies, cross-cultural communication, and their impact on acculturation. Finally, the theories most linked to this research were identified as the mixed-embeddedness approach, the co-ethnic enclave theory, the human and social capital theory, and how they intersect with cross-cultural competencies and acculturation.

2.1 Concepts related to entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship

2.1.1 Definitions and classifications

There are no singularly acceptable definitions of the terms entrepreneur and entrepreneurship as the terms are used across management, economics, and social science disciplines. Some of the common definitions of the terms are discussed below:

2.1.1.1 Entrepreneur

Shabbir and Kassim (2019) have defined an entrepreneur as somebody who identifies an opportunity, gathers resources to utilise this opportunity and adds value while developing a business undertaking that fulfils customer requirements (Tengeh & Nkem, 2017). In contrast, a business owner can also be defined as an individual who has founded and managed the growth of a business for profit purposes. Uygun and Gujrati (2020) add the term 'innovator' and 'risk taker' to their definition of entrepreneurs as they note that entrepreneurs often introduce novel ideas into the economy and create value by moving resources from lower yield areas to higher productive areas, while Schumpeter noted entrepreneurs were 'creative-destructive' as they often exploit new and untried inventions and revolutionised or reformed business processes (Austin et al., 2012).

Shabbir and Kassim (2019) elaborate that this innovation and creation could be linked to the product, production process or industry organisation. Another interpretation of the term entrepreneur comes from Liang et al. (2019), who state that entrepreneurs add value to available resources by acquiring them to generate products and services that their customers require for the sake of profit. However, the simplistic definition of an entrepreneur, which links their endeavours to profit generation, does not consider the kind of entrepreneurs who may not be involved in business solely for the sake of earning a profit, such as social entrepreneurs (Brieger & De Clercq, 2019).

Social entrepreneurs are motivated by creating 'shared value' and adding meaningful welfare for their society and may propagate subsistence marketplaces which create synergies to support inclusive growth (Azmat et al., 2015). While social entrepreneurs have similar characteristics to all entrepreneurs, for them, their social mission is central and unequivocal. Their goal evidently impacts how they perceive, assess, and exploit opportunities and utilise their returns (Austin et al., 2012). Moreover, adding to the complexity of defining entrepreneurs, there is

little clarity in the literature on the differences between the terms 'entrepreneurs' and 'business owners', leading them to be used interchangeably (Olusegun, 2012).

However, there are distinct differences in these roles because an entrepreneur is fundamentally crucial for the function of an enterprise (Mueller et al., 2012). In contrast, the business owner may simply own a financial proprietorship without holding a central role in the operations (Ramoglou et al., 2020). Drucker (2014) notes that business and entrepreneurship are different as all-new small businesses are not entrepreneurial in nature or represent entrepreneurship. This clearly draws a demarcation between a business, which is profit-motivated and operates under administrative management, and entrepreneurship, which essentially needs to be innovative and/or change-oriented and thrives under entrepreneurial management.

2.1.1.2 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship is defined as the *"dynamic, institutionally embedded interaction between entrepreneurial attitudes, abilities and aspirations, by individuals who drive the allocation of resources through the creation and operation of new ventures"* (Acs et al., 2017, p. 479). Essentially entrepreneurship is the process that an entrepreneur undertakes in determining and exploiting lucrative opportunities (Gedik et al., 2015). This view is agreed by Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 218), whose definition of entrepreneurship is that *"entrepreneurship involves the study of sources of opportunities; the processes of discovery, evaluation, and exploitation of opportunities"*.

Other academic literature on entrepreneurship has revealed that entrepreneurs are responsible for more than economic contributions; they also bring increased employment opportunities and contribute toward socio-economic development and propagation of innovation (Kasseeah, 2016). Gouvea et al. (2021) largely agreed with this point. They note that entrepreneurship stems from the individual's 'creative spirit', which induces enduring business ownership, and job creation and generates economic security.

To sum up the above definitions, entrepreneurs are individuals who recognise and identify opportunities, are willing to take risks and have the talent for innovating a product/service or its creation process to cater to customer needs while generating profits by creating or expanding a business. Entrepreneurial orientation necessitates the basic amalgamation of attributes such as innovation, risk-taking abilities and being proactive (Thoumrungroje & Racela, 2013).

Working towards this end, entrepreneurs generate employment, contribute towards socio-economic development, and thereby contribute toward economic stability.

2.1.1.3 Immigrant entrepreneurs

Work-related international migration has significantly risen in most countries (Biswas et al., 2019), increasing the frequency of immigrant entrepreneurship (Glinka, 2018). Immigrant entrepreneurs are defined as new immigrants who set up and manage an enterprise in their host country (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013). While some researchers like Sinkovics and Reuber (2021) note that immigrant entrepreneurs start businesses for economic survival reasons, others have argued that immigrant entrepreneurs also migrate for an opportunity. Ruiz et al. (2017) state that opportunity entrepreneurs are those individuals who desire to start businesses to fulfil opportunities. On the other hand, necessity or need-based entrepreneurs are individuals who get into entrepreneurship for economic reasons and because they experience disadvantages in the job market such as wage gap, lack of jobs or discrimination from host country nationals (Erdogan, 2019).

International entrepreneurship has often been subdivided into three main areas, seemingly alike but with subtle differences. These are ethnic entrepreneurship, immigrant entrepreneurship, and transnational entrepreneurship and have attracted increasing academic interest in recent years (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020). Ethnic entrepreneurship has been defined as connections and consistent business interaction patterns among individuals who share mutual national or ethnic backgrounds or have similar migration experiences (Indarti et al., 2021). As per Xu et al. (2019), immigrant entrepreneurship is the behaviour of an individual displaying entrepreneurial orientation across national borders with the intent to create value. Sui et al. (2015) also agree that immigrant entrepreneurship is conceptually rooted in internationalising the individual's entrepreneurial experience.

Ethnic entrepreneurs are better integrated and familiar with their host context, and therefore their issues may be dissimilar; however, immigrant entrepreneurship may also be considered the first stage of ethnic entrepreneurship, thus making them entwined concepts which are often interchangeably used. Transnational entrepreneurs also similarly migrate to other countries for entrepreneurial opportunities; however, they concurrently maintain business linkages and interests within their home country (Wang & Liu, 2015). Transnational entrepreneurs may have business linkages simultaneously in more than two countries. They virtually and physically

engage in more than one socially embedded environment and maintain crucial global relations to take full advantage of different resource bases (Wang & Liu, 2015).

In short, immigrant entrepreneurship essentially involves pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities in a different country which differentiates it from transnational entrepreneurship, which involves entrepreneurial activities across several countries despite the argument that they both face similar issues concerning internationalisation. However, ethnic entrepreneurship links to the entrepreneurial initiatives of ethnic minorities settled within their host context and the contributions made and issues faced by them. Most studies on entrepreneurship related to migrants tend to regard 'immigrant entrepreneurs' and 'ethnic entrepreneurs' as interchangeable terms (For example, Zolin et al., 2016).

Conversely, Thomas and Ong (2015) argued that while ethnic entrepreneurial organisations exclusively targeted members within or similar to their co-ethnic society, this was not the case with 'immigrant entrepreneurs' who catered to a more global market while benefiting from the resources they could mobilise from within their ethnic networks. Immigrant entrepreneurs were, therefore, not exclusively embedded in the ethnic markets and were free to explore opportunities in the local markets (Thomas & Ong, 2015).

As per Azmat and Fujimoto (2016), ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship are concerned with studying entrepreneurial initiatives of ethnic minorities in a host country and the struggles they face as well as their contributions, which makes the terminology interchangeable. However, Glinka (2018) notes subtle differences between the two and notes that immigrants are those individuals who have recently immigrated (past few decades), while ethnic minority groups may have lived in the host country for several generations and centuries.

Therefore, ethnic entrepreneurs would encompass a much broader concept, including immigrants and ethnic minority groups. Arpino and de Valk (2018) argue that ethnic entrepreneurs are more likely to be familiar with the host country's culture and are well integrated into the environment as compared to immigrant entrepreneurs; therefore, they face different sets of problems, and therefore their life satisfaction is also lower than that of the host country natives. Immigrant entrepreneurship thus indicates early stages in the progression of ethnic entrepreneurship.

However, based on the number of researchers that interchangeably use the term, a more suitable counterargument may be to accept that both their identities are commingled as immigrant entrepreneurs belonging to co-ethnic communities and vice versa. There is little clarity in the literature that provides a clear demarcation line between the two terms, which are considered interchangeable; therefore, literature on both immigrant entrepreneurs and ethnic entrepreneurs will be analysed in the literature review of this research. However, the term immigrant entrepreneurship will be used herein for this research to denote the individuals who move from their home country to their host country and get involved in entrepreneurship.

Furthermore, research by Martínez et al. (2013) established that immigrants originating from developing countries (for example, China, Uganda, Thailand, Brazil etc.) hailed from inherently entrepreneurial environments which offer a relatively higher activity index of entrepreneurship; these emergent countries are often poorer and have high unemployment rates; therefore, citizens are forced to grab opportunities and innovate. Immigrants from these countries are also likely to have some prior entrepreneurial experience; therefore, they are more likely to get involved in entrepreneurial undertakings in their host countries. The U.K., on the other hand, ranks 37th in the world based on the percentage of entrepreneurs in the population, with only 4.6% entrepreneurs (Brinded, 2015).

A large and growing body of research which has investigated immigrant entrepreneurship indicates that it provides the impetus for socio-economic advancement in their host economy by being highly entrepreneurial about identifying and acting upon opportunities which help in generating more jobs and economic value (Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2014; Sui et al., 2015; Turkina & Thi Thanh Thai, 2013). This view is supported by Sundararajan and Sundararajan (2015), who notes that immigrants have a higher propensity for entrepreneurship than natives. Some studies indicate that this may be because of the lack of opportunities for immigrants (Abada et al., 2014). Therefore entrepreneurship becomes crucial for their continued survival and relevance amongst immigrant communities (Akin et al., 2017).

However, other studies indicate that immigrant entrepreneurs are no longer 'necessity entrepreneurs', but rather they are 'opportunity entrepreneurs' whose motivation to incorporate high-growth ventures comes from their ability to recognise, exploit and generate opportunities within niche markets which are not otherwise viable for local entrepreneurs (Dheer, 2018). Moreover, while immigrant-owned enterprises often benefit from ethnic resources available to

them, they do not have to be exclusively embedded in ethnic markets (Thomas & Ong, 2015), as these entrepreneurial opportunities are often dependent on the demand conditions of the host country (Dheer, 2018).

Whether lack of opportunities is a crucial push factor towards entrepreneurship in today's times will be delineated and discussed in detail later with reference to the blocked mobility theory. Extant literature notes that immigrant entrepreneurs contribute to the economy (Omisakin, 2017) by offering unique products and services, creating jobs, providing social capital, reducing poverty and helping create a diverse and more inclusive social structure (Khosa & Kalitanyi, 2014).

Moreover, owing to this same resilience, the immigrant entrepreneurs, according to an empirical study by Riva and Lucchini (2015), have better chances of survival than their native counterparts due to their disposition toward hard work. International migration has both an economic as well as social impact, especially in Europe and the U.K. (Ambrosini, 2014; Bolívar-Cruz et al., 2014) and has been instrumental in repopulating areas with reduced fertility rates such as Ireland, Germany, and Sweden (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013). Andrea and Viazzo (2017) and Reynaud and Miccoli (2018) have similarly noted that immigrant populations have been instrumental in repopulating demographically depleted areas such as the Italian Alps, which have been affected by depopulation due to population ageing. Their study questions if this cultural integration creates significant and lasting social impacts.

It has been observed by several studies that in most Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the rates of immigrant self-employment are greater than that of native citizens (OECD, 2019; Peroni et al., 2016). This propensity for self-employment may partially be explained by the labour market's blocked mobility theory, which indicates that a lack of opportunities induces self-employment as a coping mechanism in immigrants (Alaslani, 2019). However, the contribution of immigrant entrepreneurs cannot be contested; they serve as a stimulus for economic regeneration and stability and societal revitalisation (Peroni et al., 2016) by forming socio-cultural hubs.

Recognising this potential for economic and social revitalisation, the Government of the U.K. has made provisions for encouraging immigrant entrepreneurship. They offer two different visas for immigrant entrepreneurs to live in and start entrepreneurship within the U.K. Tier 1

(Graduate Entrepreneur) visa is for non-EEA and Switzerland graduates (from within or outside the U.K.) who are officially endorsed by either the Department for International Trade (DIT) or an authorised U.K. higher education institution (HEI) as having a genuine and credible business idea. This allows 1 year for the Graduate Entrepreneur to start and establish their business and can be extended for 1 year based on the business's success.

Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) visa is for non-EEA and Swiss immigrants who can bring substantial investment funds for setting up a business in the U.K. The required investment amounts differ between the different categories, from £50,000 for tier 1 graduate entrepreneurs switching into a tier 1 entrepreneur visa to £200,000 for individuals directly applying for the tier 1 entrepreneur visa. This visa allows a stay of 3 years and 4 months and is extendable for a further 2 years (GOV.UK, 2019). These visas have a significantly high rejection rate due to the stringent requirement and tough decision-making process; therefore, after a 2015 review, a new start-up visa was announced for the U.K. (Morris, 2018), while the Tier 1 visa program is undergoing reform to streamline the process and only attract genuine investors and entrepreneurs.

Two other types of visas that allow immigrants to arrive in the U.K. and get into entrepreneurship are dependent or spouse visas and permanent residence through other eligibility. Suppose an immigrant qualifies for permanent residence from another method or arrives in the U.K. based on their marriage or partnership with a citizen or permanent resident of the U.K. In that case, they are also eligible to become immigrant entrepreneurs (GOV.UK, 2019).

2.1.1.4 Co-ethnic entrepreneurs

Co-ethnic entrepreneurs have been defined as people sharing commonalities, such as national background or migration experience, and are further united by consistent interaction and socio-cultural connections (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011). Immigrant entrepreneurs frequently orient toward products and markets that are popular among their co-ethnic networks to take advantage of country-of-origin or home country business strategies (Pires & Stanton, 2019). Barrett and Vershinina (2017) noted that immigrant entrepreneurs fit three categories: 1. those that have started a business for survival, 2. Entrepreneurs united by their shared societal and cultural heritage or 3. immigrant entrepreneurs operate within a minority population (also known as ethnic entrepreneurship).

Earlier research on co-ethnic entrepreneurs has denoted these kinds of entrepreneurs from the perspective of middleman minority (Halkias, 2017) who are self-employed, non-assimilating immigrants who provide their skills, goods and services predominantly to their own co-ethnic community and sometimes serve as an intermediary between their community and the mainstream society (Zhang et al., 2021). Middlemen minority usually are traders who, due to their marginalised societal position in the host country, identify strongly with their co-ethnic background and use their co-ethnic networks to develop their business and gain opportunities (Efendic et al., 2016).

It has, however, also been argued that strong intra-ethnic solidarity keeps co-ethnic entrepreneurs structurally detached from the host and home societies (Efendic et al., 2016) therefore hampering their cultural acculturation due to their own resistance to the host culture. This research, therefore, aimed to understand if immigrant entrepreneurs act as intermediaries between their community and the mainstream market or if reliance on the co-ethnic networks hampers their attachment and acculturation within the host society. This study also delved deeper into the entrepreneurial competencies and the role they played in the entrepreneur's acculturation and their enterprise's commercial success.

2.1.2 Entrepreneurial competencies and characteristics

Desired entrepreneurial characteristics, as per Gedik et al. (2015), are the ability to plan and develop those plans to achieve goals, have passion for the business idea, have good communication skills, display essential marketing skills, have positive interpersonal skills, require management skills and leadership skills. They should also be able to learn from the failure of others and withstand their own failures without giving up. For this, a problem-solving attitude is necessary, and they should be able to seek and accept advice from successful mentors (Li et al., 2016).

Moreover, entrepreneurs should be willing and able to adapt, network and innovate. de Vries (2012) agreed that adaptability and resilience were important characteristics and outlined the importance of a strong work ethic. Other characteristics of entrepreneurs as per extant literature are creating value, recognising and pursuing opportunities, engaging in continuous adapting,

innovating, and learning, not being limited by the availability of resources and exhibiting enhanced accountability for outcomes (Shabbir & Kassim, 2019; Tengeh & Nkem, 2017).

Entrepreneurial competencies are regarded as crucial for venture gains and for pursuing suitable commercial opportunities and, consequently, positive entrepreneurial outcomes such as financial gains and the creation of jobs which benefit both the host society as well as the immigrant entrepreneur (Wilson & Martin, 2015). Entrepreneurial competencies can be divided into personal competencies (such as taking the initiative, problem-solving, persistence, commitment to quality etc.) and venture-related competencies (such as determining business potential, having the ability to launch and manage a business, including developing a business plan, work effectively with consultants, financing competency, set and achieve goals, business promotion etc.)

These basic characteristics and competencies are common across all kinds of entrepreneurs, whether they operate within their home country or are immigrant entrepreneurs operating within a host environment (Antonin & Abrar Ali, 2021). Whether they exclusively cater to the ethnic communities in their host country or aim to or currently operate in the mainstream market of their host country, all entrepreneurs require these competencies (Vandor & Franke, 2016b).

However, researchers claim that there are specific competencies that are required components for immigrant entrepreneurs exclusively, which enable them to pursue their entrepreneurial journey in a culturally diverse environment of their host country and also help them ease into their acculturative process within the host environment (Turkina & Thi Thanh Thai, 2013; Wilson & Martin, 2015). Thus, it becomes especially important for immigrant entrepreneurs to translate their innate competencies and acquired human and social capital from the host country into favourable business outcomes, or they highly risk entrepreneurial and personal failure (Sui et al., 2015).

Literature on specific competencies required by immigrant entrepreneurs is reviewed and discussed in a later subsection in this chapter. However, as certain competencies are acquired from the native or home culture of the immigrant and the requirement of some competencies depends on the cultural context of the host country that the immigrants settle into, therefore, this empirical research aimed to fill gaps in the literature regarding the specific entrepreneurial

competencies that make Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs more successful in acculturating into their host environment in the U.K.

2.1.3 Shadow or hidden economy

The shadow or hidden economy is also known as the informal economy that entails economic activities occurring outside the purview of formal institutional boundaries; these may, however, for large sections of society, be contained within an informal institutional boundary (Webb et al., 2013). Informal commercial activities can amount to up to 30% of the total global economic activity and significantly contribute toward reducing poverty and augmenting economic development. As an informal economy takes place outside of the state regulatory systems thus, informal entrepreneurship goes unmonitored and therefore, it can be exposed to unethical practices, which may include labour exploitation, corruption and abuse of the natural environment and resources, among other vices (Turkina & Thi Thanh Thai, 2013).

An empirical study found that formal and informal entrepreneurial activities cannot be easily demarcated. Their distinction is often blurred and difficult to navigate because immigrant entrepreneurs have regular involvements in 'off-the-book' illicit business deals interspersed with legal official business deals that are reported. The study in the U.K. studied Nigerian entrepreneurs and indicated that barriers experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs made them operate outside the formal/legal structures regulated by the host country government (Ojo et al., 2013).

The immigrant entrepreneurs' resilience and need to operate in the shadow economy stemmed from their need to survive in the U.K., which forced them to find 'creative' ways to overcome barriers (Turkina & Thi Thanh Thai, 2013) and eventually, this prompted them to acculturate into the host society. For this empirical research, while care was taken to interview only legitimate immigrant entrepreneurs, it would be difficult to differentiate between entrepreneurs who have legitimate businesses but also conduct some informal activities in the shadow economy (De Castro et al., 2014). Moreover, operating in the shadow economy is not likely to impact the challenges faced and the competencies required by the immigrant entrepreneur.

2.1.4 Changing immigrant trends

Immigrant entrepreneurs found new enterprises, created local jobs and generated a significant annual income that contributes disproportionately more than local entrepreneurs to the host country's economic growth (Kerr, 2013). This can be attributed to the fact that research from countries like Canada, Germany, Sweden, Australia, Netherlands, Spain, United Kingdom, Slovakia, and Belgium have indicated that the rate of entrepreneurship amongst native-born individuals is significantly lower than that of immigrants who seem to display a more robust entrepreneurial attitude (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020; McAuliffe & Ruhs, 2017).

However, the prototypical characteristics of immigrant entrepreneurs and the scope of their preferred business activities and industries have changed significantly recently. More explicitly, earlier researchers focused on immigrant entrepreneurs motivated by financial needs or push factors such as lack of employment opportunities to start their own SME enterprises. These entrepreneurs focused on sectors that catered to their ethnicities, such as restaurants or grocery stores, or in sectors with low client interactions, such as taxi businesses (Räuchle & Schmiz, 2019).

However, in the twenty-first century, the immigrants seeking to immigrate to other countries to expand their opportunities often come with higher levels of education, specific skills, innovation, and significant amounts of transnational capital, which they use to add value, innovation, and creativity to the professional services and/or products they offer (Räuchle & Schmiz, 2019). These immigrants often tend to be younger than the local population and commonly have a more robust entrepreneurial motivation, making them consider entrepreneurship as their goal rather than as a substitute for wage employment (Gagnon, 2014).

As opportunity entrepreneurs, the new-age immigrant entrepreneurs are likely to gravitate towards high-growth ventures that are non-viable for local entrepreneurs by identifying and exploiting opportunities in ethnic niches. They alternatively create new niches and business opportunities that may target mainstream markets by using their advanced skills, cross-border experiences, and transnational business ties. Some of these entrepreneurs also have entrepreneurship that transnational span boundaries (Wang & Liu, 2015).

Since the early 2000s, there has been a rise in the arrival of migrants in the U.K. from Asian countries; similarly, there is a growing impetus that has been noticed in international entrepreneurial activities from Indian, Turkish and Chinese immigrants (Crick & Chaudhry, 2013). The changing economic power of China, which has made it a global economic superpower, has likewise contributed significantly to the changing trend in immigrant entrepreneurship.

A fair share of the incoming immigrants are students who then become immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. (Chen et al., 2019). Furthermore, immigrants are also arriving for the purpose of entrepreneurship because advancements in critical areas of data exchange, lowered costs and developments in transportation and ease of internet-based communications have opened new avenues for entrepreneurs. Individuals now migrate to other countries not only for work and education but also for professional training and networking to extend the scope of their transnational enterprises and find new opportunities to set up SMEs in their host country. These immigrant entrepreneurs often come with or have access to sufficient financial capital to set up their organisations.

Nazareno et al. (2019) showed that Filipino immigrants used their professional education and prior experience to develop allied businesses in their host country. Moreover, traditional immigrant business sectors such as retail and hospitality services have expanded in terms of their type and size. Ethnic restaurants, traditionally small and quick-serve, are now expanding and catering to a wider variety of price points as they become more incorporated in the local markets (Nazareno et al., 2019). Fast-food or takeaway restaurants diversify into exotic and extravagant restaurants or fine-dining establishments (Liang et al., 2019).

This kind of change has also been seen in other industry sectors and professional services which now are no longer limited to the ethnic enclaves and have spread to urban and suburban communities which may or may not be co-ethnic (Chen et al., 2019). Changes in trends can be of many kinds; some companies began as small ethnic enclave establishments, then expanded to other co-ethnic enclaves and then the mainstream markets, for example, Xi'an Famous Foods, a USA-based Chinese fast-food restaurant (Xianfoods, 2021). In contrast, others like Panda Express have grown into a restaurant chain worth \$2 billion, employing over 250,000 employees in 2,000 restaurants across several countries. Other ethnic-owned organisations

began operations in the host country's mainstream economy itself due to their access to resources (Smart & Smart, 2015).

These changing trends are possible due to the changes in the global business policies and economic restructuring that increased the technological and well as financial resources available to immigrant entrepreneurs (Dheer, 2018) as well as due to the improvements in interconnectivity with their home country networks and overseas social networks due to their multicultural background (Light & Shahlapour, 2016; Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016). Earlier immigrant entrepreneurs, especially those arriving from China, had limited or no connection with their home countries and the networks from back home that they could tap for human, social and financial capital. Therefore, these immigrants had to depend exclusively on their embeddedness in the host society and within the local co-ethnic groups to leverage their businesses (Guercini et al., 2017).

China's economic superiority and its position as the biggest provider of tourists with great spending power in the U.K. changes the entrepreneurial opportunities available to Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs (WTO, 2021). The Chinese migrants and tourists have higher consumption levels than local and European individuals, which opens up new avenues of growth for businesses owned by immigrant or co-ethnic entrepreneurs (Chen et al., 2019). Earlier research focused on the perspectives of immigrant entrepreneurs who had limited access to human and financial capital. Therefore these immigrant entrepreneurs were inextricably tangled within co-ethnic social structures and bound by co-ethnic solidarity to conduct business (Chen et al., 2019).

The academic view was that these small individual-owned enterprises heavily relied on unpaid family or exploitative immigrant labour to run low-end ethnic businesses that often were unable to break out of the limited ethnic markets. On the other hand, immigrant entrepreneurship in the past two decades has been more global, diverse and complex; therefore, there is a growing need for specific literature that especially studies the context of immigrant entrepreneurs that are not only motivated by push factors to embark on their entrepreneurial journeys in their host culture (T. Jones et al., 2014). The challenges they face, their acculturative journey and their solutions to challenges could possibly differ in these changing global economic situations. This study attempted to fill this gap in the literature by assessing the current context of immigrant entrepreneurship in the U.K.

2.2 Theories of immigrant entrepreneurship

Immigrant entrepreneurship theories consist of cultural theory, ethnic enclave theory, human, social and financial capital, and mixed embeddedness theories. The Cultural Theory discusses the importance of cultural characteristics in forming the orientation toward immigrant entrepreneurship (Chung & Tung, 2013). These characteristics include co-ethnic resources like religious views, savings, family ties, an inclination for thrift, home country work ethics, and social value compliance. This is followed by a review of the ethnic enclave theory that espouses the importance of networks. The disadvantage the immigrant entrepreneurs face is discussed and forms the basis of the blocked mobility theory, which notes that immigrant entrepreneurship was founded on such disadvantages (Dabić et al., 2020).

Following the blocked mobility theory is the human, social and financial capital theory, which was discussed in detail. Together, these theories ground the foundation of the mixed embeddedness theory by Kloosterman (2010). The mixed embeddedness theory adds additional factors like socio-economic atmosphere and the politico-institutional environment of the host country to the Cultural theory. It discusses how all these forces are responsible for shaping the entrepreneurial opportunities available. Labour market disadvantages and lack of job opportunities or a wider pay gap were some of the disadvantages that ‘push’ immigrants into entrepreneurship. Several of these theories are discussed in further detail below:

2.2.1 Cultural theory

Cultural theory links cultural traditions to the higher entrepreneurial propensity of immigrants and attributes it to the social networks they build in their host country (Chung & Tung, 2013). It proposes that immigrant individuals are similar to other individuals in their ethnic groups and display cultural characteristics such as persistence, the propensity for hard work, frugality, the ability for risk-taking and risk acceptance, and predisposition for self-employment, and these characteristics are fuelled by a strong sense of community (Choi & Kim, 2013; Jang & Kim, 2013).

The theory suggests that these inherent cultural attributes are common within co-ethnic groups, making them more inclined towards entrepreneurship and increasing their chances for success (Jang & Kim, 2013). A New Zealand study by de Vries (2012) on Indian small business owners discovered that the cultural traits of strong work ethic and adaptability were most important for

settling co-ethnic entrepreneurs in their new contexts.

These results were backed by a study on Chinese immigrants in Spain, which discovered that adaptation brought business success for small business owners and helped them overcome discrimination (Yiu, 2013). An exploratory study by Ye et al. (2013) established that cultural values enabled host country integration of the business while small business entrepreneurship was encouraged by the co-ethnic group culture. However, other scholars discount the cultural theory as inconsequential as they find little evidence relating culture to entrepreneurship. For example, Aldrich and Yang's (2012) argument is that cultural identity alone does not encourage entrepreneurship; they, however, note that while the co-ethnic culture of the individual can nurture business competencies, there was little evidence that it induced business ownership.

Interestingly, Piperopoulos' (2012) exploratory qualitative study, encompassing 15 co-ethnic minority entrepreneurs in Greece, found that male and female co-ethnic entrepreneurs shared some similar entrepreneurial experiences. However, the motivations of the individuals to become entrepreneurs, their unique qualities, business views, backgrounds and characteristics were different. Piperopoulos' (2012) study found that the immigrant entrepreneurs were more influenced by their gender rather than their ethnicity in this aspect.

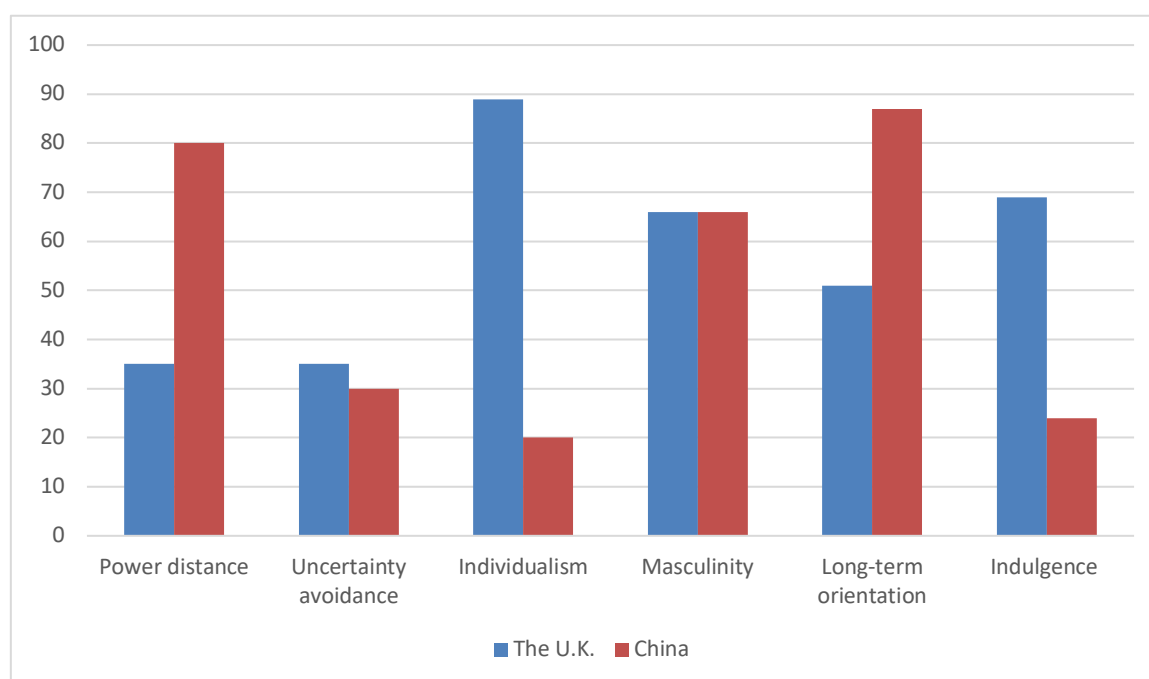
This raises the question of whether culture and co-ethnic background significantly influenced immigrant entrepreneurs. Instead, the business environment and its perception may be responsible for the individual's business ownership choice. Patel and Vella (2013) take this argument further by noting that business type choice is determined by the setting where the immigrant is induced to become an entrepreneur. The setting encourages them to get involved in businesses that are similar or are linked to those of their co-ethnic immigrant groups.

The findings of Lalonde (2013) become relevant in this context as they revealed that place of origin was instrumental in how the individual viewed culture. They conclude that the influence of culture is strong in the processes of entrepreneurship. However, this longitudinal, ethnographic study on cultural influences on Arabic entrepreneurs based in Canada had only 5 participants highlighting its limitations. The influence of culture on immigrant entrepreneurship was also examined in the study by Shinnar et al. (2012), which used the cultural dimensions by Hofstede and gender role theory to assess that both gender and culture had a significant influence on business intentions and perceptions of challenges faced.

Some of the barriers studied in this study included competencies, support systems, and the fear of failure, and literature notes that fear of failure negatively correlates with entrepreneurial intentions (Wyrwich et al., 2016). Shinnar et al. (2012) study findings were reiterated by the stance of Lalonde (2013) and also those of Wang and Altinay (2012) who conducted a much larger empirical study of 258 participants to conclude that culture had an impact on entrepreneurial orientation.

A comparison between the cultural dimensions of the U.K. and China reveals a significant distance between the two cultures, especially concerning individualism, power distance and long-term orientation and indulgence (see figure 2.1) (Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede-insights, 2021). Individualism denotes loose ties and loyalty between groups in a culture, while collectivism is linked to strong protective ties. Power distance indicates the acceptance of unequal distribution of power within organisations and institutions. A higher power distance means that country embraces hierarchy. Finally, indulgence is linked to the attitude of acceptance of satisfaction vs regulation of gratification through restrictive social norms.

Figure 2.1 - Hofstede 6 cultural dimensions: the U.K. vs. China



Source: Hofstede-insights (2021)

However, another interesting finding of Wang and Altinay's (2012) study was that co-ethnic networks in which the immigrant entrepreneurs were entwined helped and hindered their business growth by focusing on ethnic products and traditional business models. While it was easier for the immigrant entrepreneurs to break into the business, it was also just as hard for them to break out of the co-ethnic markets into the mainstream markets, as per the research of Malerba and Ferreira (2020). However, it needs to be questioned whether the immigrant entrepreneurs are interested in expanding into the mainstream markets or if they feel satisfied catering to a largely ethnic clientele as per their cultural orientation. Hamizah Abd et al. (2018) study on how cultural distance links with the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunity notes that cultural distance plays a role in the market focus and that there are four markets within which opportunities exist for immigrant entrepreneurs.

These are immigrant entrepreneurs selling ethnic products and services to mainly ethnic clients, selling local products and services to mainly ethnic clients, selling ethnic products and services focusing mainly on local clients and selling local products and services to mainly local clients. As per their findings, immigrants with low or moderate cultural distance are best suited to selling ethnic products and services to both ethnic and local clients, while those with high cultural distance can best serve co-ethnic clients with ethnic and local products and services (Hamizah Abd et al., 2018). As per Wang and Altinay's (2012) study, cultural influence on entrepreneurship choices was especially true for immigrants belonging to the Chinese ethnicity as they chose to largely pursue expansion and growth within the co-ethnic markets, including the use of middlemen or agents to further their entrepreneurial aspirations amongst limitations.

2.2.2 Middleman minority cultural theory

Furthermore, the middleman minority cultural theory proposes that immigrant entrepreneurship is used as cultural capital to improve the social standing of the disadvantaged immigrant by challenges such as the lack of opportunities and discrimination (Liu et al., 2014). Bonacich (1973) was one of the initial researchers to popularise the middleman minority theory, which highlighted the economic role of the intermediate position in society; this intermediate position was essentially occupied by the people belonging to the middleman minority group. While such people tended to collectively be involved in certain 'middleman' occupations such as labour contractor, broker, money lender, agent and rent collector, they could also be occupied in other non-traditional roles.

Middlemen from the co-ethnic networks are used to alleviate some disadvantages for immigrant entrepreneurs to provide information, capital and/or labour that is crucial for the business (Chan, 2015). However, the exclusive use of cultural theories to explain immigrant entrepreneurship behaviour is severely limiting. Morris et al. (2015) note that there is an impact of the intermingling of multiple cultures on the behaviour of individuals. Therefore one culture alone cannot have a decisive impact.

2.2.3 Ethnic enclave theory

Ethnic enclaves were historically defined as *“immigrant groups which concentrate in a distinct spatial location and organise a variety of enterprises serving their own ethnic market and/or the general population”* (Portes, 1981, p. 290). This definition indicates that the ethnic enclave can therefore exist only when two requirements are fulfilled, which are: ethnic entrepreneurs essentially employ only their co-ethnics (Pullés & Lee, 2019), and secondly, the ethnic enclave is spatially constrained away from the host country's leading economy in order to internally function like a labour market (Ojo & Shizha, 2018).

The first implication of these requirements is that primarily the ethnic group should be relatively big and diversified in terms of socio-economic status so that a sizable number of enclave members have the economic abilities to establish enterprises which hire the other members. The second implication is that the ethnic enclave is separated from the main economy as without this spatial constraint, the ethnic entrepreneurs would not have a steady availability of co-ethnic workers, and similarly, the workers will be unable to depend on the ethnic enclave for employment (Ojo & Shizha, 2018). However, more recent studies have a broader definition of ethnic enclaves, which notes that ethnic enclaves have high concentrations of people from similar ethnic backgrounds, cultures, preferences and habits. Ethnic enclaves offer easy access to resources for the new immigrant entrepreneurs, including specialised ethnic markets, suppliers, labour, capital and network unity, which protects the small businesses (Wang, 2015).

The ethnic enclave theory has been further propagated by a plethora of earlier research on ethnic enclaves, which largely notes that immigrants were more successful within the shelter of co-ethnic enclaves. Co-ethnic enclaves, for example, Chinatowns, little Mexico or Indian neighbourhoods, used a mixture of common ethnic language, socio-cultural ties and other

features of social capital such as cultural knowledge to start and advance co-ethnic small businesses (Prashantham et al., 2015; Zolin et al., 2016). Prashantham et al.'s (2015) quantitative study encompassing 102 participants found that co-ethnic ties within the enclaves were useful in leveraging the relationship for market access in international growth; however, it was the non-ethnic networks that drove market growth. Therefore, this study outlined both the negatives and positives of networking exclusively within co-ethnic enclaves and recommends that immigrant entrepreneurs attempt to network within and outside ethnic communities to reap all the benefits of building networks.

Typically, immigrant entrepreneurs are influenced by their co-ethnic networks, which makes them congregate in certain economic sectors or market niches even if these niche sectors do not exclusively relate to co-ethnic businesses; for example, Indians often are in the motel business. Chinese, Koreans and Turkish immigrants tend to either get into restaurants/food businesses or own dry cleaning businesses. A large majority of Bangladeshis are involved in running taxi services (Kerr & Mandorff, 2015). The new incoming immigrants can reap the benefits by gravitating towards similar businesses, like those owned by other co-ethnics, by learning and benefiting from having access to resources such as shared knowledge of local rules and regulations, entrepreneurship experiences, referred opportunities and industry-specific skills of their co-ethnic peers (Ojo & Shizha, 2018).

However, a study by Fong and Hou (2013) that assessed Canadian census data to conduct a multivariate analysis on the role of co-ethnic enclaves found that the earnings of immigrants were proportionately less as the concentration of co-ethnics within the enclave increased. Andersson and Hammarstedt (2015) study also had similar results. This may be partially attributed to increased competition, leading to price undercutting or crowding out (Toussaint-Comeau, 2012). However, Toussaint-Comeau (2012) found that despite the lower earnings, co-ethnic networks significantly influenced the decision of immigrants to become business owners. The study using USA census data analysed that the probability of self-employment increased significantly when other members of the co-ethnic groups were likely to be self-employed too. This prevalence contributes to the 'pull' factors that encourage immigrant entrepreneurship within co-ethnic networks (Toussaint-Comeau, 2012).

The criticism of the ethnic enclave theory hinges on the class struggle within ethnic enclaves as the co-ethnic employers and employees display divergent economic interests. Because of

their resources and seniority in the enclave, the employers can exert ethnic solidarity, which essentially insulates incoming immigrants and then coerces them into accepting low-wage jobs rather than guiding them towards self-employment and greater economic freedom (Peterson & Crittenden, 2020). Essentially employees in ethnic enclaves can be disadvantaged as they are segregated from the mainstream market due to language barriers, and they are limited to the available undesirable jobs and low wages. Therefore, critics of this theory argue that ethnic entrepreneurs operating within enclaves thrive on exploiting co-ethnic workers (Ojo & Shizha, 2018), especially those that do not display a high level of host country language skills which blocks them from acquiring work outside the ethnic enclave.

This finding that employment within the co-ethnic enclave was responsible for depressing income was consistent with those of Rosales's (2013) study. In contrast, another study found that the income impacts for both employers and employees within the ethnic enclave had mixed results (Azmat, 2013).

Conversely, a study by Cheng (2015) showed that female immigrant entrepreneurs experienced substantial disadvantages in entrepreneurship due to their gender, a finding that was echoed by (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). Based on these findings, it can be stated that there is a three-way interaction of setting (co-ethnic enclave or mainstream market), the individual's gender and the immigrant's English ability impacted the eventual outcome.

Additionally, a Canadian qualitative study by Fenwick (2012) claimed that networks were not simply used for seeking employment and other economic contacts and were also useful for building social contacts. The study that used 19 in-depth interviews to collect information from minority co-ethnic groups such as Chinese, Latin American and African Canadian noted that individuals had to navigate through complex networks, encompassing varied communities and race and class structures and therefore, the individuals were induced into developing sophisticated tactics to negotiate through these co-ethnic relations. However, there has been some study on the impact of other variables over applying the co-ethnic lens for immigration-related studies.

Schiller and Çağlar (2013) noted that the political, cultural and economic positioning of the cities that the immigrants chose to settle in also impacted their choices. This could be because these factors contributed to the immigrants' availability of entrepreneurship opportunities.

Further, concepts such as the orientation of the entrepreneur (need-based versus opportunity-based) (Ruiz et al., 2017), social embeddedness (T. Jones et al., 2014), social class, religion (Audretsch et al., 2013) and outlook for growth in mainstream markets have shifted the focus of immigration entrepreneurship studies to other theories such as mixed embeddedness theory making the enclave theory less apposite than it was in the past (Wang & Altinay, 2012). The various empirical research above reiterates that other than co-ethnic enclaves, social structures, geography, and language are equally important.

While many studies have focused on the comparisons concerning national structures of opportunity (for example, Alicia Coduras & José Manuel, 2013), few studies have focused on the impact of urban structures such as built environment and facilities available to the immigrant entrepreneurs (Beckers & Kloosterman, 2014; Eduardo & Giacomo, 2018). However, close proximity for small immigrant entrepreneurs may be limited to studies of 'enclaves' (Wang, 2013). Recent studies indicate that central ethnic enclaves once popular in big cities are slowly dissolving and dissipating over the years. Newer areas of ethnic and geographical concentration (for example, ethnic concentration suburbs, also known as ethno-burbs) have arisen instead (Kye, 2018).

These other areas where the immigrant entrepreneurs can work, socialise and access culturally targeted offerings can equally help them form socio-ethnic ties similar to the benefits that are offered by co-ethnic enclaves, such as easier availability of resources, opportunities and conducive institutional conditions (for example demand for the goods and service in localised markets). Such social relationships can help increase the immigrant entrepreneurs' motivation and be positively correlated to the eventual success of the organisation (Kim, 2018).

The above analysis indicates that whether negative or positive, the co-ethnic enclaves tend to impact the outcomes for immigrants who choose to align themselves and their entrepreneurship with the co-ethnic enclaves. While co-ethnic enclaves have beneficial impacts for incoming immigrant entrepreneurs by providing easier access to resources, support of co-ethnics who have had similar migratory experiences and a culturally familiar arena which enables them to settle in quickly both professionally and personally; however, they also impede their eventual assimilation into the host society and can reduce the long-term earning potential of the immigrant entrepreneurs.

As Beckers and Blumberg (2013) note, the ethnic community can be concurrently confining and nurturing. Because the ethnic markets tend to be very limited in size, they often cannot support a large number of enterprises and therefore, immigrant entrepreneurs might need to break out of the confines of the ethnic enclaves to the more significant opportunities that are present in the mainstream markets (T. Jones et al., 2014). This research aimed to assess the role that ethnic enclaves play in the acculturation process and opportunity structures available to immigrant entrepreneurs.

2.2.4 Blocked mobility or disadvantage theory

To understand the underlying reasons for higher levels of self-employment among immigrants when compared to native populations, researchers identified that self-employment was often driven by labour market disadvantages and obstacles that immigrants face in gaining employment in their host country (Reitz et al., 2013). This view was also accepted and propagated by Gast et al. (2016), who also note, in their panel study of 4832 participants, that smaller firms can produce more entrepreneurs because the environment of small firms allows employees in low positions to take advantage of the 'knowledge spill-over effects'. As fewer employees manage multiple roles in small firms, they acquire the experience and training of necessary skills, expertise and knowledge, which permits them to build their own networks that are favourable to entrepreneurship amid the disadvantages that they would otherwise have faced in the mainstream markets (Gast et al., 2016).

These barriers form the 'push' factors that induce entrepreneurship and could include issues like non-recognition of qualifications from the home country, language barriers, lack of training and difficulties in identifying and acting on opportunities (Dabić et al., 2020). This theory also links to the labour market disadvantage theory, which notes that marginalised economic positions drive immigrants into starting their own businesses for economic stability, as they are able to overcome and circumvent the disadvantages and challenges that they encounter in the host society's labour market and escape unemployment by becoming self-employed (Lofstrom, 2013). This theory links to the co-ethnic enclave theory as most immigrants facing blocked mobility issues are required to find their opportunities within the co-ethnic enclaves (Reitz et al., 2013).

While some immigrant entrepreneurs can use their disadvantages to their advantage by tapping

into an ethnic niche, as reported by Hedberg and Pettersson's (2012) qualitative study encompassing 20 women entrepreneurs from 13 countries settled in Sweden. They discovered that in the care sector, there was ethnic and gender sorting, and the women were able to tap into this mainstream market by employing ethnic strategies in the labour market by creating ethnic identities that were adjusted to suit the requirements of their customers who belonged to mixed origins but were embedded in the host country's majority society. This result brings forth another point of view of the labour market disadvantaged group.

Poblete (2018) found that newer immigrants felt more discrimination than the more settled immigrant groups. Similarly, other researchers also discussed the discrimination that often affects the opportunity structures available to immigrants (Kazlou & Klinthall, 2019). For example, the Italians in Chicago were less likely to report blocked mobility than Asian immigrant groups; this finding was reiterated by Dheer (2018) and Longhi (2020). However, Koopmans' (2013) article was unable to arrive at a similar consensus regarding the disadvantage theory as this research indicated that selective immigration policies in classical immigrant-receiving countries (United States, Canada and New Zealand) led to higher levels of education amongst the immigrants.

Greater levels of education led to an important composition effect on the human capital, which in turn led to greater integration into the host society and its labour market. Amongst all of the European countries, the U.K. was the only country with a higher immigrant educational profile, indicating that the disadvantage theory as an impetus for entrepreneurship did not necessarily hold weightage in these circumstances as the majority of the immigrants had the required human capital to acquire suitable jobs in the local labour market (Koopmans, 2013).

However, extant literature agrees that women entrepreneurs are more affected by blocked mobility than men (Carter et al., 2015), especially if they belong to the developing world; they have added disadvantages (Menzies, 2021; Nkrumah, 2016). However, operating exclusively within the ethnic enclave or niche market can be disadvantageous for the growth of the business and the mixed embeddedness approach indicates that economic and political structures should be used to leverage the business out of the ethnic market into a more mainstream market for added opportunities (T. Jones et al., 2014). The mixed embeddedness theory will be discussed in further detail in section 2.2.6 below.

2.2.5 Human, social, and financial capital theory

There has been ample research on the impact of social, human, and financial capital on immigrant entrepreneurship (Santarelli & Tran, 2013; Stam et al., 2014). Hu et al. (2021) note that immigrants who integrate into their host society's labour market by incorporating a blend of human, social and financial capitals. The simplest definition of human capital is the competencies, attributes, skills and knowledge acquired by individuals or groups of individuals (Soydas & Aleti, 2015). Human capital is critical for all migrant individuals, especially immigrant entrepreneurs who use their human capital skills to identify and exploit opportunities to produce goods and provide services or ideas in the local markets.

A limited measure of an individual's human capital is made by calculating the total potential future earnings of the individual. However, this calculation fails to accurately consider that human capital is influenced by factors such as the individual's skills, educational qualifications, and work experience. Furthermore, unquantifiable factors like cross-cultural and emotional intelligence, the individual's social skills like communication or being harmonious, their judgement ability, as well as the impact of the local environment on the person's attitudes and expectations. Moreover, personality traits like working hard, personal habits and creativity or innovativeness also impact the potential future earnings, but these cannot be easily measured (Acemoglu & Autor, 2019).

Social capital in enterprise research refers to a prospective business's resources which an entrepreneur may informally obtain through their family and personal network of friends and community (Hu et al., 2021). Social capital offers practical support from family and even co-ethnic networks. Most small enterprises rely on assistance from family and friends for physical work contributions; such contributions are often unpaid or given significantly low compensation. Social capital can often come in the form of un-official apprentices for the business who gain experience in lieu of wages (Gao et al., 2013).

Social capital thus becomes a socially cohesive force that denotes personal empowerment that an entrepreneur derives from their family, friends and greater social networks (Tata & Prasad, 2015). Moreover, the practice of social capital helps in the correction of the disintegration of civil society by building stronger community ties (Tata & Prasad, 2015). Social capital links to the ethnic network concept, including social support - for example, cheap or unpaid labour

contributions by family members - and financial support - for example, interest-free monetary contribution or loans (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014).

Financial capital refers to the critically essential economic resources available to an entrepreneur which are required for entrepreneurship. Shad et al. (2020) state that financial capital encompasses debt and equity capital structure. Access to sufficient financial capital to purchase fixed and current assets is critical for immigrant entrepreneurs as they can leverage this capital to sustain competitive advantage (Boso et al., 2012). Neneh (2016) used the resource-based theory to also link financial capital with the performance of SMEs, indicating that without sufficient financial capital, entrepreneurs of SMEs are unable to generate adequate performance. Similarly, lack of financial capital and the inability to manage finances were critical reasons for immigrants not getting into entrepreneurship and SMEs' failure (Dileo & García Pereiro, 2018).

In contrast, other researchers claim that the business culture, especially for SMEs, should include financial literacy, which is the set of knowledge crucial to making effective decisions for managing finances. It would include learned skills combined with cognitive abilities to manage financial aspects such as budgets, accounting, making payments for goods and services, acquiring loans, and managing outstanding receivables.

Rita and Huruta (2020) have noted that financial capital can be both internal and external; however, SMEs largely depend on the availability of internal finance; moreover, Rita and Huruta (2020) discovered that access to internal finance alone was inadequate, especially for the survival of SMEs. They noted that internal finance was constrained by factors like fierce competition, swift technological development, shorter product cycles and innovation requirements that overstretched the available investments of SMEs; therefore, internal finance constrained growth. As immigrant entrepreneurs often faced limitations of self-financing, thus, capital from external sources was an important factor in the growth and success of the entrepreneurship (Rita & Huruta, 2020).

Human and social capital is used more often for business development with positive results in areas of higher immigrant concentration, especially among co-ethnics (Seghers et al., 2012); however, Kwon et al. (2013) elaborated, stating that while social trust led to higher levels of self-employment among immigrants, community-based social capital had a more positive

benefit on natives rather than for immigrant entrepreneurs. Similarly, a study by Petrou and Daskalopoulou (2013) in Greece indicated that cooperation between inter-linked and connected organisations brought about increased innovation in products and services, therefore, proving that there is a link between innovation and the accrued social capital.

Another empirical research, based in the U.K., used a qualitative methodology to draw out a positive connection between the social capital of inclusion (using religious group networks) and entrepreneurship, especially in the beginning and growth phases of the business. Empirical evidence from a study in China revealed that human and social capital could be acquired from political networks, which can help advance the individual's business opportunities (Zhang et al., 2012).

Researchers prescribing a culturalist bent adopt the rationale that ethnic minority entrepreneurs possess the exceptional ability to tap into the resources available from family and social groups for cheap labour that is flexible, motivated and loyal and provides insider information through their network connections (Tata & Prasad, 2015). The mainstream majority of competitors, by implication, do not have this facility. Hu et al. (2021) note that social capital such as support from family is less of a concrete resource and more of an enabler that allows the immigrant entrepreneur to access other resources of labour, suppliers, capital and markets. Similarly, Tata and Prasad (2015) note that the family plays a pivotal role in the success of an immigrant entrepreneur and is their most crucial capital asset. These findings were agreed upon by (Santarelli & Tran, 2013).

Especially for small businesses, it has been noted that the use of social capital, especially within co-ethnic enclaves, was part of their successful business strategy (Klinthäll & Urban, 2014). Researchers have questioned if social capital should embrace deeper and formalised networks, including civic institutions and business clubs, rather than remaining restricted by the informality of the connections (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). Moreover, studies indicate enhanced benefits for the entrepreneurs when their social capital is backed by cultural capital (Light & Dana, 2013). Conversely, a study by Syrett and Sepulveda (2012) based in the U.K. questioned the social capital theory as a support system for immigrant entrepreneurs. It stated that political changes were more responsible for economic diversity.

The social capital approach was introduced early on by Bourdieu (1986) and has since found resonance in the works of several other researchers (Ganguly et al., 2019; Neumeyer et al., 2018), among others who note that social capital can be potentially divisive by encouraging bonding amongst ethnically similar people while excluding others which include members of the host society and can bring limitations and reduce diversification and growth of the enterprise (Toruńczyk-Ruiz, 2014). This verdict is backed by the findings of Beckers and Blumberg (2013), who discovered that higher human and social capital did not automatically relate to higher earning potential for immigrant entrepreneurs, nor was social-cultural acculturation through entrepreneurship an indication of economic achievements. This also resonates with the findings of the study by Santarelli and Tran (2013). Yet, despite the fact that social capital plays an arguably dynamic role, there are several theoretical and operational problems arising from the exclusive dependence on social capital (Hyun-soo Kim, 2016).

The first question arises from the assumption that all entrepreneurs, especially immigrants, experience social cohesion and are socially embedded (Jones & Ram, 2021). Levanon's (2011) study on Chinese ethnicity immigrant entrepreneurs in the United States of America noted that while social capital was influential, it was also conservative and defensive, and this internal exclusiveness reduced external possibilities and expansion of the enterprise. Bengtsson and Hsu (2015) and Dabić et al. (2020) point out that self-employment was often not a result of access to rich social capital but rather it was a result of poor access to financial and human capital; however, having social capital was instrumental in bringing opportunities to these entrepreneurs. Similarly, Rath and Swagerman (2016) noted that exceedingly competitive labour markets increasingly saw a replacement of social networks with vocational training and higher education credentials for the appropriate allocation of human resources.

While some researchers note that human capital has a negative relationship with entrepreneurship, which means that individuals with greater education and acculturation prefer to leverage their potential in professional careers over entrepreneurship and self-employment. For example, research-based in the U.K. has long suggested that long acculturated ethnicities such as British-Indians are likely to improve their human capital through higher educational qualifications and move out of entrepreneurship towards professional jobs in order to reduce career insecurity (Villares-Varela & Sheringham, 2020). It can therefore be analysed that a scarcity of human capital is more likely to lead to self-employment amongst immigrant entrepreneurs than having deeply rooted social capital (Vershina et al., 2021).

Therefore, jobs that immigrants get tend to be professional or technical in nature rather than managerial. Conversely, researchers like Kerr and Lincoln (2010) reported that immigrants who were educated and had technological know-how were more likely to be attracted to entrepreneurship over salaried jobs because their human capital, expertise and creativity were better rewarded in entrepreneurship. They could leverage their knowledge of diverse cultures to broker opportunities by adapting ideas from across cultures and bringing new processes and products that are unique (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018; Vandor & Franke, 2016b).

2.2.6 The theory of mixed embeddedness

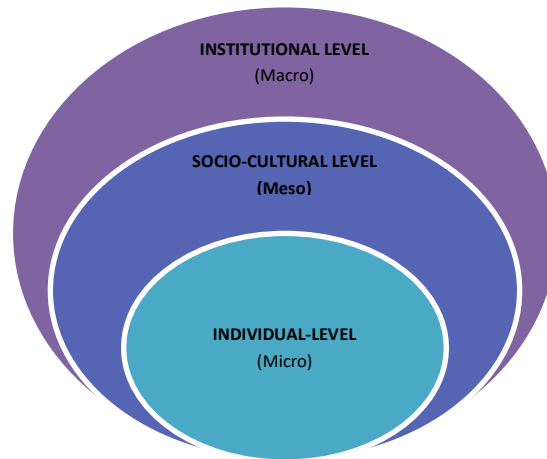
The mixed embeddedness is a relatively comprehensive approach which aims to explain that the accrual of opportunities for an immigrant entrepreneur is more complex than the simplistic explanations offered by the ethnic enclave or human, social and financial capital theories. However, while some elements overlap with the human, financial and social capital theory, there are some key differences. Kloosterman (2010) initially proposed the mixed embeddedness theory in the 1990s, suggesting that the individual's cultural traits and social and financial capital resources alone are insufficient to analyse immigrant entrepreneurship because the opportunities available to be exploited by the immigrant entrepreneur also play an important role.

Further, the mixed embeddedness theory suggests that immigrant entrepreneurs are embedded in three layers of influences that impact the opportunity structure available to them. These are micro, meso and macro levels (see figure 2.2). The micro-level (individual level) is the immigrant entrepreneur's personal capital, including resources such as their cross-cultural intelligence, communication skills, etc. Their education level and technical skills are included in the human capital that the individual brings with them, and this can also include the financial capital they bring along with themselves.

On the meso level (socio-cultural level), the social embeddedness of the immigrant entrepreneur is included. This is the social capital an immigrant entrepreneur brings from the home country and accumulates in the cultural environment of the host country in the form of information, knowledge and resources from co-ethnic networks that are part of the meso level (Kazlou, 2019). The macro-level (institutional level) includes economic aspects such as the

host country's economy, policies, and rules and regulations that impact the immigrant entrepreneur and their enterprise. These levels are intertwined, and their dynamics form the opportunity structure available to the immigrant entrepreneur (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

Figure 2.2 - The levels of embeddedness of an immigrant entrepreneur



Source: Kloosterman and Rath (2018)

Therefore, in addition to the individual's abilities, their social network and the host country's external environment also play an important role on multiple levels. The immigrant entrepreneurs' opportunity structure or institutional embeddedness can be further divided into local, regional and national levels because the support available to them at each level is powerful in shaping an immigrant entrepreneur's activities (Kloosterman, 2010). Kloosterman (2010) noted that the immigrant entrepreneur must commit to interacting with the environment of the host country at all of these levels, for example: influencing the requirements and regulations which impact their enterprises at local, regional and national levels and also affect the entry of the enterprise into the mainstream markets.

This approach has become popular in migrant entrepreneurship and immigrant entrepreneurship research in recent years because of its simple applicability (Bagwell, 2017). Scholars (Kloosterman, 2010; Tata & Prasad, 2015) argue that immigrant entrepreneurs have strong social and cultural embeddedness within family and co-ethnic networks. This kind of social embeddedness brings a vital boost to their entrepreneurial activities by providing social capital. While they often lack sufficient financial and human capital, immigrant entrepreneurs can rely on their social capital for resources, cheap or free labour and insider information to bring them opportunities (Kloosterman, 2010; Tata & Prasad, 2015).

Kloosterman and Rath (2018) furthermore note that conceptually immigrant entrepreneurship arises from the juncture where a match is made between the skills (individual competencies) and resources such as social and capital (family, ethnic networks and enclaves), which must then align with the spatial contextual conditions (such as market characteristics, rules and laws). The approach argues that *the immigrant entrepreneur's* personal competencies impact entrepreneurial activities and opportunity structure along with institutional embeddedness and social embeddedness aspects. Therefore this combination gave rise to the term mixed embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010). For example, South Asian immigrants would require specific food ingredients native to their countries, such as turmeric powder, native vegetables and lentils.

They can start a grocery store selling exclusive Indian groceries by incorporating their personal competencies with their institutional embeddedness, which involves the economic and regulatory context of the U.K.; meanwhile, their social embeddedness (family, friends, co-ethnic society members) ensures they have access to the adequate resources required to run the business successfully. However, it must be noted that co-ethnic networks that offer these close social relations to immigrant entrepreneurs not only contribute supportive resources but also play a role in shaping the entrepreneurial goals and actions of the network members in a way to increase intra-community cooperation instead of only focusing on profit maximisation for the enterprise (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

The institutional aspect is divided into two main spheres: the *economic context*, such as poor labour market conditions, which refer to the *economic situation* and *market conditions*, such as demand for a product, and market openness. Moreover, the *politico-institutional context* is defined by the *rules, laws and policies* that impact business or immigration and/or help foster the new entrepreneurs' activities (Ram et al., 2017; Steenbeek & Schutjens, 2014). The opportunities the entrepreneurs are able to access can be changed by their spatial setting or the neighbourhood in which they operate. This is so because their opportunities may be aligned with the geographical immigrant distribution. Therefore more opportunities may arise in areas of higher co-ethnic concentration, which may lead to the formation of ethnic enclaves (Kloosterman, 2010).

This thesis aimed to assess the challenges faced by the immigrant entrepreneurs in their host society, how their embeddedness impacted these in society, and what role their personal competencies play in easing acculturation. The above analysis of the various theories indicates that three specific theories heavily influence this research, the first is the human, social and financial capital theory, the second is the ethnic enclave theory, and the final is the mixed embeddedness theory that encompasses elements of all the above theories, all three are discussed in further detail. A critical review of the extant literature on challenges, cross-cultural competencies and acculturation was carried out before forming the conceptual framework for this study based on the theories studied above.

2.3 Challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs

A great deal of previous literature has highlighted the growing importance of immigration entrepreneurship globally based on their contribution to the host society and its economy (Omisakin, 2017; Vijayakumar & Cunningham, 2016). There has been some research on the challenges experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs in various contexts (for example, Kremel, 2016; Nel & Abdullah, 2015; Teixeira, 2017). However, Nel and Abdullah (2015) claim that extant literature fails to offer a comprehensive list of challenges that affect immigrant entrepreneurs.

Moreover, there is limited information on the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Additionally, the empirical findings of current research note that there are variances in the challenges faced between different ethnicities even if they are in the same context; therefore, the findings which are based on another country's contexts cannot be generalised to the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. This point was also raised by Malerba and Ferreira (2020) after they conducted a systematic review of developments in immigrant entrepreneurship research across 67 studies from the extant literature.

However, such studies can be used to ground and inform the current research to form a basis for forming a question bank for the empirical research. For example, quantitative research by Nel and Abdullah (2015) surveying experiences of 316 immigrant entrepreneurs in Kuala Lumpur, discovered that business issues such as financing, lack of experience, low education level, and lack of familiarity with the local business culture have a negative effect on the

success of immigrant entrepreneurial business' as success and prospects were positively correlated. Similarly, entrepreneurship challenges can negatively affect the business's future projections.

As discussed above, generalisation of prior research findings from a different cultural context is not recommended (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020); therefore, it becomes essential to identify what unique challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs might face when setting up business in the U.K. and how they can resolve these problems. Thus, this conjecture underpins the main objective of this current research. The following sections outline immigrant entrepreneurs' common challenges in their host countries. Further, a summary of extant research on the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs is also discussed below:

2.3.1 General challenges faced by entrepreneurs

A large number of the challenges that are faced by immigrant entrepreneurs having SMEs are common to those faced generally by small businesses. These can include challenges of initially attracting customers, building a favourable reputation, formally securing external finance and competing against already well-established competitors (Storey, 2016). While the challenges are common to all new small businesses irrespective of the entrepreneur's ethnic identity, these challenges are likely to be intensified for immigrant entrepreneurs owing to their unfamiliarity with prevalent supply and demand conditions, business culture, norms, practices, competitive milieu and government regulations of the host country. However, these challenges did not form the crux of this research as they were general to all entrepreneurs regardless of their immigration status.

One of the most commonly referenced challenges mentioned in literature is not being comfortable with the host country's language and challenges related to communication (for example, Ngota et al., 2018). Another general challenge immigrant entrepreneurs commonly faced was little or no access to the host country's markets (Jiang et al., 2016). Moreover, immigrant entrepreneurs commonly face issues of financing and challenges related to lack of capital (Jiang et al., 2016; Ngota et al., 2018; Tengeh & Lapah, 2013). Faced with these challenges, immigrant entrepreneurs often have to engage in multiple income-earning activities to survive (Villares-Varela et al., 2018). This makes it especially hard for female immigrant entrepreneurs because they have to manage families along with their businesses, as per Wang

(Wang, 2019).

2.3.2 Challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs

Kremel (2016) states that immigrant entrepreneurs are more likely to face challenges than native entrepreneurs. This can be attributed to the fact that in addition to learning and operating in a new language, immigrant entrepreneurs must also adapt to a new personal and professional environment. Immigrants, furthermore, tend to lack social and business networks, which enable native entrepreneurs to access finances easily, information about mainstream opportunities and business-related advice (Dabić et al., 2020). An investigation by Wang and Warn (2018) suggests that immigrant entrepreneurship has developed from the interaction of dynamic and complex factors within the host country's business environment to the various institutional elements and need for resources (for example, non-recognition of educational qualifications, start-up capital, low local language proficiency and prior work experience).

This disadvantage can discourage immigrant entrepreneurs from accessing the mainstream markets of the host country even though operating in the mainstream markets brings additional opportunities and supplementary profitability for a small business (Arrighetti et al., 2014). Quantitative research undertaken by Teixeira et al. (2007) gathered information from 246 immigrant entrepreneurs across five immigrant groups and found that visible minority groups faced more challenges than white minority groups alluding to an element of discrimination (Teixeira et al., 2007). Therefore, these challenges formed the basis for this study because such challenges are specific to immigrant entrepreneurs and could also be specific to immigrants of particular ethnicities.

The challenges studied across the extant immigration literature have been divided into four large sub-categories for ease of understanding and clarity. These four categories, discussed below, are socio-cultural, financial, politico-institutional, and other miscellaneous challenges.

2.3.2.1 Socio-cultural challenges

Not being fluent in the host country's language can cause substantial difficulties for immigrant entrepreneurs in negotiating all challenges; thus, communication barriers have been reported to be the greatest socio-cultural challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). This barrier can be linked to the blocked mobility or disadvantage theory as the lack of

communication and career-related skills reduce their opportunities (Moon et al., 2014). The blocked mobility theory suggests that an immigrant chooses entrepreneurship to overcome these challenges. Usually, these kinds of businesses are established at the opportunity structure's lower end with limited scope for growth. However, it is interesting to note that, as per the study, while the Korean immigrant entrepreneurs reported the highest level of language difficulty, they had fewer issues concerning financing than the English-speaking Caribbean and Somali group in the study by Teixeira et al. (2007).

Contrastingly, Malki et al. (2020) propose that difficulties in the procurement of finance were mainly due to language barriers because immigrant entrepreneurs find it difficult to understand the requirements for obtaining bank loans. This anomaly in research findings raises the very pertinent question: Does the lack of local language skills create barriers in accessing host country resources or lead to discrimination in the host country? (Dabić et al., 2020). Another reason that could potentially explain the anomaly of the findings is that certain co-ethnic groups had better co-ethnic network support systems, which enabled them to access solutions to their challenges (for example, finances) more easily (Kremel et al., 2014). It could, therefore, be analysed that their access to private financing could help smooth out some difficulties caused despite their limited socio-cultural skills.

Similarly, other researchers have suggested that most socio-cultural challenges can be alleviated by participating in co-ethnic networks or living and working in co-ethnic enclaves where social capital is available to the immigrant entrepreneur in the form of solidarity and mutual trust, and access to resources and insider market information (Zhang et al., 2016). However, it must be noted that researchers have also stated that language barriers and lack of human resources force entrepreneurs to remain limited to low-growth enterprises, especially those that cater exclusively to ethnic market needs or in specific niche areas where little local market competition is present (Achidi Ndofor & Priem, 2011).

Conversely, a contrasting view was presented by empirical research in the U.S., which found that while few ethnic groups (for example, Cubans in Miami and Chinese in New York) found that ethnic enclave characteristics such as employing co-ethnic labour or accessing financial capital were beneficial, other ethnic groups (for example Asian Indians, Koreans and Russians) did not exclusively depend on co-ethnic labour or catered to only co-ethnic customers. These groups had found more success by displaying middleman minority characteristics and catering

to customers in the mainstream economy by integrating into the host society and gaining resource support from the host and ethnic networks (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). It can be noted here that these challenges were not faced because of the lack of education or skill levels. Moreover, many recent immigrant entrepreneurs have reported having high qualifications levels (Bates & Robb, 2014) and professional skills compared to migrants from several decades ago.

However, on the contrary, their prior education and experience may not directly be pertinent to their current entrepreneurship as a choice of the line of business can be dependent on many external factors such as opportunities and market demand (Rahman et al., 2018). Another possibility is that the potential immigrant entrepreneurs find it difficult to acquire relevant management experience while working for others due to discrimination which hampers their ability to get responsibility (Iskander, 2019). Further, immigrant entrepreneurs in sectors of low-value-addition find developing their strategic capabilities and socio-cultural skills more difficult (Carter et al., 2015). This leads other researchers to hypothesise that educational qualifications are crucial for deciding the course of the business creation as immigrants with higher education levels have more awareness about the available support systems, but this is more effective when combined with relevant practical experience (Dzomonda & Fatoki, 2018).

The findings of Beckers and Blumberg's (2013) Netherlands study discovered that despite higher levels of education and social integration, second-generation immigrants did not display improvements in business performance compared to 1st generation immigrants. However, while the findings of Hou et al. (2013) largely matched those of Beckers and Blumberg (2013), they noted that these findings were not valid for 2nd generation female immigrant entrepreneurs, who were more likely to choose high-return entrepreneurial activities than their mothers as they were more educated. This discrepancy indicates that the gender of the immigrant entrepreneur also played a role in their entrepreneurial motivation.

The above analysis indicates that although immigrant entrepreneurs' competencies play a crucial role in the success of a business and in managing socio-cultural challenges, however, they are not the only factors at play. At the most, it can be attributed as an essential component of the success of a business rather than the only reason. Other challenges that have an impact are discussed below.

2.3.2.2 Financial challenges

Immigrant entrepreneurs experience more significant financial difficulties than other small enterprises in acquiring business start-up credit (Irastorza & Peña-Legazkue, 2018). Recent studies have proposed that financial institutions have low confidence in immigrant entrepreneurs and are wary of meeting their financing requirements (Wang & Warn, 2019). Irastorza and Peña-Legazkue (2018) explain that this difficulty is chiefly because of their lack of personal endowments. It is especially true for newly incoming immigrants with no proven credit history in the host country. Applying for credit history becomes complicated in the host country due to their relatively short duration of stay before they begin their entrepreneurial journey.

Immigrant entrepreneurs there, therefore, suffer severe financial challenges during the process of new venture creation. Lack of finances and temporary cash flow problems requiring an urgent influx of financial aid can cause challenges even for organisations that have been in business for some time (Bates & Robb, 2014). Other challenges that impede immigrant entrepreneurs' access to financial capital include extreme competition in market sectors, lack of host country 'track record', and discrimination exacerbated by language difficulties in applying for bank loans. Moreover, the role of trust has been highlighted by previous studies as it can have a material impact on their ability to obtain financial capital (Moon et al., 2014).

An analysis of extant literature by Bird and Wennberg (2016) discovered that in a majority of studies, immigrant entrepreneurs reported never having accessed or attempted to gain financial support from the host country's financial institutions; instead, immigrant entrepreneurs depended on a combination of personal savings, private loans and reliance on co-ethnic or other social networks to accumulate necessary resources. This finding is startling, especially as most immigrants typically arrive with few savings and frequently make a bare minimum living through temporary, unskilled labour upon their arrival (Nancy et al., 2018). These findings echo early research findings by Chand and Ghorbani (2011), which explained that immigrant entrepreneurs often worked long hours in informal and often undocumented job settings to build savings, learn related skills and gain entrepreneurial opportunities.

However, these studies operate under the assumption that primarily the entrepreneur's entrepreneurial motivations are based on blocked mobility and secondly that the entrepreneur lacks human capital, which thereby only allows the entrepreneur to operate in the lower level

of the opportunity structure (Kloosterman, 2010). It needs to be questioned if this is necessarily true as new incoming immigrant entrepreneurs may have already acquired higher human capital in their home country and education in the host country. Also, they may be motivated for entrepreneurship based on 'pull' factors such as entrepreneurial inclination, gaining higher social standing and the need for autonomy rather than 'push' factors such as the inability to acquire suitable jobs in the host country market due to lack of language skills and formal education (Rueda-Armengot & Peris-Ortiz, 2012). It has been noted in recent literature that not all immigrant entrepreneurs were low skilled and that many of the recent immigrant entrepreneurs had higher level qualifications and experience than those were reported by early immigrant entrepreneurship researchers from several decades ago (Carter et al., 2015; Marvel et al., 2016).

2.3.2.3 Politico-Institutional Challenges

Researchers have mentioned several additional challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs face; for example, Dheer (2018) discussed that an important challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs was the need to deal with national-level regulatory requirements regarding the business; these regulations differed between countries, making it hard for a new immigrant entrepreneur to manage especially as they lacked the support of reliable local business advisory services (for example chartered accountants, attorneys and taxation experts) (Kremel, 2016). Most of these issues drastically impacted the success of immigrant enterprises.

The other common challenges noted by researchers were lack of awareness of taxation laws and local regulations, which made administration of the enterprise difficult and time-consuming, competition from local and co-ethnic competitors, which may lead to price undercutting, dearth of pertinent market information, which hampered decision-making process, unequal opportunities for immigrants as compared to host country nationals and not having the willingness to understand and accept local values and business traditions (Huang & Liu, 2019).

While local tax laws, rules and national and state-level regulations are common challenges for all entrepreneurs, immigrant entrepreneurs feel more cost impact (Yeasmin, 2016). This barrier can be further compounded by their lack of communication skills and the unfamiliarity of immigrant entrepreneurs with the U.K. laws (Chen et al., 2019). In order to circumvent the unfamiliar or unsuitable regulations, larger numbers of immigrant entrepreneurs are enticed to

operate in the informal economy compared to local entrepreneurs who are better equipped to handle these challenges (Williams, 2016) due to their local support systems.

Over the years, to overcome institutional challenges, the U.K. government has promoted business support services in many forms (Ram et al., 2012). However, these support systems are often geared towards entrepreneurs operating in the mainstream markets and are not always appropriate for the specific requirements of the immigrant entrepreneurs' offerings. Immigrant entrepreneurs are also more likely to distrust the efficacy of such generic services (Ram et al., 2012). While these support services are likely to provide for the needs of all similar businesses, the additional challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face seemingly reflect sectoral or locational problems (Ram et al., 2012).

Positively viewing the environment as supportive of all entrepreneurial initiatives can be critical for immigrant entrepreneurs. Institutions can provide regulatory frameworks that offer reassurances of fairness of the regulatory environment in addition to transparency, efficiency and stability (Ram et al., 2012). Trust and a constructive institutional environment reduce immigrant entrepreneurs' uncertainty and inspire risk-taking. Institutional trust likewise impacts the perception of transactional costs, which relate to the initiation and operation of a business.

2.3.2.4 Other challenges

Arrighetti et al. (2014) suggest clear advantages might be gained from inter-ethnic links formed in multicultural hybridism within organisations. Market opportunities within the entrepreneurial mesosphere are not just related to finding markets for goods and services. However, they also encompass the local labour market, skill and knowledge acquisition opportunities, individual perceptions and discrimination. Research has noted that a common challenge experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs was concerned with the attitude toward accessing finance for SMEs (Bates & Robb, 2014; Moon et al., 2014). While inadequate finance has been established to be limited to the growth and success of SMEs (Macartney, 2014), immigrant entrepreneurs were often 'discouraged borrowers' who refused to apply for external finance for fear of being rejected or being handed loan conditions that were greater issues (Freel et al., 2012).

A variety of reasons were attributed that discouraged the borrowers, including their choice of the business sector (Efendic et al., 2016), inadequate credit history in the host country, the requirement for collateral (Irastorza & Peña-Legazkue, 2018) and real or perceived discrimination from host nationals (Moon et al., 2014). Some ethnic minority groups were more prone to reporting these constraints than others; however, the literature does not clarify if discrimination exists in institutionalised banking systems where objective statistical approaches are employed to consider loan applications. These challenges push immigrant entrepreneurs toward informal solutions provided by co-ethnic communities rather than relying on the local financial institutions, as per the findings of Bates and Robb (2014).

The common challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face per extant literature are discussed in detail above. However, this discussion raises some more pertinent questions - can some of these challenges be managed by the personal competencies of the individual or by employing cross-cultural intelligence? Does having better communication skills enable the immigrant entrepreneur to face these challenges more effectively? Furthermore, do these challenges hamper the acculturative process that enables the immigrant entrepreneur to find a better fit within their host society. These concepts are discussed in more detail in the following subsections.

2.4 Competencies of immigrant entrepreneurs

Living and working in a culturally diverse environment is challenging, and immigrating individuals require distinctive competencies to succeed in their new environment (Glinka, 2018). Peroni et al. (2016) note that entrepreneurs with a balanced set of diverse competencies are more successful than specialists and have a higher propensity towards innovation and ventures that target mainstream markets and high-growth business segments. These competencies, therefore, become significantly more critical for immigrant entrepreneurs as they need to undertake all the usual responsibilities of entrepreneurship despite facing challenges related to a new cultural environment. They need to learn to adjust to the host country's diverse working style and adjust personally to different cultural dimensions, which may contrast with their own cultural underpinning (Wang & Altinay, 2012).

Moreover, for immigrants undertaking self-induced migration, these limitations have to be contested without the support of the resources that are available to well-established, large

organisations. The success and emergence of business ventures, therefore, rely significantly on the skills and competencies of the entrepreneur, especially in smaller enterprises where the role of the entrepreneur is crucial (Burns, 2016). Before attempting to understand how Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs will be able to overcome challenges faced by them using cross-cultural competencies, it is imperative to understand the subject in detail.

Ample research has been carried out on cross-cultural competence; nevertheless, there is no specific definition or categorisation of cross-cultural competencies. Its definition and context differ as per the different fields of study. Competencies are considered resources that an immigrant entrepreneur may leverage to enhance the productivity of other resources (Dheer, 2018; Mathews et al., 2016). Individual competencies, therefore, link directly to the resource-based view and bring sustained competitive advantages for the immigrant enterprise resulting in financial success (Mueller, 2014). Cross-cultural competencies, therefore, can be simply defined as:

“...an individual’s effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad”.

(Johnson et al., 2006, p. 530)

Other researchers have noted that the cross-cultural competencies of an individual are their set of psychological and socio-cultural adaptation skills, which may be leveraged in the host and home countries to ensure the success of their business.

In academic literature, cross-cultural competence has varied and sometimes contradictory definitions as cross-cultural studies have been studied in many professional fields and encompass multiple academic approaches. Prior research has commonly identified several concepts which relate to cross-cultural competencies. These are cultural knowledge, cultural intelligence, language literacy/fluency, adaptability, innovation, critical thinking, cross-cultural awareness, and understanding (Bartel-Radic & Giannelloni, 2017; Chen, 2019). Some of these concepts overlap, while others, such as communication or language skills, significantly impact the acquisition or usage of the other competencies.

Cultural knowledge may be characterised as cultural-general and cultural-specific. Cultural-general comprises awareness and knowledge of cultural variances, which may be applicable to describe and compare any cultural setting. It allows the facilitation of cross-cultural comparisons and the generalizability of cross-cultural knowledge. On the other hand, a Culture-specific approach instigates the gaining of a deeper understanding of a particular cultural context with detailed knowledge. Cultural-specific conversely comprises knowledge of specific customs, dos and don'ts and taboos etc., of a specific culture (Larina, 2015). These may also be influenced by geography, politics, legalities, economy etc. Cultural intelligence uses the acquired cultural knowledge to build the individual's ability to adapt to different cultural contexts and function successfully in different cultural settings.

Cultural intelligence combines emotional and social intelligence acquired through observing and analysing how others behave in various societal situations. The application of culture intelligence enhances human understanding and generates culturally informed solutions for the host culture's context. Moreover, the higher cultural intelligence of the immigrant entrepreneur or leader positively correlates to organisational performance (Nosratabadi et al., 2020) and is, therefore, a significantly crucial cultural competency.

On the other hand, according to Yari et al. (2020), cross-cultural competence is a combination of behavioural, cognitive, and affective/motivational components that enable the individual's adaptation and acculturation in cross-cultural environments and, therefore, their success in the host environment. This proposition comes with the assumption that immigrant entrepreneurs inherently bring home country cultural traits such as strong work ethic, adaptability and reliance (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Mackie, 2018) while living in the host culture enables them to build additional competencies like language skills that enable a smoother transition between the two cultures.

This argument is accepted by other entrepreneurship researchers, such as Ruiz et al. (2017). They note that culture can play a decisive role in explaining why immigrants from certain countries possess more entrepreneurial inclination than other immigrants or local populations (Ozgen et al., 2011). The other competencies that individuals living in a different culture benefit from are cultural empathy, flexibility, emotional stability (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022) and a positive attitude which links to motivation and emotional management.

Individuals' attitudes relate to how they perceive the host country's culture, and a positive attitude relates to acceptance, while a negative attitude leads to rejection. Ng et al. (2017) note that retaining a positive attitude toward home and host country cultures is a crucial cross-cultural competency. The competencies required by immigrants to succeed in the host environment are often divided into adaptation (Chang et al., 2013) and psychological adjustment (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013), business cultural intelligence (Alon et al., 2016; Aslam et al., 2016), management competence (Gabriela et al., 2015) and effectiveness of business communication (Bücker et al., 2014; Kealey, 2015).

Socio-cultural adaptation of an individual includes their cultural learning and acceptance, language skills and bicultural flexibility; they can also include adaptability of social skills and local practices, adjusting to the local business practices and the individual's learning skills (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017). It must be noted that adaptation and adjustment are interlinked components under the umbrella term acculturation (Ng et al., 2017).

It can be seen that competencies may be considered critical for entrepreneurial activities, mainly because it is the entrepreneur's competencies that enable them to identify, evaluate and exploit opportunities by deploying optimal resources towards these opportunities (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011). From this brief overview, it is clear that the most critical competencies are communication, cross-cultural intelligence and acculturation. A detailed study of these concepts is carried out below to further the objectives of this study.

2.4.1 Cross-cultural communication

People of differing cultural backgrounds exchange knowledge, information and emotions effectively to develop mutual understanding. This process is called cross-cultural communication. Having at the very least a basic level of local language skills enables the immigrant entrepreneur to function in the host society (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). Sound cross-cultural knowledge and personal attributes of an individual link to their ability to communicate effectively. Non-verbal and verbal interaction forms the basis of cross-cultural communications, and these can help nurture better business relationships with people of varied cultural backgrounds. Successful communication is completed when the message is transmitted with the intended meaning clearly understood (Thomas & Ong, 2015).

Researchers find that face-to-face communication can be most efficient in cross-cultural communication even more than emails which are now a standard method of business interaction. Telephonic conversations, especially in a language foreign, for an immigrant entrepreneur, are harder than face-to-face conversations as non-verbal cues and visual stimuli are not communicated; however, it was easier than email conversations where the meaning of the words could be misconstrued more easily due to the lack of tonal cues (Aricat & Ling, 2018).

Non-verbal communications transfer vital messages as they are automatically produced rather than words which can be carefully picked. Non-verbal communications include gestures, facial expressions and eye contact, voice tonality, physical interactions like touching, usage of physical space and may even include scents and smells. This finding was reiterated by Thomas and Peterson (2016), who claimed that emphasis on non-verbal becomes even more crucial in cross-cultural communication as people rely more heavily on non-verbal cues to understand the conversation.

Phone, email, and internet-based data exchange communication technologies are commonly used in business communications. Communication richness helps build and maintain efficient business relationships (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). These technologies may be arranged on a communication richness continuum and a technological sophistication continuum to understand the most effective techniques to use. Phones allow voice inflexion to be communicated, conveying deeper emotional content. Email communications are not as rich in conveying the meaning nuances of communication (Tyers, 2017), although they may be used for personal communications and allow the usage of emoticons for added nuances. However, Internet-based data exchange systems are appropriate only for functional business communications and are widely used for invoices, shipments and payments (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014).

The biggest challenge in cross-cultural communication is the different languages of the stakeholders, and having a weaker command of the language can lead to misunderstandings (Thomas & Peterson, 2016). Clear communication is vital for building and maintaining business relationships and trust (Tenzer et al., 2014). English has become a globally preferred language as it is used in 143 countries worldwide, and therefore it has become the international

language of business (Tyers, 2017). There are many differences in culturally-based conventions within the language itself. This can produce difficulties in understanding even when both the parties speak English (Thomas & Peterson, 2016).

Moreover, the main language of business in China is Mandarin Chinese, while in the U.K., it is English, both are completely different language systems, and non-native speakers may find it hard to adjust to British English. Moreover, Chinese is a high-context language while English is low-context. In low-context cultures like the U.K., communication is straightforward and verbal communication is taken at face value without giving much significance to unspoken contexts. Contrastingly, high context countries like China have a high reliance on the underlying, unspoken context in their communications which can sometimes be as important as the spoken words. Context is vital in these cultures as not understanding the interaction style differences may lead to misunderstandings (Peng, 2016).

Arrighetti et al. (2014) suggest that local language proficiency is strategically important, especially for immigrant entrepreneur-owned SMEs. This proficiency should be incorporated into their long-term entrepreneurial planning because it allows them to expand their market reach and not remain limited to the ethnic markets in the host country. Host country language fluency aids communication and enables an immigrant entrepreneur to quickly learn and accept local traditions, values and cultural aspects that could affect their ability to conduct business, suggest the findings of a study of European expatriate executives in New Zealand by Tahir (2021).

The findings equally apply to Chinese expatriates in other host countries, who need to learn the local cultural contexts to succeed in their entrepreneurial journey. These findings are backed by an empirical study by Wang et al. (2017) which notes that the communication and interpersonal skills of Chinese expatriates especially were not easily transferable into other host country contexts. Though language is intertwined with culture, research notes that English is becoming a global language of business (Tyers, 2017). Its functional position as a globally spoken language makes it naturally an effective tool for mutually coherent communication for non-native speakers with locals and other non-native speakers.

A Chinese entrepreneur in the U.K. should acquire decent knowledge about the differences in the languages and use this knowledge appropriately to their advantage. Tahir (2021) stated that

higher local language skills are related to higher levels of expatriate adjustment and effectiveness. The positive link between language proficiency and cross-cultural effectiveness has been confirmed by other researchers who specialise in research on migrants (Hurn & Tomalin, 2013; Selmer & Luring, 2015).

Good command over communication enables a business to become successful in a diverse culture as it encourages empathy and increases the immigrant entrepreneur's chances of attaining outcomes of mutual interest. While Arrighetti et al. (2014) stated that entrepreneurship is possible without foreign language competence by relying only on co-ethnic networks and suppliers who can communicate in the home country's language (for example, Mandarin Chinese), Prashantham et al. (2015) argue that this is akin to skimming the surface of the ocean because the local markets drive market growth, not the more limited ethnic markets. An entrepreneur will therefore be able to break out into the mainstream markets only after acquiring local language proficiency.

This point is backed by Sui et al. (2015), who discovered from their empirical study that language mismatches reduced an entrepreneur's ability to leverage potential regional market advantages and bond with mainstream communities. Liu et al. (2015) echoed this finding by stating that the host country's language proficiency enabled entrepreneurs to develop relationships with stakeholders in the host country, for example, local businesses, host country governmental agencies and suppliers. An empirical study by Selmer and Luring (2015) found that foreign language fluency shared a non-linear relationship with the effectiveness of cross-cultural interactions, indicating that effective relations could be fostered without being multilingual.

2.4.2 Cross-cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence refers to the individual's ability, knowledge and motivations and focuses on mental ability rather than the individual's behavioural ability (2015). The cultural intelligence of the immigrant entrepreneur forms the basis of their ability to successfully manage commercial relationships with other businesses, trade associations and the host country's government (Bücker et al., 2014). The cultural intelligence of immigrant entrepreneurs is, therefore, a vital human capital resource that has the ability to impact and alter the performance of their enterprise (Zolin & Schlosser, 2013). Cultural intelligence also has a

bearing on the immigrant entrepreneur's capacity to interact effectively with their multicultural employees and enable them to strategically meet and exceed organisational goals (Bücker & Korzilius, 2015).

Cultural intelligence is a multi-dimensional concept defined as the ability of an individual in a diverse culture to receive and process the messages and then consider the cultural context to make reasonable and viable judgments for adapting successfully to new cultural settings. Current conceptualisations of cultural intelligence are used as a framework, including cognitive, motivational, meta-cognitive and behavioural cultural intelligence (Huff et al., 2014).

The components of cultural intelligence are defined below:

- 1) Cognitive cultural intelligence deals with the basic cultural knowledge and structure of this knowledge. It is obtained through education and personal experience to compile a knowledge bank of conventions, norms and practices of other cultures. This knowledge forms a basis for their behaviour and thoughts in that culture. Higher cognitive cultural intelligence means higher success in cross-cultural interactions (Bücker et al., 2014).
- 2) However, motivational cultural intelligence deals with an individual's desire to adapt to a cross-cultural environment. It is the ability to give attention to understanding diversity, focusing the required energy on learning and using this newly learnt knowledge to function appropriately in cultural situations that are diverse from their own culture (Bücker et al., 2014).
- 3) Meta-cognitive cultural intelligence is a high-order mental process, and this is used to understand cultural information and recognise different cultural preferences. People with high Meta-cognitive cultural intelligence can tell when and how cultural knowledge can be applied; this happens effortlessly through advanced mental processes (Lorenz et al., 2018).
- 4) Behavioural cultural intelligence deals with the individual's capacity to act at a behavioural level. It is the aptitude of the individual to display verbal and nonverbal behaviours in interactions that are appropriate to the cultural context. An individual is more likely to be accepted easily by a diverse cultural group if they exhibit appropriate words, gestures, facial expressions, body language and voice tonality. This leads to

stronger interpersonal relations and an effective work environment (Ko et al., 2015). However, cultural intelligence behaviours between home and host country can vary significantly and thus cause problems.

Individuals with high cultural intelligence levels communicate more effectively in new cultural contexts, as per Froese et al. (2016). Immigrant entrepreneurs find that their psychological well-being is negatively impacted by the stress caused by problems that they face while adapting to unfamiliar cultural contexts. They face difficulties in intercultural communications, adjustment, performance, and interpersonal effectiveness. However, research indicates that these challenges can be countered by using cross-cultural intelligence (Fang et al., 2018).

Intercultural effectiveness can be predicted using cultural intelligence as an explanatory variable. Past research indicates that cultural intelligence plays a critical role in measuring how quickly an individual can adapt to the context of a new culture (Ramsey & Lorenz, 2016). Moreover, the importance of cultural intelligence of immigrant entrepreneurs is a critical cross-cultural competency that relates directly to organisational success (Aslam et al., 2016) as small enterprises rely heavily on the entrepreneur's abilities because of their significant role in their role the organisation. Therefore, it can be analysed that cultural intelligence dimensions have a positive correlation with cross-cultural competence dimensions of international entrepreneurship.

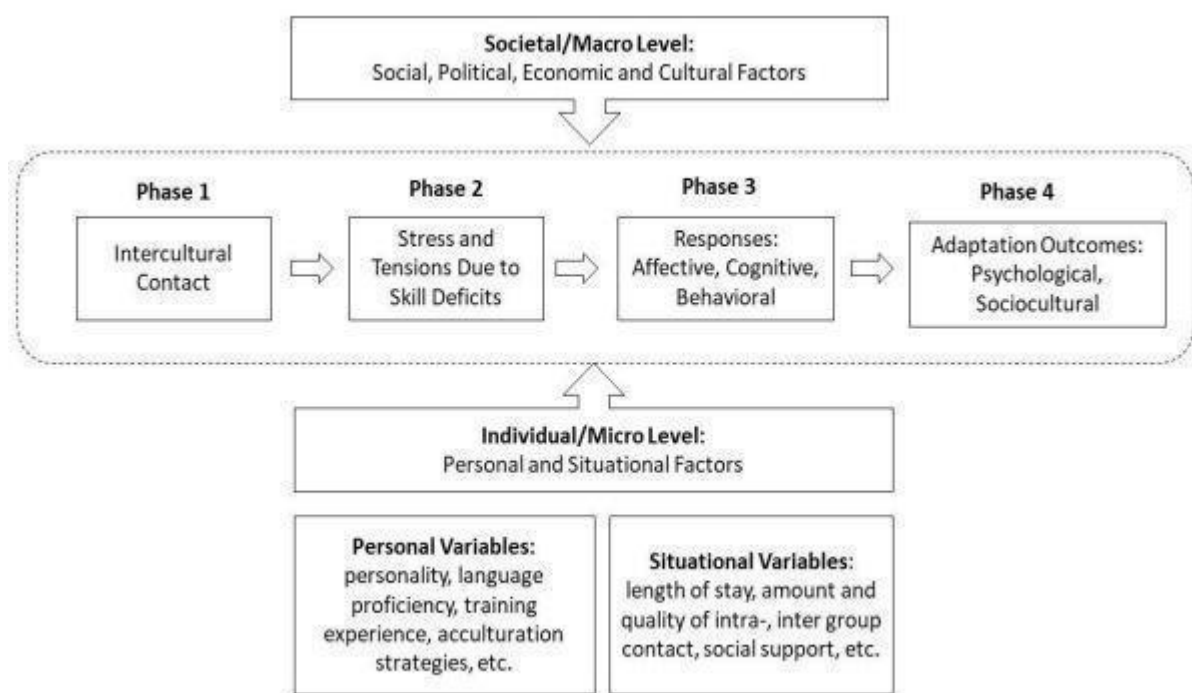
2.4.3 Cross-cultural acculturation

Acculturation is an ongoing process of social and psychological acceptance of the cultural change. The individuals of two or more cultures integrate and learn to balance the different cultures in continuing adaptation for the desired outcomes (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). This process begins as soon as there is close interaction between the two cultures (Berry, 2017). Essentially, the acculturation process includes an individual's acquiring, adjusting, and adapting to their new cultural environment. Adjustment can be defined as the degree of success in accomplishing acculturative and normative evolving tasks (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012), while adaptation is part of acculturation orientation which includes maintaining the home culture while actively adapting to the host culture (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016).

Literature documents that acculturation strongly impacts immigrant entrepreneurs' career goals

and entrepreneurial activities (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018). However, the acculturation process for each individual is impacted by a multitude of related factors such as social, political, cultural and economic factors, as well as the individual's personal variables such as language skills, training and personality. Another crucial factor that impacts the acculturative process is the individual's embeddedness in the social groups and the support available to them, and their length of stay in the host society (Lem, 2019). (See for a model of the acculturative process in figure 2.3).

Figure 2.3 - A model of the acculturation process



Source: Adapted from Ward et al. (2001, cited in Lem, 2019, p. 165)

Acculturation is exceptionally demanding for immigrants who have entrepreneurial aspirations (Sirin et al., 2013) who face challenges and especially more so if they have limited personal competencies (Achidi Ndofor & Priem, 2011) and cross-cultural intelligence; this negatively impacts the prospects for their businesses (Zolin et al., 2016). This thesis examines the potential impact on acculturation primarily through a cross-cultural management standpoint, as the interaction between two diverse cultural contexts poses challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs and requires an increased demand for cross-cultural intelligence and competencies for coping (Vandor & Franke, 2016a).

2.4.3.1 The concept of acculturation vs assimilation

Before proceeding further, it is important to discuss the differences and distinguish between the terms acculturation and assimilation. Assimilation is a gradual process of adopting the traditions and practices of another culture, thus eventually becoming a part of the host culture by leaving their own culture, traditions and practices to blend into the host society (Kivisto, 2015). Assimilation may be forced or voluntary. Forced assimilation involves compelling the person or group of people to adopt the other culture's traditions, language or religious practices (Heberer, 2017). The minority group adopts the host society's culture, thereby losing their cultural identity to blend into the host society fully.

The process can be gradual or quick; however, forced assimilation has negative undertones. Voluntary or unforced assimilation arises from the desire of the immigrant to adapt to the host culture and become a part of it. Total assimilation occurs when the immigrant adopts the culture and its practices completely and becomes indistinguishable from the natives of the host society (Angelini et al., 2015). This can be difficult to achieve if there are significant differences between the two cultures, and it is considered a negative, especially in cases of forced assimilation.

Though, it must be noted that assimilation could also be internally motivated by the immigrant, especially for gaining economic benefits. However, Beckers and Blumberg (2013) note that socio-cultural assimilation, especially using business ownership, does not essentially guarantee greater economic success. Research linking immigration, business ownership and assimilation and its fallacies is ongoing (Lofstrom, 2013); therefore, there is little definitive clarity on whether assimilation is crucial and/or an inevitable part of the immigration process for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Acculturation, on the other hand, is an ongoing process during which an individual or group of people of one culture adopts the values and practices of the host culture without losing their own distinct cultural identity (Berry, 2015). The acculturation process over time often results in changes to both cultures, their customs, food, religious practices, and customs carried out within other social institutions (Berry, 2015). However, the acculturation process begins when the first contiguous contact is made between two diverse cultures (Berry, 2017). The acculturative process commonly undergoes a 4-stage process which is the honeymoon phase, the culture shock phase, the recovery phase, and the mastery phase (see table 2.1)

Table 2.1 - The four stages of acculturation ¹

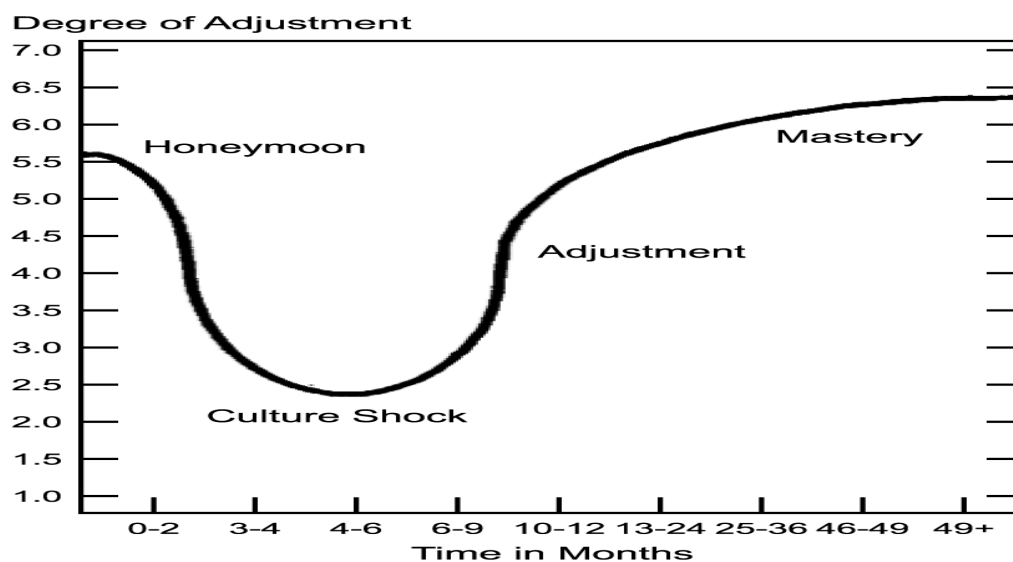
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Excitement (Honeymoon phase)	Culture shock phase	Recovery phase	Mastery phase
The excitement of being in contact with a new culture in the host country	Feeling frustration because of the differences and experiencing or displaying hostility	Adjustment with the new normal and growing more comfortable in operating within the new culture	Spanning the cultural barriers more easily and adapting to the new culture
When new immigrants arrive in a different culture, they are likely to overlook any negatives while enjoying the fresh and exciting parts of the diverse culture. This honeymoon phase lasts only till the novelty excitement fades.	The individuals are likely to make prejudicial comparisons between home and host cultures as they learn more about the host culture. The immigrants are shocked at certain aspects of the culture that are very different from their own culture and norms. They are most likely to want to withdraw and return to their home country at this stage, as this is the most difficult stage during the individual's acculturation process.	Increased familiarity with the new settings makes the immigrants more comfortable. They are likely to make new friends, the comfort level of using the host language is higher, and they are beginning to appreciate the differences between the home and host cultures while attempting to maintain a balance between the two in their personal lives.	The immigrant has spent significant time adapting to and accepting the new culture. They are more embedded in the host society, and a sense of biculturalism has developed.

Source: Zaker (2017)

¹ The length of time each phase takes is dependent on the individual's competencies, motivations and personal orientations toward other cultures.

The four stages of acculturation outlined above are modelled around the U curve model. This U curve model was first propagated in the 1950s by Lysgaard, and in the 1960's Oberg further developed it to its current form (Shi & Wang, 2014). The core of the model is the assumption that the cross-cultural transition process is a culture shock. This shock on entering a new environment is divided into four stages of adaptation: honeymoon, cultural shock, adjustment, and adaptation. The process has two high stages, which are: the first stage of the honeymoon and the last stage, which is mastery or adaptation, while the lower end of the 'U' consists of culture shock and adjustment, which form the middle of the culture shock period (see figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4 - The U-curve model



Source: Adapted from Black and Mendenhall (1991, cited in Trompeter et al., 2016, p. 14)

However, despite its practical application in understanding the flow of the adjustment process and designing support systems for the immigrants, this model has been criticised as Shi and Franklin (2014) note that not all immigrant entrepreneurs necessarily conform to the four stages outlined by the U-curve model. While a connection between the length of stay within a host culture could be established with the level of adjustment (Davies et al., 2015), this relationship did not necessarily always follow the predictable U-curve in terms of time as per the model.

This is because ease of adaptation is individual-dependent, and while some adapt in the early stages of their internationalisation, others could take years to become comfortable. This is also culture-dependent, and while some cultures offer acceptance and an open welcome, others have

stronger barriers that make it harder for immigrant entrepreneurs to adjust. Shi and Franklin (2014) pointed out that the relationship between cross-cultural adaptation and time is too complex to conform to a simplistic U-curve model as it involves changes in both the home and the host cultures, and changes within larger groups take time.

Noticeable effects of acculturation at the group level may include modifications in dietary habits, clothing choices and language. Acculturation is always a reciprocal process; this means that as the minority culture adopts practices of the majority culture similarly, the majority culture also undergoes changes to include elements of the minority cultures that they are in constant contact with. This is also known as the Cultural Fusion Theory, providing a more representative portrayal of the immigrant experience (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). As per this theory, select elements of the immigrant culture are fused together with the host culture. While some researchers have argued that this process continues until neither group is essentially a minority or majority, and some homogeneity is attained. However, a contrasting view argues that such kind of acculturation is not desirable as it leads to the dilution of the cultures (Heine, 2015).

Despite the interchangeable use of the terminology, acculturation cannot be likened to the process of assimilation. While assimilation is often accepted as the logical eventual outcome of acculturation, it may result in other outcomes, such as integration, marginalisation, rejection, or separation (Berry, 2017). Moreover, an empirical study on the use of acculturation strategies for coping revealed that assimilation was the least preferred strategy among the surveyed immigrant group (Ndika, 2013) as it involved the willingness of the immigrant to adapt to the host country's culture by losing their cultural heritage and co-ethnic identity.

As per their research, few immigrants preferred losing their cultural identity. Separation is considered the opposite of the assimilation strategy as it includes the preference of an individual to retain their cultural heritage even if that means not adapting to the host country's culture or interacting with it. This implementation of the separation strategy without experiencing isolation is difficult. Integration, on the other hand, is a balanced strategy as some facets of the host country's culture are adopted while retaining some facets of the immigrant's cultural heritage, as per Ndika's (2013) study.

A study encompassed 104 of 1st generation Nigerian immigrants in the USA revealed that the most common strategy of integration was the usage of assimilation and separation strategies simultaneously, depending on the demands of the situation. Ndika's (2013) study notes that the participants had developed flexible co-ethnic identities, and they considered themselves to be American (assimilation) or Nigerian (separation) based on the setting. The study based in the USA concludes that individuals may negotiate multicultural contexts from many perspectives and that assimilation cannot be considered the final destination for the acculturative process.

Zaker (2017) note that bi-dimensional acculturation patterns are common, therefore largely agreeing with the findings. However, other studies have found different results. For example, Kärkkäinen (2017) notes that integration is the starting point for most immigrants, while van der Zee & van Oudenhoven (2022) note that the choice of strategy can be dependent on the host culture's orientation towards immigrants and the integration strategy is more likely to be common in societies that welcome immigrants.

The above analysis of literature on acculturation and assimilation has defined and differentiated the two similar terms. It is noteworthy that the acculturation process is a multi-dimensional conception related to identity, behaviour and value (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). For this thesis, acculturation will be regarded as a continuous and dynamic process of psychological and cultural change which occurs when there is sustained contact between two or more culturally diverse groups and their individuals (Berry, 2017).

Moreover, the integration strategy will be considered the cornerstone of the acculturative process for this research in keeping with the arguments presented by Berry (2017). Furthermore, Taušová et al. (2019) suggest that integration strategy positively links to successful adaptation, while Cheng (2015) notes that societies in which less discrimination is noted tend to prefer integration strategy versus separation strategy, which is prevalent in those societies where there is greater discrimination and rejection of the immigrants from the host society.

Further, the growing extant literature on acculturation notes that the younger immigrants who are born and immigrate to their host country at the young ages of 6 to 12 (also identified as the 1.5 generation) are more deeply immersed and integrated into the host culture than 1st generation immigrants Beckers and Blumberg (2013). This finding is reiterated by a comparative study by Beckers and Blumberg (2013), which found that amongst the researched

group of five non-Western 2nd generation immigrant/migrant entrepreneurs' groups, the 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants achieved much higher degrees of socio-cultural integration than the 1st generation or newly incoming immigrants. These findings indicate that integration and acculturation are both natural and inevitable. Therefore the researcher proposes that (integration strategy) acculturation is an accepted integral component of the immigration process.

2.4.3.2 Cross-cultural Adaptation and Adjustment

There has been some confusion in the literature regarding the terms cross-cultural adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation. There is little consensus on whether and in what way these two concepts differ from each other. While several researchers (for example, Bierwiazzonek & Waldzus, 2016) consider these terms interchangeable. Xu et al.(2019) proposition that the term 'adjustment' denotes minor changes required for coping with new cultural situations, while 'adaptation' denotes significant changes and re-alignment required after a major change such as the individual immigrating into a new and diverse cultural context.

On the other hand, Hoelzel (2018) advocates that 'adjustment' involves the experiences, emotions and reactions to intercultural changes, while 'adaptation' is the process of coping with an intercultural change by changing one's behaviour and cognition. However, these are subjective to the individual who is attempting adaptation. For the purpose of this research, we will consider these terms to be separate from each other, agreeing with the opinion of Hoelzel (2018) and discussing each of these components of acculturation in detail.

- **Cross-cultural adjustment**

The cross-cultural adjustment has been defined as the cultural learning process that sets the level of familiarity and psychological comfort a person achieves while working and living in a new culture (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). This explanation is expanded further by Koveshnikov et al. (2014), who analysed whether an immigrant entrepreneur becomes psychologically comfortable depending largely on their relationship and cross-cultural adjustment within the host environment. An assortment of aspects of that new cultural environment will decide if the immigrant entrepreneur feels comfortable and familiar.

Cross-cultural adjustment is a steady process of adjustment into the host environment, which brings about a degree of psychological adjustment in a different society. An Africa-based study

by Okpara and Kabongo (2017) noted that cross-cultural adjustment might be predicted by the individual's kind and level of training. They note that adjustment is of 4 types: work adjustment, general adjustment, psychological adjustment and interaction adjustment. They all were positively linked to specific and general experimental and specific and general conventional training in enhancing immigrant entrepreneurs' adjustment. Immigrant entrepreneurs can reduce the uncertainty experienced during this process by communicating and interacting with people of the new culture. This interaction does not only help them feel comfortable but also aids them in adjusting to the new culture, which in effect will lead to them harmonising with the differences, as per Juang and Syed (2019).

A well-adjusted immigrant entrepreneur benefits from the formation of social capital. This becomes a vital tool for immigrant entrepreneurs who must work and live directly in foreign cultures without support systems (Selmer & Luring, 2015). Moreover, the empirical study by Salgado and Bastida (2017) found that the sociability level of the migrant linked positively and enhanced their cross-cultural adjustment. Adjusted immigrant entrepreneurs can easily build social and professional networks and maintain relationships that facilitate achieving their professional and personal goals, as per Koveshnikov et al. (2014).

Interestingly another view of the same argument was applied in the study of Salgado and Bastida (2017), which claimed that higher financial, professional or personal achievements led to higher cross-cultural adjustment. Whichever interpretation is accepted, it is clear that achievements are positively linked to cross-cultural adjustment, leading to higher effectiveness. This finding is developed further by a study on 299 expatriates conducted by Davies et al. (2015) which found that the length of stay in the host country increased the level of adjustment as did having a partner from the host country.

This indicates that integration in mainstream society is beneficial for cross-cultural adjustment and that the longer the immigrant lived in the host country, the more their level of adjustment was expected to increase. This raises the pertinent question of whether entrepreneurs who have managed businesses for long periods in the U.K. face different challenges than new immigrant entrepreneurs because of their enhanced adjustment level. However, the factuality of this correlation between length of stay and level of adjustment may be argued if the immigrant entrepreneur remains solely limited to the ethnic enclave for business and personal interaction and/or use the services of middlemen to access mainstream markets (Setti et al., 2020).

Cross-cultural adjustment encompasses three dimensions:

- 1) General adjustment is concerned with daily life factors affecting an immigrant entrepreneur and his family. These factors include housing, food, health care, shopping, driving and living costs. Immigrant entrepreneurs who are able to manage good levels of general adjustment gain control of their professional and personal settings and are able to get comfortable. This helps them enhance their performance and fulfil expectations better (Koveshnikov et al., 2014). General adjustment involves processes related to cognition, emotions and behaviour, a shared experience involving family, colleagues and other relations. Immigrants with greater family support are more successful at achieving their objectives (Rojas et al., 2018). It includes good living conditions, which enable an immigrant entrepreneur to dedicate more emotional and cognitive effort to work. Satisfied immigrant entrepreneurs are likely to engage comfortably in social interactions, maintain high-quality relationships within the community and therefore share and build more robust networks, which will help them accomplish their goals in the host country.

- 2) Interaction adjustment deals with interactions in non-work and work environments. This measures the degree of comfort an immigrant entrepreneur feels while communicating with host country nationals. This adjustment level is the hardest to achieve due to the variances in cultural norms, traditions, acceptable behaviours and expectations of each country. Selmer and Luring (2015) argued that interaction adjustment was the most challenging of cross-cultural adjustment facets because of differences in basic language abilities and the mental maps of individuals of differing cultures. The rules for acceptable cultural norms were revealed to expatriates in their interactions with host nationals; therefore, more interactions meant more adjustment. Moreover, the findings of Salgado and Bastida (2017) suggest that language skills negatively correlate to cultural distance. This means that the higher language skills of the migrants would lower the perceived cultural distance between their home and host contexts.

However, there is an added aspect that needs to be considered that the formation of social capital also heavily depends on an individual's inclination to be sociable, to cooperate within the purview of reciprocally suitable terms of reference and to make new associations within the host culture as well as their motivation to immigrate

(Vijayakumar & Cunningham, 2016). Immigrant entrepreneurs that rank highly in interaction adjustment are able to form new collaborative forces more easily and participate more in organisational learning, core business process development and innovation (Selmer & Luring, 2015). To summarise, interaction adjustment essentially encompasses trust, connection, understanding and feeling of membership. These outlooks accumulate with time in relationships within professional and personal groups.

- 3) Work adjustment comprises the degree of comfort experienced by an immigrant entrepreneur in adjusting to new work roles, tasks and environment. It is supported by shared similarities in policies, procedures, and requirements of tasks. However, key aspects of the same job may differ from country to country; therefore, an individual may receive conflicting signals of expected behaviours in new settings. Immigrant entrepreneurs may need to develop skills and behaviour patterns that are new and more suited to the new environment. This may include interacting with and managing host country nationals to perform coordinated tasks seamlessly (Young, 2017).

An empirical study by Wang et al. (2017) explored the cross-cultural skills required by expatriate managers in different cultural contexts. The study discovered that in African and Middle Eastern countries, self-maintenance skills were crucial for the economic survival of Chinese entrepreneurs, whereas, in the European and Australian contexts, the more critical skills required to adjust were language abilities and interpersonal abilities.

While this study covered the major continents, it failed to address the fact that countries within a continent (for example, Europe) can be wildly different in culture, so the generalisation of the results may not be suitable. This study also did not focus on the specific context of the U.K., leaving a gap in the literature to be filled by a future study. Moreover, the systematic literature review by Malerba and Ferreira (2020) also did not find any study that was from the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. However, the findings of Wang et al. (2017) significantly indicate that the home country's cultural context, in conjunction with the explicit requirements of the host country's context, was crucial in identifying the required skills for cross-cultural adjustment. This point is similar to the one made by Cheng et al. (2014), who noted that the host country's context was instrumental in providing the differentiated experience of an immigrant group.

A good work adjustment enables an immigrant entrepreneur to easily fulfil explicit task requirements, organise routines and reach specific predefined goals. Interaction with co-workers, suppliers, customers and other stakeholders is crucial. Social capital is built by getting involved in more social networks, building strong relationships within these networks and by deploying co-workers' resources. Jibeen (2011) notes that well-adjusted immigrant entrepreneurs, comfortable in their new work environment and role, are likely to spend further time and effort in acquiring appropriate behaviour that helps in interpersonal interfacing and simplifies the maintenance of social relationships.

Combining the three areas of adjustment, namely general, work and interaction adjustment, determine the degree to which the immigrant entrepreneur is prepared to face challenges in a new cultural context. Moreover, cognitive cultural intelligence and Meta-cognitive cultural intelligence have found little academic backing in being a good predictors in relation to cross-cultural adjustment (Taras et al., 2013). The dimensions of cultural intelligence outlined by Lorenz et al. (2018), namely **cognition** which sometimes also includes **metacognition** (the ability of the individual to cultivate patterns from available cultural cues;) **motivation** (the ability and desire to engage with others who may be culturally different;), and **behaviour** (the individual's ability to act in harmony with the above two dimensions of cognition and motivation) aid in the individual's ability for cross-cultural adaptation.

However, despite some academic opinion that not all cultural intelligence dimensions are equally important for cross-cultural adjustment, it can be debated that the dimensions of cognition, motivation and behaviour are necessary competencies for gaining Cultural knowledge that help an immigrant entrepreneur to overcome issues in adjustment and helps them acquire a better cultural fit (Xu et al., 2019) and continually maintain an entrepreneurial orientation (Raavee et al., 2019) and alertness (Yang et al., 2022) and unceasingly acquire opportunity confidence (Irfan & Siddiqui, 2020; Ko et al., 2015). Moreover, other empirical researchers have proved that cultural intelligence positively impacts cross-cultural adjustment (Lin et al., 2012).

Cultural knowledge can be learned with the help of cross-cultural training, which may include language courses and an introduction to the host country's culture, as per (van Driel & Gabrenya, 2013). However, Okpara and Kabongo (2017) found through their empirical research that there was a positive correlation between training and the individual's general

adjustment, psychological adjustment, work adjustment, and interaction adjustment. Therefore, it can be concluded that training is an essential part of building competencies that would ultimately lead to adjustment.

Migrants often tend to concentrate in similar or co-ethnic groups, especially when the host culture is vastly different from their own culture. Immigrant entrepreneurs are no exception, especially since business networks can be built and opportunities gained from interacting within these groups (Kremel et al., 2014; Wang & Warn, 2018). They are likely to congregate around areas, shops, restaurants and even hospitals that specifically cater to their own cultural backgrounds. They are even likely to live in places with a high concentration of residents from their own culture or at least are foreigners. This view aligns with Jibeen's (2011) assessment that the formation of social capital has a cognitive aspect and that it evolves from personal motivation.

Consequently, when immigrant entrepreneurs are well adjusted to their general environment, it brings a feeling of satisfaction. It reduces cognitive stress load, which can then be concentrated on interacting socially, building relationships and being motivated to maintain social ties (Cheng et al., 2014). Contrastingly, immigrant entrepreneurs who find that their basic needs are not suitably satisfied have more cognitive stress and find it harder to form new social capital. It even impacts their ability to effectively perform coordinated procedures and meet the requirements of challenging tasks. This point was examined in a study by Salgado and Bastida (2017), which found that cross-cultural adjustment positively correlated to both individuals' effectiveness and achievements and is essential for the eventual adaptation

- **Cross-cultural adaptation**

Cross-cultural adaptation is defined as the totality of dynamic processes involved in learning culture-specific skills that attempt to establish and sustain a stable, functional and reciprocal relationship within a new and sometimes dynamic cultural milieu through direct and indirect interactions (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). A meaningful deliberation on cross-cultural adaptation is whether the immigrants acculturate into the host society by trying to fit in as closely as possible or if the cultural adaptation process is more complex than that, and immigrants use the available support systems to make choices regarding how they adapt (Shrikant, 2018). Young (2017) theorised that cross-cultural adaptation is profoundly challenging and requires a

recalibration of the immigrant's life tools and assumptions or deculturation. In order to assimilate into a new culture, the migrants must abandon their home culture to adopt local societal norms that are more acceptable in the host culture. They also need to learn to operate in the host country's language.

However, there have been many critiques of any absolute theory, such as assimilation, as its rigid stance is considered both unidimensional and unfeasible. Croucher and Kramer (2017), among others, note that cultural fusion is inevitable and is a more realistic portrayal of the immigrant experience because cross-cultural adaptation is a creative, reciprocal and dynamic process (De La Garza & Ono, 2015). The migrants can utilise resources from their home and host country's languages, cultures and contexts to integrate, withstand and influence the home country's culture.

The theory proposed by De La Garza and Ono (2015) argued that there were multiple ways for migrant adaptation and acquiescing to the host culture was not obligatory; moreover, the host society and culture also changed and evolved with the influx of migrants, indicating that the integration strategy of the process of acculturation was dynamic and two-dimensional as it involved both the host individuals and the immigrants.

Although some research has been carried out on the adaptation of immigrant entrepreneurs, they have often concentrated on the economic aspect of adaptation; especially highlighting the point that because of the disadvantages immigrants faced in the host labour market, they frequently opted for self-employment (for example, Cueto & Rodríguez Álvarez, 2015; Jiang et al., 2016; Thomas & Ong, 2015). The review of literature below encompasses the economic, social, cultural, socio-cultural and psychological adaptation of immigrant entrepreneurs.

1) Economic adaptation

An abundance of prior literature indicates that recent immigrants are unable to find work appropriate to their education and experience (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Rueda-Armengot & Peris-Ortiz, 2012). This phenomenon has variously been termed an economic dead-end, relative disadvantage theory (Cueto & Rodríguez Álvarez, 2015) and the labour market's blocked mobility (Soydas & Aleti, 2015). It denotes the fact that immigrants have limited opportunities and inhibited markets which turns them towards self-employment as an adaptive

strategy to alleviate economic paucity among immigrants (Rosales, 2013). While others argue that immigration based on opportunity entrepreneurship enhances economic growth Ruiz et al. (2017) and is a result of changing influence between countries and therefore cannot be ignored.

Moreover, recent research cautions that the need-based and opportunity-based categorisation of entrepreneurial activity is misleading Ruiz et al. (2017). The mixed-method study included 459 respondents to quantitative questionnaires, which were followed up by 18 in-depth interviews and concluded that constraining the motivations of individual entrepreneurs into two categories was an oversimplification of their rationales. In practice, immigrant entrepreneurs had mixed motivations of opportunity and necessity, and this also temporally was fluid based on the circumstances and changed over time as entrepreneurs were frequently driven by both opportunity and necessity factors Ruiz et al. (2017). Opportunity-based entrepreneurship differs because of the entrepreneurs higher levels of education, average income potential, legal standing (Hong et al., 2020), and ability to adapt to and integrate resources from different cultural contexts (Brzozowski et al., 2014). Therefore opportunity-based entrepreneurship was a crucial process resulting in economic adaptation.

2) Social adaptation

Immigrant entrepreneurs also bring social revitalisation to the host economies (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Sui et al., 2015). Larger cities often form co-ethnic communities or enclaves, strengthening community ties through networking and rejuvenating regional development. Ethnic businesses catering exclusively to co-ethnic enclaves have distinctive characteristics and bring immigrant entrepreneurs opportunities for upward mobility by offering them.

Access to support, financial resources and a co-ethnic labour pool. Immigrant entrepreneurs have been known to establish membership within co-ethnic enclaves to tap into the abundance of local advice and networks. They will likely employ other co-ethnic employees (Pullés & Lee, 2019). They are especially able to counter intense competition from local entrepreneurs by using their social ties amongst the dense cluster of the co-ethnic enclave for their economic advantage Ruiz et al. (2017). However, conversely, this can also create hostility for immigrant entrepreneurs among the host country nationals and deter acculturation fostered by the immigrant entrepreneurs' social initiative (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022).

3) Cultural adaptation

Immigrant entrepreneurship literature often concentrates on the role national culture plays in immigrant adaptation (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013) or addresses why some cultures predispose their natives to become self-employed over other cultures using the perspective of the cultural dimensions popularised by Hofstede as per Shinnar et al. (2012). For example, a study by Chand and Ghorbani (2011) revealed that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs displayed a greater probability of employing non-family or unrelated staff than Indian immigrant entrepreneurs due to the inherent differences in individualism and collectivism. Individualism and collectivism are one of the five dimensions outlined by Hofstede (Hofstede, 2011) to compare national cultures. Individualism is one end of the continuum where the prime focus is on self and family in a loosely knit framework of society which favours independence and self-reliance. At the same time, collectivism refers to the other end of the spectrum and focuses on the importance of community, selflessness and altruism.

A similar opinion has also been expressed by Wang et al. (2017) in their empirical study, where they state that Chinese working values have an unequal relationship between leader and subordinate. The differences can be attributed to the endowment of human capital that differs between cultures. A standard measure of human capital is the level of formal education acquired by the immigrant as a greater degree of human capital positively correlates to a higher ability and therefore displays a greater propensity to start an entrepreneurial venture because the immigrant entrepreneur displays a higher capacity for learning new ways of conducting business and adapting to the regulations and legislation of the host country (Backman, 2013).

The difference between the home and host country's cultures has been termed 'cultural distance' (Xu & Chen, 2017), and it can be used to predict adaptation ease. Greater distance makes adapting to a new culture more difficult (Demes & Geeraert, 2014); this is agreed by Salgado and Bastida (2017) and Varela and Gatlin-Watts (2014) as their studies discovered that cultural distance is negatively interconnected to cross-cultural adjustment. For example, Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs might find it easier to conduct business in Singapore or Taiwan rather than in an Anglophone country like the U.K. However, the study by Salgado and Bastida (2017) discovered that such cultural distance could be reduced by enhancing the foreign language skills of the migrants, thus easing adaptation.

4) Socio-cultural adaptation

Acculturation is a dynamic practice of psychological and cultural adaptation when people of varying cultures have direct and continuous contact (Berry, 2015) and involves psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Klafehn et al., 2013). Socio-cultural adaptation is the social aptitude that enables an individual to successfully fit into the host country's culture by procuring the appropriate socio-cultural abilities (Ward et al., 2011). In research, this has commonly been analysed through the lens of the cultural learning approach and especially behavioural dimensions (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2017). Socio-cultural adaptation essentially engages the individual's skills to successfully navigate the host culture repeatedly (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). A study by Schreuders-van den Bergh and Du Plessis (2016) discovered that women immigrants displayed better abilities for socio-cultural adaptability than their male counterparts, indicating that gender influences on the acculturation process were a suggestively important variable.

Entrepreneurship is socio-cultural in nature; therefore, factors relating to the socio-cultural environment deeply impact its activity (Song et al., 2020). Researchers such as Beckers and Blumberg (2013) describe the socio-cultural aspect of adaptation as interpersonal interactions with host country communities and the degree of change immigrant entrepreneurs undertake in their cultural, behavioural and attitudinal actions to make these interactions effective.

Components of the host culture that differ the most from the home culture require the most significant adjustment from the immigrant entrepreneur; therefore, it can be analysed that cultural distance and socio-cultural adaptation are closely interlinked (Demes & Geeraert, 2014) and that if immigrant entrepreneurs attempt to engage and integrate with the host country's human and social capital both pre and post-migration they will find it easier to adapt into their host country (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022), especially if they become fluent in the local language (Salgado & Bastida, 2017). Similarly, other empirical studies suggest that immigrant entrepreneurs displaying positive attitudes experience fewer complications during socio-cultural adaptation and early internationalisation (Saiyed & Ricard, 2021).

Researchers have documented that social capital positively impacts immigrant entrepreneurs' ability to recognise and exploit opportunities outside the co-ethnic enclaves (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013; Sullivan & Ford, 2014). In addition to language skills, other human capital

such as knowledge, training and experience are also required for adjustment in the host country (Seghers et al., 2012) and networking with natives of the host country helps ease adjustment even when there is lesser proficiency in the language - therefore researchers like Froese et al. (2016) recommend bridging dimensions of human capital like language with social capital like networking for making their adjustment process more straightforward. The role of socio-cultural capital was assessed in deeper detail during this empirical research.

5) Psychological adaptation

An individual's psychological adaptation strongly correlates with socio-cultural adaptation, as individuals with better abilities to manage psychological aspects such as emotions achieve greater levels of socio-cultural adaptation in a shorter time (Kuo, 2014). Drigas and Papoutsis (2018) suggest that managing emotional conflict is an ability dimension, not a personality dimension, as it contributes to psychological well-being. Psychological adaptation can be defined as the individual's mental and emotional satisfaction, comfort and welfare in the context of the new culture (Demes & Geeraert, 2014).

A research by Jibeen (2011) on psychological adaptation finds that when life events like immigration become aggravating stressors, for an individual having little or no coping mechanisms, psychological adaptation is compromised, which may even result in mental health deterioration such as anxiety or depression due to acculturative stress. Immigrants that develop competencies, for example, emotional regulation and coping strategies, are more easily able to adapt psychologically to the variances of the cross-cultural environment (Hormiga & Bolívar-Cruz, 2014).

Entrepreneurship literature also has studied the role of emotion as it can guide an individual's entrepreneurial activities (Cerdin et al., 2014). Emotions can include both positive (for example, happiness and hope) and negative (for example, anger and fear) constituents (Hormiga & Bolívar-Cruz, 2014). Positive and negative emotions directly impact the entrepreneurial process by directing effective changes influencing the individual's behaviour and actions (Cerdin et al., 2014). Subsequently, the immigrant entrepreneur's cross-cultural competencies for psychological adaptation centre on positive attitude, coping strategies and emotion management.

In exceptionally dynamic and unpredictable entrepreneurship environments, emotions may be the tipping point which alters the balance during decision-making and influence the entrepreneurs' risk perception and preferences (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018) and is a crucial competency for bearing challenges and taking entrepreneurial risks (Nikitina & Lapiņa, 2018). In the cross-cultural context, emotion management helps manage conflicts relating to cultural differences. Therefore, many researchers (for example, Omorede et al., 2015) suggest that cross-cultural competencies include perceiving, understanding, and managing emotions. Managing emotions consists of having an awareness of emotions of the self and having the ability to solve emotional conflicts by managing frustration of failed social interactions with patience (Tharbe et al., 2021).

This comprehensive analysis of acculturation and its related concepts indicated that acculturation is not only likely but is, to a certain extent, inevitable. However, this does not mean the immigrant loses their cultural identity. The extent of interaction within the host society and the level of home-culture contacts maintained influences the acculturation process. The core values an immigrant brings from their home culture are seldom abandoned to adopt host-culture values; simply, the immigrants take on some of the host culture ideals while retaining their own cultural identity. Barker (2015) concluded that while it is achievable for immigrants (especially the 1st generation ones) to gain some bicultural competence; nevertheless, the most common acculturation outcome is integration as immigrants adapt to some of the host culture traits while retaining their home-culture identity firmly.

2.5 Concepts underpinning the research

2.5.1 Mixed embeddedness approach

The mixed embeddedness approach was considered significantly important for studying immigrant entrepreneurs as this approach draws attention to the influence exerted by the host country's external environment on opportunity structures. This approach implies that while human, social and financial capitals are crucial for immigrant entrepreneurs, however, as the individuals do not live in a vacuum, therefore, external factors such as national policies (for example, immigration or state policies for starting a business) also have varying levels of impact on the opportunity structures available to them.

The mixed embeddedness theory proposes that the immigrant entrepreneurs' prospects for upward mobility are only understood when in addition to their social embeddedness, their socio-political and politico-institutional embeddedness is also factored in (Storti, 2014). This approach operates on the assumption that the increasing numbers of new immigrant entrepreneurs who get into entrepreneurship are entrepreneurial due to their lack of human and financial capital (Soydas & Aleti, 2015), and their social networks are used effectively for making up the deficiency for gaining opportunities.

The mixed embeddedness approach does not exclusively deal with opportunity structures and opportunities but also assesses how the immigrant individuals are rooted in broader social structures (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). These relatively concrete networks in which the immigrant entrepreneurs are embedded are formed by their social relationships with their customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders such as banks. Often direct competitors and even the law enforcers are ignored when social embeddedness is considered, but they also have a role in the social embeddedness of the immigrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

Furthermore, Munkejord (2017) discovered that the female migrants from Russia in cross-cultural marriages to host country natives could easily access resources in the host environment. They had easier access to bank loans, business advisors and third-party associates. This finding is similar to the findings of Davies et al. (2015), who discovered that the level of adjustment in the host country was the highest among migrants with host country spouses and the lowest among migrants who had partners from their home country. This proves that immigrant entrepreneurs who were also marriage-related migrants may not necessarily experience the same challenges as new immigrant entrepreneurs who have no local contacts; due to their extraordinary access to host country networks and deeper embeddedness into the socio-cultural level of the host society.

The drawback of the mixed embeddedness approach is its inability to clarify why there are widespread inter-ethnic variances inside the entrepreneurial concentration. Moreover, being a reasonably new approach, there is a marked absence of historical perspective. Also, another disadvantage is that this approach primarily focuses on activities of the lower end of the market and does not take into full consideration that immigrant entrepreneurs may also be motivated by 'pull' factors and get into entrepreneurship willingly to enhance their upward mobility.

Many ethnic entrepreneurs enter or remain in business ownership despite having enhanced qualifications, skill sets and access to external, formal financing sources to create high-quality enterprises with an emphasis on larger-scale productions and growth orientation. Such immigrant entrepreneurs prefer to diversify into sectors of high value for the economy, not necessarily low-level retailing and restaurant businesses that were characteristic of earlier under-resourced immigrants (Mavoungou, 2020). This subtle but crucial shift in motivations for entrepreneurship may profoundly impact the eventual expected outcomes for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Therefore, while the mixed embeddedness approach is a crucial theory underpinning this research; however, the researcher felt that no singular theory suitably encompassed all the variables that informed the basis of this research. Consequently, the impact of other theories and variables were also considered for underpinning this research, especially the role of human capital and aspects of ethnic enclave theory, both of which impact entrepreneurial opportunities (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020).

2.5.2 Co-ethnic enclaves and networks

An ethnic enclave is a geographic area with a high concentration of ethnically similar people who conduct business mainly with the members of their own community (Terzano, 2014). Co-ethnic enclaves (for example, Chinatown in many metropolitan cities globally) are business neighbourhoods that form a strong network for entrepreneurs with small enterprises and limited English skills. However, they also serve as social gathering places for people from a particular ethnicity (Danzer & Yaman, 2013). Immigrant entrepreneurs are likely to congregate in co-ethnic groups, especially when the host culture is vastly different from that of their own culture. They are likely to assemble around demarcated co-ethnic areas (for example, Chinatowns), which have shops catering to their ethnicity, restaurants and even hospitals that specifically cater to their own cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, they are more likely to select the location of their home based on its concentration of ethnic residents or around other foreigners to the host country; for example, Chinese immigrants choose areas that are inhabited by other South East Asians (Achidi Ndofor & Priem, 2011). Familiarity helps with the adjustment process, and an immigrant entrepreneur who is

well adjusted to their general environment has a greater level of satisfaction and reduced cognitive stress load. They can interact socially more efficiently and build relationships, and these co-ethnic networks can enable the immigrant entrepreneur to set up a business more efficiently (Wang & Warn, 2018).

Contrastingly, immigrant entrepreneurs who find that their basic needs are not suitably satisfied undergo cognitive stress and are unable to form new social capital, which has a knock-on effect on their ability to efficiently perform synchronised procedures or execute challenging tasks (Partanen et al., 2014). An increasing body of literature has deliberated on the significance of co-ethnic networks and the supportive role they play in the social adjustment of migrant populations (Partanen et al., 2014; Sullivan & Ford, 2014).

Kremel et al. (2014) note that immigrant entrepreneurs with solid networks within their social, co-ethnic enclaves' can have advantages even over the entrepreneurs who are native to the host country. However, Tavassoli and Trippel (2019) argue that simply being within a co-ethnic enclave does not significantly impact the prospects of entrepreneurship. They propose that the advantage derives only from co-ethnic communities, with a relatively higher share of entrepreneurs who form their own networks.

Studies on social research underscore the importance of social identity, use of social enclaves and co-ethnic networking in adapting to a new culture (for example, Lo & Teixeira, 2015; Ojo & Shizha, 2018). Other researchers also note that without cultural adaptation, immigrant entrepreneurs find it difficult to cater to a more mainstream market and get limited to their social enclaves (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011). Kloosterman and Rath (2018) similarly talk about the importance of the social embeddedness of immigrant entrepreneurs in their paper.

Social identities are formed within co-ethnic enclaves by the immigrant communities. This identity is defined as emotional value, cognition and significance attached to a membership with a specific group. Social identities help create a co-ethnic advantage, per the systematic review by Malerba and Ferreira (2020), which has been described as a perception of credibility within a co-ethnic business. For example, staff of Chinese ethnicity in a Chinese restaurant help to create the perception of trust and authenticity for the majority of the customers (Wang & Warn, 2018).

Furthermore, a robust social identity helps to develop and maintain a co-ethnic network which is especially beneficial for a start-up business (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020; Robertson & Grant, 2016), and it helps in decreasing the transaction cost of trade, especially among strangers in the open market by offering collective resources and information unavailable to other entrepreneurs lacking the co-ethnic social identity in the traditional markets (Arrighetti et al., 2014).

Co-ethnic networks also bring advantages by providing opportunities and a mutual trust platform, enabling community members to build successful businesses (Zhang et al., 2016). Research reveals that co-ethnic enclave networks were instrumental in deciding the nature of immigrant entrepreneurship, especially amongst Chinese enclaves, by providing a shared base of knowledge and resources easily accessed by a new immigrant entrepreneur (Ojo & Shizha, 2018). The degree of embeddedness determines the strength of the network ties; immigrant entrepreneurs reap the benefits of strong ties within their co-ethnic networks as kinship, mutual trust and friendship are freely offered (Partanen et al., 2014; Sullivan & Ford, 2014). Strong ties, therefore, impact newly incorporated enterprises most significantly because of their need to access resources which are quickly and efficiently obtained via co-ethnic networks rather than conventional sources (Zolin et al., 2016).

Furthermore, Terzano (2014) notes that an increasingly popular trend of multi-ethnic enclaves is being noted that is transforming the concept of conventional enclaves. Traditionally co-ethnic enclaves catered to a solitary ethnic minority, for example, people of only Chinese ethnicity in Chinatown; however, there are growing occurrences of co-ethnic transitions as other similar yet distinct co-ethnic minority groups' presence increases in these conventional enclaves, for example, Vietnamese or Taiwanese businesses and homes in Chinatown (Chen, 2018).

Researchers note that reconfiguration is inevitable, and another way in which ethnic enclaves are significantly changing is by allowing the area to become diversified in terms of residents while the businesses in the area remain specific to the ethnic identity. Moreover, such areas' ethnic identities are often commodified to attract tourism and gain other opportunities (Terzano, 2014). This change would potentially broaden the business horizons of those immigrant entrepreneurs who cater exclusively to single, co-ethnic minority groups through their businesses because they will be able to cater to a larger market. For example, Chinese grocery

stores in Chinatown can also carry Japanese or Vietnamese goods or market their goods to local customers who want to try ethnic Chinese groceries.

However, it must be noted that despite the benefits of being associated with co-ethnic enclaves; a longstanding association also becomes a barrier to the growth of the business as the immigrant entrepreneur is unable to acquire host country skills easily and understand local business practices, cultural behaviours or gain local language proficiency which reduces their ability to acculturate into the mainstream markets (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013; T. Jones et al., 2014).

Co-ethnic enclaves, therefore, limit the scope for the entrepreneur and the business. Consequently, creating networks outside specific co-ethnic enclaves is integral for growing a business that is integrated into mainstream society (Gast et al., 2016). A key breakout strategy for enterprises that intend to cross the boundaries of their co-ethnic enclave is to build multicultural organisations with business partners and employees that are non-co-ethnic and diverse so that the organisation is well equipped to adapt to the host culture (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020).

- **Changing the nature of Ethnic enclaves**

Moreover, studies indicate that ethnic enclaves may no longer be spatially constrained as earlier studies had indicated. There are spatial changes in immigrant-owned enterprises, which no longer are relegated to specific ethnic enclave areas or lower-end addresses. Newer firms can have more central business district area premises or upmarket addresses in suburban locations and business parks. Developed economies often show a trend in diversification and growth of immigrant-owned enterprises with fast growth trajectories, primarily because of their online presence, which allows them not to remain limited to their immediate geographic area as per Kloosterman and Rath (2018).

Recent studies also indicate that while social networks are an asset for an immigrant entrepreneur, these networks do not necessarily need to refer to local ethnic networks alone as the role of global and transnational linkages can no longer be undermined, especially with increased ease of connectivity and global business connections (Bagwell, 2017; Pruthi & Wright, 2017). Transnational linkages are relevant for dis-embedding and re-embedding the immigrants and impact immigrant entrepreneurs' opportunity windows and social positions

(Pluss, 2013). The study by Zubair and Brzozowski (2018) also focuses on this exact point that recent immigrant communities do not necessarily have access to co-ethnic enclaves any longer and therefore resort to other relations and networks for opportunities and their entrepreneurial success. This research, therefore, aimed to assess the role that ethnic enclaves play for current immigrant entrepreneurs and if there were any changes in this role.

2.5.3 Cross-cultural competencies

Immigrant entrepreneurs' cross-cultural competencies are skills that migrants bring to help them in the cross-cultural context. This can include language skills, their level of education, influences that increase cross-cultural intelligence like cross-cultural exposure or training and similar competencies that enhance their ability to thrive in a different cultural context (Brzozowski et al., 2014). Living in a culturally diverse milieu can be challenging, requiring distinctive cross-cultural competencies from the immigrating individuals to remain competitive (Glinka, 2018).

These cross-cultural competencies, which an immigrant entrepreneur requires for effective entrepreneurial activity, are also beneficial in enabling the individual to acculturate into the host society. Cross-cultural competencies include skills required for identifying opportunities, leveraging tangible and intangible assets and deploying resources (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011). Competencies are resources that immigrant entrepreneurs may leverage to enhance the productivity of other resources (Mathews et al., 2016). These include abilities like language competence, learned culture-specific abilities and the individual's aptitude for acquiring these supplementary culture-specific abilities, their attitude towards cultural differences and their ability to flourish amongst diverse cultures (Sui et al., 2015).

Consequently, researchers note that culture impacts the behaviour and the adaptation of immigrant entrepreneurs and accessing resources such as finance and local market knowledge from co-ethnic networks in the host country, enabling them to set up their businesses more easily (Munkejord, 2017). Moreover, the cultural distance can also play a significant role in the choice of products and services choice as well as a market focus for immigrant entrepreneurs (Hamizah Abd et al., 2018). However, the relationship between human capital, the national capital and immigrant entrepreneurship needs to be examined at a deeper level to

understand how some immigrant entrepreneurs leverage their cultural resources more effectively (Backman, 2013) by using their cross-cultural competencies.

According to the literature review, language skills and cultural intelligence are the most important competencies. Moreover, Cross and Gilly (2014) and Saiyed and Ricard (2021) propose the following competencies are just as essential: understanding of the host culture, building relationships, tolerance for ambiguity, adaptability, multi-perspective systematic thinking, proactivity, intuition, sensitivity, attitudes, linguistic aptitude, decision-making that is culturally inclined, diplomacy and international orientation. While competencies are often clubbed under the human resource theory as a small subsection because they link to the knowledge and learnings of the individual, they are considered to be of greater importance in reality.

Research has found that the scarcity of this human capital, along with the attitude of the immigrant entrepreneur, most often inhibits business growth (Saiyed & Ricard, 2021). Immigrant entrepreneurs displaying low levels of cross-cultural competencies often remain limited to serving the ethnic markets predominantly despite the fact that ethnic markets are often small and have a greater internal competition which undercuts business due to the availability of fewer opportunities (Bates & Robb, 2014). Moreover, Bates and Robb (2014) and Kirca et al. (2012) argue that immigrants could rise above low-level entrepreneurship by leveraging their enhanced qualifications and competencies in high-growth non-ethnic markets as it helps them explore new opportunities.

For this research, cross-cultural competencies will be examined under the three main sub-headings:

- 1) **Communication** encompasses non-verbal and verbal interaction, which can nurture better professional and personal relationships. Successful communication entails the message being transmitted, and the intended meaning is clearly understood (Thomas & Peterson, 2016). Language is a crucial competence for the acculturative process. The role of language has been well researched in socio-cultural adaptation (for example, Brzozowski et al., 2014). If immigrant entrepreneurs bring this human capital on arrival to the host country, they can acculturate more easily. Lack of language proficiency can be a hindrance for immigrant entrepreneurs, firstly in accessing host market resources

and secondly in transferring from an ethnic to a more mainstream clientele (Arrighetti et al., 2014). Moreover, proficiency in the language enables the immigrant entrepreneur to identify and exploit the host country's mainstream market opportunities (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). However, despite the academic understanding of the importance of language, several studies have reported the lack of language skills as a common issue faced by immigrant entrepreneurs (Nel & Abdullah, 2015).

2) **Cultural intelligence** is a multi-dimensional conception, defined as the individual's ability to receive and process messages, consider, and select their cultural context, help in shaping cultural facets in their current environment and make reasonable judgments which are viable for acculturating successfully into new cultural settings (Fang et al., 2018). Current conceptualisations of cultural intelligence include cognitive, meta-cognitive, motivational and behavioural cultural intelligence (Huff et al., 2014) and competencies linked with cross-cultural adaptation and adjustment. Cognitive cultural intelligence is the knowledge the immigrant individual has of the specific practices, norms, religious beliefs and rules and regulations etc., of the host culture. Meta-cognitive cultural intelligence is concerned with the processes which the immigrant individual can employ to understand and acquire knowledge about their cross-cultural context. It also is their coping strategies, cultural awareness, and ability to act appropriately according to the local norms (Huff et al., 2014).

3) **Acculturation:** The acculturation process involves an immigrant's adjustment and adaptation to their new cultural context in the host environment (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). Acculturation includes the concepts of cross-cultural adjustment and cross-cultural adaptation. The cross-cultural adjustment was defined as a level of familiarity and psychological comfort in a new culture. However, whether an immigrant entrepreneur becomes psychologically comfortable and familiar depends mainly on the individual's relationship with an assortment of aspects within that host environment. These aspects are the individual's sociability, length of stay, access to good living conditions, and acceptance of variances in cultural and work-related norms, traditions, and expectations (Koveshnikov et al., 2014). Cross-cultural adjustment positively correlates with achievements and effectiveness (Salgado & Bastida, 2017). While cross-cultural adaptation is a dynamic process that enables immigrant entrepreneurs to utilise resources such as languages, cultures, and contexts from both the home and host

country to withstand, acculturate into and also influence the host country's culture (De La Garza & Ono, 2015; Sui et al., 2015). This is further subdivided into economic, social, cultural, socio-cultural, and psychological adaptation.

Some of the critical extant literature that was analysed for this study is represented in table 2.2

Table 2.2 - Extant literature

Concept	Definition	Content	Authors
Mixed embeddedness	The mixed embeddedness theory states that the immigrant entrepreneurs' prospects for upward mobility can be estimated only when their social embeddedness, their socio-political and politico-institutional embeddedness are all factored in.	Mixed embeddedness Social embeddedness Institutional embeddedness	Davies et al. (2015); Kloosterman and Rath (2018); Munkejord (2017); Storti (2014);
Ethnic enclaves	Ethnic enclaves are areas having high concentrations of people from similar ethnic backgrounds who share similar cultures, preferences, and habits. Ethnic enclaves traditionally support new immigrant entrepreneurs with easier access to resources such as suppliers, labour, capital, and networking which protect small enterprises and give them easier entry to specialised ethnic markets.	Ethnic enclaves Networks Support systems Financial power centre	Azmat (2013); Beckers and Blumberg (2013); Jones et al. (2014); Kim (2018); Wang (2015); Zolin et al. (2016);
Communication	The immigrant's ability and interest in learning to interact in the local language. This also indicates their effectiveness in gaining new linguistic skills that help them cope with the host culture and cultural diversity by switching between the home and host cultural frames. Cultural metacognition (knowledge and awareness) has to be applied by the	Knowledge (culture-specific) Communicative behaviour (verbal and nonverbal) Metacognition	Chelariu and Osmonbekov (2014); Lorenz et al. (2018); Sui et al. (2015); Wang et al. (2017);

	immigrants to deal with people from different cultural backgrounds and contexts effectively.		
Cross-cultural intelligence	Cross-cultural intelligence is the individual's capability to manage effectively and perform in a culturally diverse atmosphere. Cross-cultural Intelligence is a multi-dimensional paradigm consisting of cognitive, motivational, metacognitive, and behavioural intelligence.	Knowledge (processes, context, and content) Cognition Metacognition	Alon et al. (2016); Aslam et al. (2016); Bücker et al. (2014); Fang et al. (2018); Huff et al. (2014);
Acculturation (Adjustment)	Psychological adjustment can be understood in terms of stress and coping frameworks, while socio-cultural adaptation is related to the ability to 'fit in' the new culture.	Stress and coping Learning Personality traits	Koveshnikov et al. (2014); Okpara and Kabongo (2017);
Acculturation (Adaptation)	The capability to adapt to a different culture by accepting its cultural specifications, value systems and beliefs. Adaptation indicates a higher propensity for cross-cultural intelligence.	Emotional resilience Flexibility/openness Perceptual acuity Personal autonomy	Croucher and Kramer (2017); De La Garza and Ono (2015); Shrikant (2018); van der Zee and van Oudenhoven (2022);

The use of the above concepts in various degrees was considered appropriate for grounding this study to identify the successful strategies Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs can implement to overcome the challenges they face in the U.K. The mixed embeddedness approach encompasses the importance of human, social (co-ethnic networks) and financial capitals and also highlights the importance of political and institutional embeddedness (such as market characteristics, rules and laws that impact the immigrants) in opportunity structures.

However, despite its relative comprehensiveness over previous theories, the mixed embeddedness approach gives little importance to the individual immigrant entrepreneurs' human capital, especially their cross-cultural competencies. It chooses to place greater importance on institutional embeddedness and social embeddedness. This may be because the mixed embeddedness approach aims to understand the impact of these variables in opportunity structures. However, this study aimed to use the mixed embeddedness approach to assess enablers for immigrant entrepreneurs' acculturative process along with their ability to access better opportunities.

Competencies are a variable that can be easily improved and upgraded. Essentially, they are a variable that can be easily controlled and enhanced by the individual, while the other variables, such as financial capital and social embeddedness, are not solely in the control of the individual. Moreover, while an individual may be able to attempt to achieve deeper institutional embeddedness, however, market and political conditions cannot be influenced by them. Therefore, the individual's cross-cultural competencies may have a much higher impact on immigrant entrepreneurs' acculturation process into the host society. Therefore, this study proposed to investigate if challenges could be met and managed by a much more nuanced combination of the mixed embeddedness approach and a greater emphasis on building the individual entrepreneurs' personal cross-cultural competencies, including cross-cultural intelligence and communication.

2.6 Research gap from theoretical perspective

This study endeavoured to fill gaps in the existing literature by uncovering challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and finding strategies for alleviating these challenges. However, there was little theoretical data available on this subject, and the available information was fragmented and not specific to the context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs

in the U.K. There is little existing literature on how immigrant entrepreneurs manage their challenges and increase their opportunities for upward mobility. A new study was needed to fill these theoretical gaps with a comprehensive framework. The expected outcome of this study was to identify the challenges, learn which elemental orientations impact these challenges and finally discover some suitable solutions that can help lessen the challenges according to the respondents of this study. For this purpose, a qualitative, exploratory research enquiry was considered more suitable than a quantitative one. It was also noted that there was a dearth of qualitative research on this topic and that most current research was quantitative.

Furthermore, some recent research on this topic, such as the systematic review of extant literature by Malerba and Ferreira (2020), indicate the importance of the competitive advantages that immigrant entrepreneurs can gain from co-ethnic communities. The literature review conducted for this research, however, indicates that much of the research available in the extant literature on ethnic enclaves is dated (for example, Dheer, 2018; Ojo & Shizha, 2018), and their relevance in the changing economic situation between China and the U.K can be questioned as the motivation for entrepreneurship has moved from need-based to opportunity based (Dheer, 2018; Wang & Liu, 2015). This change creates a significant gap in the literature that recent literature has not fulfilled. The current research can fill this research gap.

2.7 Conclusion

Chapter 2 Literature review conducted an in-depth analysis of who is an entrepreneur and an immigrant entrepreneur and discussed concepts of cross-cultural competence, including intelligence. The concepts of acculturation, which encompasses adjustment and adaptation, and cross-cultural communication were also discussed in great detail. Furthermore, theories relevant to immigrant entrepreneurship were identified and critically analysed. These included culture theory, ethnic enclave theory, blocked mobility or disadvantage theory, the human, social, and financial capital theory and the mixed embeddedness theory. The knowledge gained from understanding and discussing these concepts and theories grounded the design of the empirical research for this study.

A significant section of the literature review involved assessing the challenges identified by the current literature. The majority of the researchers reported a deficiency of language skills, lack of financial resources, lack of information and support in the host country and unequal

opportunities as their key challenges in the host country. Other significant challenges that emerged from studying the extant literature and empirical studies were inherent language and cultural predispositions, which became barriers to communication and discrimination or distrust from the host country. Furthermore, the inexperience of the entrepreneur was found to enhance the difficulties faced in mainstream market penetration (Omisakin, 2017). A study by Nel and Abdullah (2015) reported that in addition to problems accessing capital/finance, some of the other common challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs were a lack of entrepreneurial and cross-cultural training.

Other researchers have suggested that immigrant entrepreneurs experience greater market entry barriers due to their location in inner-city areas which offer poor infrastructure and where the effective demand for the goods and services is lower despite the higher population density (Ojo & Shizha, 2018). Moreover, their access to business start-up credit may be hampered due to racism and even hostility or suspicion from members of the host community (Moon et al., 2014). The location of immigrant businesses in smaller cities or cities with a predominantly local population can also hamper business growth. Support and resources available to immigrant entrepreneurs in these smaller locations can often be limited.

Furthermore, facing different challenges can also be true for individuals of similar ethnic backgrounds operating in different cultural contexts; for example: if some Chinese immigrants moved to London and other Chinese immigrants moved to Glasgow, then the challenges faced by them might differ in the different cities, and their challenges were based on the support provided by the local ethnic community and their access to resources in the local area etc. This difference becomes even more true when immigrants are settled in another country, such as Italy. People identifying with the same ethnicity might reveal different motivations for immigration and entrepreneurship and therefore face different challenges (Wang et al., 2017).

Moreover, Chreim et al. (2018) note that female immigrant entrepreneurs also tend to face gender-based barriers, which also impact their entrepreneurial journey by slowing down their pace of growth and therefore, a majority of the entrepreneurs were founded by men (Hundt & Sternberg, 2016). Being underrepresented in the labour force, women have added economic challenges. They often also suffer from lower levels of education which forms a vicious cycle by reducing their work opportunities and, therefore, their economic standing. These factors combined also impact entrepreneurial immigrant women as they also report having lesser

education and reduced economic standing, which is a significant barrier to entrepreneurship. An interesting finding by Koellinger et al. (2013) noted that while women had lower start-up propensity, the success rate of their entrepreneurship was higher than that of entrepreneurship founded by men.

To sum up, the literature review offers a litany of challenges that immigrant entrepreneurs commonly face in their host countries (for example, Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Azmat, 2013; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020). Moreover, the challenges identified from literature which spans ethnicities and countries may not strictly apply to Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the specific cultural context of the U.K. Further, there is no clear evidence from existing literature highlighting the reasons why certain challenges are experienced or why these challenges are different among different immigration entrepreneurial groups (Teixeira, 2017).

A majority of previous researches that have studied the various kinds of challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs in their host country have applied the quantitative research methodology, which assesses 'which challenges' rather than using a more expansive qualitative methodology to question 'why' the challenges were experienced and 'how' these challenges can be managed (for example, Nel & Abdullah, 2015). As the 'why' and 'how to overcome' questions are equally important as the 'which barriers' question, thus lack of research in this area creates a gap in the literature which needs to be addressed with this empirical research.

Firstly, the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs were identified and categorised from the empirical research to identify which challenges were most commonly experienced by immigrant entrepreneurs globally so that this empirical research can be based on the foundation of the knowledge that already exists in extant literature. This partially fulfils the first objective of this research which is to identify the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. The second objective of the research requires identifying how the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. are currently managing their challenges using their personal cross-cultural competencies.

The categorised challenges are then linked to the specific competencies that can help manage these challenges. Furthermore, the role of ethnic enclaves was identified to assess if they can help the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs manage the challenges they face in the U.K. This point addresses the third objective of this research. Finally, these findings eventually link with

the acculturation of the individual. Using these findings, future Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs can prepare for acculturation and gain more opportunities in the U.K. This final point addresses the fourth objective of the research.

The gaps in literature were identified to form the conceptual framework for this research by integrating pertinent constructs from the literature review. Based on the above literature review, common challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs were commonly discussed in the literature. However, this perusal of extant literature highlights the lack of contemporary immigrant entrepreneurship research relating to how to solve the challenges, the role of ethnic enclaves in acculturation and how to solve the challenges that the immigrant entrepreneurs encounter; resultingly, these became the overarching research problems which needed to be examined through this empirical research.

As a study of this size cannot cater to all the variables and check all the permutations possible in such a wide area of research, therefore, this study aimed to address the previously outlined research questions while setting aside variables such as gender, motivation for entrepreneurship and specific location while considering the immigrant's ethnicity and duration of stay in the host country to be the basis for their inclusion. Therefore, this study considered any 1st generation of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs living in any part of the U.K. This study aimed to assess which challenges were commonly faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K., whether they impacted their acculturative process in the host country, what role was played by ethnic enclaves in supporting incoming immigrant entrepreneurs and how the immigrant entrepreneurs solved the challenges faced by them in a practical manner.

In the next chapter, the methodology selected for conducting the empirical research is discussed in further detail.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter studied extant literature on cross-cultural challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs. It deliberated on the key concepts that were particularly applicable to this empirical research which is explicitly directed toward Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. The literature review helped develop a firm grounding of the subject matter. It will help design empirical research to identify the challenges specific to Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and the competencies and support systems required to overcome them.

Executing the primary research correctly is essential, as this process delivers the findings that appropriately address the research aims. Research is the means by which a researcher finds out rationales and facts; it increases academic knowledge, finds answers to specific research questions and extends our understanding of the world. Research methodology is the process by which the researcher can execute the research in a manner that best addresses the research objectives. This chapter demonstrates and analyses the research methodology employed to address the research question that was put forth in this research.

The chapter opened by debating what research paradigms and philosophy are and how they apply to this research. Furthermore, the research design suitable to achieve the aims of this research was evaluated, the methodological fit was examined, the sample selection method was specified, and finally, the data collection process and analysis methods used were reviewed. The qualitative rigour was explained, including transferability, credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings. The ethical considerations pertaining to the research were similarly addressed and are elaborated on below.

3.1 Research paradigms and philosophy

Paradigms are a set of researchers' assumptions that examine existing circumstances (Maxwell, 2012, p. 62), and they provide the researcher's guidelines to carry out their research. Paradigms are steeped in the researcher's assumptions about reality; methodology, on the other hand, is defined as the technique that a researcher uses to discover such 'reality' (Saunders et al., 2016). Furthermore, each paradigm is subdivided into three components of psychological

assumptions: epistemology, ontology, and methodology (Kekeya, 2019).

Ontology denotes the researcher's beliefs pertaining to reality and what is true. Our perception of truth influences what we think. The ontological assumptions of this researcher had an impact on topic selection, how the research question was formulated and which strategies were employed for conducting the research. While epistemology denotes the connection between the researcher and such reality and relates to how we get knowledge. The ontological and epistemological positions of the researcher had a crucial role in forming the philosophical foundation for this research.

This philosophical basis impacts all aspects of the practical research process and was instrumental in why this topic was selected, the formulation of the research question, the selection of methodology, how the sampling was conducted and the choice of the research design. The researcher is a Chinese immigrant in the U.K. with an entrepreneurial mindset, which informed the topic selection. Moreover, the language the interviews were carried out in was directly related to the researcher's greater comfort level in conducting interviews in Mandarin. Therefore the research sampling was impacted by the researcher's own ontological and epistemological positioning.

Research paradigms are not absolutes and tend to fall on a continuum that ranges from exact design principles to dynamic, unstructured directives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Paradigms create a conceptual framework within which the researchers operate to guide the discoveries through principles and assumptions and represent the researcher's philosophical way of thinking (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Therefore, paradigms guide how research should be strategically planned and designed, how the primary research is executed, and how the resultant findings need to be organised and interpreted (Kekeya, 2019).

The paradigms considered appropriate for the qualitative research methodology are positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, constructivism and participatory paradigms (Mohajan, 2018). The paradigm choice is based on the criteria of the research objectives, the research problem and the hypothesis if the researcher uses one. As the Positivism paradigm advocates, similar results can be obtained for another research that follows the same research process using statistical tools, therefore leading to the generalisation of the results (Wahyuni, 2012). Therefore, this research paradigm is better suited to quantitative rather than qualitative

(Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

As this research aimed to understand the point of view of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs rather than generating generalisable results, this research was considered to fall under the realm of constructivism with a relativist ontology. The constructivist epistemology offers the perspective that our knowledge is a construct dependent on human perception, social experiences and convention (Fosnot, 2013). Moreover, the researcher aimed to gain a broader perspective of the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs based on their experiences and perception of how to resolve these challenges. Relativism is linked to a reality which is challenging to comprehend; therefore, researchers need to rely on the triangulation of individual participants' perceptions with those of others to determine a single reality (Saunders et al., 2016).

The relativism paradigm can employ multiple methods, for example, interviews, observation and/or case studies, to capture reality in full measure while accentuating the requirement for discovery and substantiation of theories (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The relativism paradigm aims to explore and clarify a phenomenon rather than simply confirming it, as was also the goal of this research; this can be attributed to the fact that relativism gains knowledge concerning *“theories, which can be more or less truth like”* (Danermark et al., 2005, p. 10).

The truth as it applies to individuals is created and shaped by the context of their experiences, and such truth can also evolve and change as the experiences of the individual and their context change. As this study leaned towards relativism, it characteristically commences with a specific question guided by the existing theories to discover a clear explanation of the reality being researched by engaging the existing theories related to that reality (Fletcher, 2017). As multiple realities can exist, the researcher needed to dig deeper to understand the context of the interviewees.

Relativism is a popular philosophical doctrine as it is seen as an ethical and epistemic standpoint for open-minded tolerance; conversely, critics of relativism have dismissed it for having an almost uncritical and incoherent intellectual permissiveness (André, 2013). Cultural relativism, a subset of relativism, propagates the elimination of societal rigidity regarding reasoning, ethics and conduct by removing all actual definitions of universal truth and promoting the ideology that truth is relative to a contextual reference such as culture (André,

2013). Cultural relativism thus endorses individualistic perspectives to govern individuals' actions, thoughts and responses. The disadvantage of such ideology can be personal bias overshadowing the systems, discouraging diversity and even chaos resulting from limited moral progress.

It can also be said that “*classic cultural relativism has become both epistemologically obsolete and normatively objectionable*” and “*an almost impossible position to defend in the early 21st century*” (Eriksen, 2017, p. 1141&1147). As extant theories may not necessarily be calibrated to accurately reflect the reality that is being addressed by exploratory research like this one, therefore it becomes essential to recognise that all results obtained by this research are conditional to “*avoid any commitment to the content of specific theories*” (Bhaskar, 2015, p. 5).

However, using existing theories assists in conducting a deeper investigation that might elaborate, support or deny the theory and can ultimately contribute to building newer and more precise descriptions of reality (Fletcher, 2017). With the grounding of this knowledge, the researcher of this study employed the ethnic enclave theory and the mixed embeddedness theory as a guide to inform the conceptual framework for this thesis. While these theories mainly have arisen from expatriate-related research, they also link suitably to research based on immigrant entrepreneurs. They are therefore considered suitable for this research. A possible disadvantage of using these theories was that they might or might not accurately mirror the reality of challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs and the required cross-cultural competencies that can help them acculturate more easily.

According to Saunders et al. (2016), research philosophy is divided into positivism, interpretivism/constructivism, pragmatism, critical realism, and post-modernism. Positivism works with observable social reality, leads to generalisations that are ‘law-like’ or absolute and can offer predictive abilities and causal explanation. Interpretivism focuses on narratives and perceptions to form a new understanding of worldviews. It can lead to multiple interpretations and realities. Pragmatism outlines true theories to generate knowledge for successful action; it has a problem-solving attitude. Critical realism believes knowledge is transient and that facts are social constructs; it offers historical causal explanations (Saunders et al., 2016). Post-modernism notes that truth is decided by dominant ideologies and focuses on absences and oppressed meanings.

As the purpose of this research was to understand the various perceptions from the interviewee narratives, the research philosophy best suited to answer the research question for this thesis was interpretivism. An interpretivist approach attempts to understand how human beings shape the world with their own beliefs (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It argues that the world should be considered a complex subject for individual interpretation (Lewis & Saunders, 2017). Furthermore, the research focused on the interviewees' perceptions to form a worldview regarding the challenges faced by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.

The researcher attempted to understand the interpretations of research participants, and the results of this study are therefore contextual and not easily generalisable (Saunders et al., 2016). This research attempted to take an interpretivist approach through participant interaction by aiming to understand their perspectives on the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and how cross-cultural competencies, cultural intelligence and ethnic enclaves could help resolve these issues.

3.2 Research approach

The research approach needs to be succinct and transparent because it informs the formulation of the research strategy (Alase, 2017). The clarity a researcher achieves regarding the subject matter theory at the beginning of the research process guides the research project's design. Two contrasting approaches may be adopted by a researcher: deductive or inductive. The deductive approach aims to evaluate outlined propositions and hypotheses the researcher generates from existing theory to verify or falsify those hypotheses. It draws from the simple logic that if the research premise is true, then its findings will also be true. Other researchers can replicate the results if other parameters of the research remain consistent, and therefore the deductive approach is more suitable for a quantitative methodology rather than for this research which uses the qualitative methodology.

The inductive approach bases the research on observations, and the results of the empirical study are then used to generate and build theories based on the clear links that can be formed between the summary of the findings and the researcher's evaluation of the findings. The conclusions of inductive research are untested and may not be exactly duplicated in similar tests. The inductive approach deeply explores a phenomenon; from these exploratory findings,

themes can be identified, and patterns can be drawn to create a viable conceptual framework of the experiences gathered. Therefore, it is more suitable for this exploratory research. The inductive approach was regarded as the most suitable to answer the research question in this thesis and achieve its research purpose.

3.3 Research strategy

An exploratory investigation is considered suitable when little information is available about the research subject (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) and therefore was considered a suitable strategy given the nature of this study. As the literature review had earlier outlined in chapter 2, the perspectives of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs on the challenges faced by them in the U.K. is largely unexamined in extant literature. An exploratory research design enabled this researcher to discover new insights on what was being experienced by the research participants and ask relevant questions to assess the current circumstances as data details emerged during the interview because exploratory research can shift to new related directions during the process of conducting the empirical research (Saunders et al., 2016).

Exploratory research design, being flexible, is suitable when the underlying research problem is mainly unstructured and requires a better understanding. While the outcomes of exploratory research are often not conclusive, they usually facilitate the formulation of new theories or provide a more detailed understanding of the main problem (Saunders et al., 2016). Therefore, the research strategy selected for this research was exploratory as it was most likely to achieve the aims set out for this study. An exploratory research design was considered best suited for the chosen exploratory qualitative research methodology (Babin et al., 2019) for this research because the researcher was able to ask ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions as required (Yin, 2018) and explore interesting themes that arose during the interview and this aided in theory building after the results were analysed.

A semi-structured interviewing method was considered the most appropriate for this research to answer the research question. An interview is defined as a purposeful conversation (Babin et al., 2019). It is a commonly employed qualitative research methodology to conduct a methodical social investigation in the academic setting. In-depth interviews can draw more profound, nuanced, multifaceted, and rounded data than quantitative inquiries that cover broader appraisals of surface patterns (King et al., 2019).

Interviewing is commonly a verbal interaction on a one-on-one and direct basis because it can elicit clear and direct responses (Babin et al., 2019). The interviewee's views are considered valuable; therefore, through comprehensive interviews, the interviewer can understand the individual's perspectives on the research theme and endeavours to capture the true meanings of the words expressed by the interviewees (King et al., 2019).

Interviews may be unstructured, structured, or semi-structured (King et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this research as they have the advantage of retaining some structure based on the research theme by loosely following a pre-set, standardised set of questions while still retaining the flexibility to follow unique themes that may arise during the discussion (Saunders et al., 2016). For this study, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were considered to be most suitable as semi-structured interviews permitted the interviewees to deliberate on their opinions, experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

At the same time, the researcher was able to explore their meanings (Adams, 2015). By having deep conversations with the interviewees, this researcher could understand the context and dig deeper to understand their perspectives as multiple realities can exist, shaped by the context of their experience. However, researchers note that it is best to have predetermined time limits on the duration of the questioning to keep the data collected focused on the subject matter (King et al., 2019).

3.4 Research choice

Research can be carried out as a mono-method (either qualitative or quantitative) or a mixed-method (using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies) (Lewis & Saunders, 2017; Saunders et al., 2016). The mixed-method researchers claim that when both qualitative and quantitative methods are used together, the mixed-method design brings greater validity to research findings by offering triangulation of the results (Saunders et al., 2016). However, there have been arguments that triangulation does not necessarily result in greater validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Moreover, triangulation essentially assumes single realities, which negate the advantages of an exploratory qualitative study.

Furthermore, in real-world research situations, researchers involved in a mixed-methods design

report issues such as sampling problems, difficulty in analysis and reporting of the results and increased demand for resources such as researcher skills, time and finances (Flick, 2017). Moreover, as per Flick (2017), the mixed-method design also can have a significant weakness as qualitative and quantitative data may result in conflicting results which become challenging to interpret for the researcher, primarily because the analysis of Quantitative data qualitatively can be based upon individual interpretation and subjectivity.

As there is no straightforward process for such interpretation that can yield objective and consistent results, methodological purists insist that the researcher pick either the quantitative or the qualitative paradigm and not mix the two (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Moreover, employing the mixed methodology is both time and resource-consuming and is considered more suitable for larger-scale studies with more time, financial and human resources (Schrauf, 2016). The mixed-method design was therefore not especially suited to this research due to the smaller scale and the severe time and resource limitations the researcher faced.

A mono-method qualitative approach was consequently selected for the purpose of gaining deep insight into the research problem; this choice was grounded on the research question and the research purpose outlined in Chapter 1. To obtain a deeper understanding of the interviewees' perspectives of the challenges and the strategies employed to tackle them, rich data needed to be collected. This researcher selected an exploratory qualitative, interpretative enquiry as the most appropriate strategy to achieve the research objectives.

3.5 Sampling

This study required respondents of Chinese ethnicity who are immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. The U.K. was selected as the appropriate context for this study because the rapid increase of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship is a relatively recent phenomenon in the U.K., and there was little empirical research on this subject that directly addressed the challenges to Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the context of the U.K. Related research has been carried out in other cultural environments especially those of Australia and Netherlands however, there is limited information on the U.K. setting (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020). People considered ethnically Chinese were a suitable sample for this study, including interviewees from Mainland China and Taiwan.

Purposive sampling, in conjunction with the snowball method, is a common method for collecting data when conducting immigrant entrepreneurs' research (see table 3.1), and these sampling techniques were used to identify a suitable sample base for this study. This research used the purposive sampling method to recruit suitable subjects for the research. Purposive sampling can also be called selective or judgmental sampling. The respondents were selected from a non-probability sample base that matched certain desirable characteristics of the population based on the objectives of the research.

Table 3.1 - Sampling method related to immigrant entrepreneurship

Authors	Research title	Research choice	Sampling method	Sampling Size
Munkejord (2017)	Local and transnational networking among female immigrant entrepreneurs in peripheral rural contexts: Perspectives on Russians in Finnmark, Norway.	Qualitative (Interviews)	Snowballing (Personal contacts)	9
Omisakin (2017)	Economic Contributions and Challenges of Immigrant Entrepreneurs to Their Host Country–Case of African Immigrants in Auckland, New Zealand	Qualitative (Interview)	Snowballing (Associations of the immigrant community)	17
McHenry and Welch (2018)	Entrepreneurs and internationalisation: A study of Western immigrants in an emerging market	Qualitative (Interview)	Snowballing (Author’s social network)	12
Zhang and Chun (2018)	Becoming entrepreneurs: how immigrants developed entrepreneurial identities	Qualitative (Interview)	Snowballing (Online community; Local immigration service centre; Friends and acquaintances)	30

In purposive sampling, researchers can handpick the suitable respondents based on their typicality as per the research criteria. For this study, for example, the suitable interviewee was a 1st generation immigrant entrepreneur who belonged to the Chinese ethnicity and had set up a small or medium-sized enterprise in the U.K. (Soydas & Aleti, 2015). The selected suitable respondents included 12 interviewees from Taiwan and 13 from China. The research sample in purposive sampling is built based on the research requirements and therefore is subjective to the research objectives.

The initial interviewees were identified from the researcher's personal contacts and local Chinese associations and trade institutions like

- 1) the Confederation of Chinese Associations, U.K.
- 2) The Chinese Entrepreneurs Association on LinkedIn.
- 3) China Northeast Business Association.
- 4) Yellow pages in Chinese magazines and active Chinese forums such as Go2uk, Londonchinese, Powerapple and Cuclife.
- 5) Northern Britain Chinese Entrepreneurs Association and the U.K. Tier 1 Entrepreneurs groups on Facebook.

At the end of each interview, the interviewees were requested for recommendations of other potential interviewees who could help further data collection for the research, therefore utilising the snowball sampling method.

For the purpose of this research, any individual who belonged to Mainland China and Taiwan was considered suitable because due to their shared ethnicity and cultural heritage, they were likely to experience similar challenges and have comparable perspectives (Cheung, 2017). Moreover, only individuals who were 1st generation immigrants in the U.K. were being considered suitable for the research; 1st generation immigrants are those who were not born in the U.K. and had immigrated at an age when they are likely to remember their arrival in the U.K. (Soydas & Aleti, 2015), typically as adults.

The research data was collected only from 1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs because the challenges faced by 2nd generation immigrant entrepreneurs can be significantly different to those experienced by the 1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs. Challenges such as access to finance, lack of language skills, and lack of knowledge about legal and social rules and

regulations which are critical challenges for 1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs, are not commonly faced by 2nd generation immigrants as per extant literature. Therefore 2nd, generation immigrant entrepreneurs were excluded from the scope of this research and the sampling strategy.

A wide-ranging systematic review of extant entrepreneurship literature by (Aliaga Isla & Rialp, 2013; Malerba & Ferreira, 2020) notes that the majority of studies access their sample base from local institutions and associations relating to specific ethnic groups. Moreover, informal and formal business associations and municipal registries for local businesses can help identify samples related to specific populations (Hart & Acs, 2011), as is required for this study.

Moreover, personal contacts were employed to access the first few interviewees, after which the snowball technique was used. Using personal contacts to identify initial samples is considered suitable and necessary in this context because the interviewees belong to the Chinese ethnic background. As per the traditional Chinese Confucian culture, approaching an individual through personal contact is obligatory and appropriate. The likelihood of gathering information of higher quality increases as the respondent is more willing to share opinions and perspectives with someone who is known or familiar with the ethnic network or through personal contact (Chuang et al., 2015). Using personal and business contacts is therefore necessary for gathering richer and more nuanced data.

It was challenging for the researcher to accurately estimate the number of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. because there is no precise data available from the Government or its agencies, making it more challenging to estimate the appropriate sample size. It is suggested in the literature that qualitative data be collected to the point of saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The point of data saturation is reached when the researcher analyses that no further information can be garnered by adding further participants (Lewis & Saunders, 2017).

Therefore, this study aimed to gather data till the saturation level was reached. Literature similarly suggests that rather than relying on specific sample size, it is reasonable to stop adding cases when nothing new is being learnt any longer while conducting qualitative research (Saunders et al., 2017). However, experts claim that the saturation point is achieved at different points for different researches based on the researcher's epistemological and methodological approach, discipline in which the subject is rooted, the purpose for which the research is being

conducted and practical, logistical considerations (Saunders et al., 2017). Therefore, based on the sample sizes of similar studies conducted earlier on similar subject matters, this number had been assessed as a median of 20 participants. Keeping median sample size and saturation levels in mind, the study aimed to target interviewing approximately 25 to 30 participants. Eventually, 25 suitable respondents were interviewed for this research.

As this research aimed to find out what challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs faced and how they use their cross-cultural competencies to solve the challenges in order to achieve adaptation in the host country, therefore, the attempt was to gain a holistic perspective from Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs rather than specifically focusing on a particular sector, participant age, education level, and gender. Ethically, a researcher may collect any demographic information crucial for forwarding the research; however, it is argued that if the demographic information is collected, it should be suitably utilised when the analysis is conducted. This research collected information on questions regarding the type of sector, immigrant length, immigrant route, and staff numbers for reference.

3.6 Data collection

For the collection of rich qualitative data, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted in this study. Face-to-face interviews have the advantage of offering circumstances where the participants can freely air their opinions and discuss their experiences truthfully. Direct and indirect observation of the participants during the interview allows the researcher to delve deeper into the interviewees' feelings and perspectives (Anguera et al., 2018). The ideal location for conducting a face-to-face interview is usually the interviewees' private office, as it affords confidentiality while allowing the interviewee to feel comfortable in familiar surroundings to share their views freely.

Exploration of human perspectives in their natural setting enabled the researcher to make sense of their everyday contexts and enhanced the understanding of the interviewees' perspectives (Teherani et al., 2015). However, when such face-to-face interviews are impossible, Skype interviews can be used to supplement as they offer similar possibilities of observing the interviewees' body language and nonverbal cues.

The interview invitation letter, consent form and interview information sheets were written in English and Mandarin Chinese. Considering that the English capability and language

preferences might differ amongst the potential participants, the participant invitation letter, interview information sheet and consent form were written in English and Mandarin Chinese. The interviewee could choose which language they preferred to communicate in during the primary research process. Further, the interview guide used during this research was designed in English, and then it was competently translated into Mandarin Chinese by the researcher, who is proficient in both languages.

The translations of the Mandarin Chinese versions of the document of the participant information sheet, invitation letter, consent form and interview protocol were checked by a translation expert to ensure the meaning is the same as the English version. The translated documents were proofread by a professional translator Hsin-Pei, Yu, who graduated with an MSc in Translating & Interpreting from the University of Salford. She has native English and Mandarin fluency and holds a degree from the University of York in 'Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Enquiries regarding the translation for this research can be directed by email to Hsin-Pei, Yu at koala0823@hotmail.com.

The interview guide was provided to interviewees in both language versions; therefore, the participants of this study could choose which version they preferred to use during the interviews. This ensured that the interviewee could access all the pertinent research-related information in a language of their choice and that language limitation did not restrict their responses. Moreover, the level of comfort with the interviewee's language was considered during the interview process. Interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese whenever possible to gather richer data. The researcher requested permission to record the whole interview interviewees to ensure that the data collected was accurate and could be accurately transcribed. All the Mandarin Chinese language interviews were transcribed verbatim and then translated into English; this process mediated any language challenges the interviewee might face in speaking freely in English (Egilsson et al., 2021).

The translation process involved the interview transcription being first translated into English from Mandarin Chinese using Microsoft word, after which the researcher manually scrutinised the translations to ensure that the data was translated and transcribed with no errors. The translations were then checked by the translation expert, Hsin-Pei, Yu, to double-check that the connotations of the information gathered were not unwittingly altered by the researcher during the translation. Any specific Mandarin Chinese terms, for example, 'Guanxi' (relationships) or

'Mianzi' (face), that could not be accurately directly translated were retained in Mandarin Chinese so that the original meaning was not lost in translation and to avoid an impact on the analysis of the findings (Ho et al., 2019).

Guanxi is a distinctive realisable concept which may be operationalised to provide a guide for normal personal relationships. Chinese raised in the socialist society take guanxi for granted as an integral part of daily life. A good guanxi network helps in all aspects, such as procuring new goods or services to gain admission to good schools (Song et al., 2014). Mianzi is intangible, yet it is a type of social currency that indicates personal status; it is impacted by the individual's social position and material wealth (Song et al., 2014).

While interviewing in the native language of the interviewee has its advantages, such as gathering more nuanced information which would have been lost if the interviewee was forced to think in their mother tongue while speaking in English, there is also the chance that the meanings of the data can be lost if the translations are not carried out with complete integrity and transparency (Piazzoli, 2015). Translation accuracy is crucial to retain the data accuracy, foundational integrity and validity of the research data collected, especially if the research is on sensitive topics (Clark et al., 2017).

Trustworthiness of research pertains as much to translation procedures and translation results as it does to the research process and its findings (Sutrisno et al., 2014). While complex translation processes and multiple translators can be used to enhance the trustworthiness, however, the resources required for such multivariate processes are often beyond the capacity of a student researcher (Santos et al., 2015); however, being bi-lingual, the researcher was able to also ensure the accuracy of the translation in conjunction with the translation expert thus increasing its trustworthiness.

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is complex as it works with non-standardised data. It requires the organisation and division of collected data into manageable units. Then the researcher undertakes a synthesis of the findings to identify phrases, themes and the relationship within common variables. After the identification of patterns and processes then comes determining important learnings and generalisations that can be consistently discerned from the collected

data and juxtaposing these generalisations with established theories and the current body of knowledge. Finally, the researcher chooses what information must be disseminated to others (Lester et al., 2020). Findings are drawn from the analysis by identifying significant themes from the data collected.

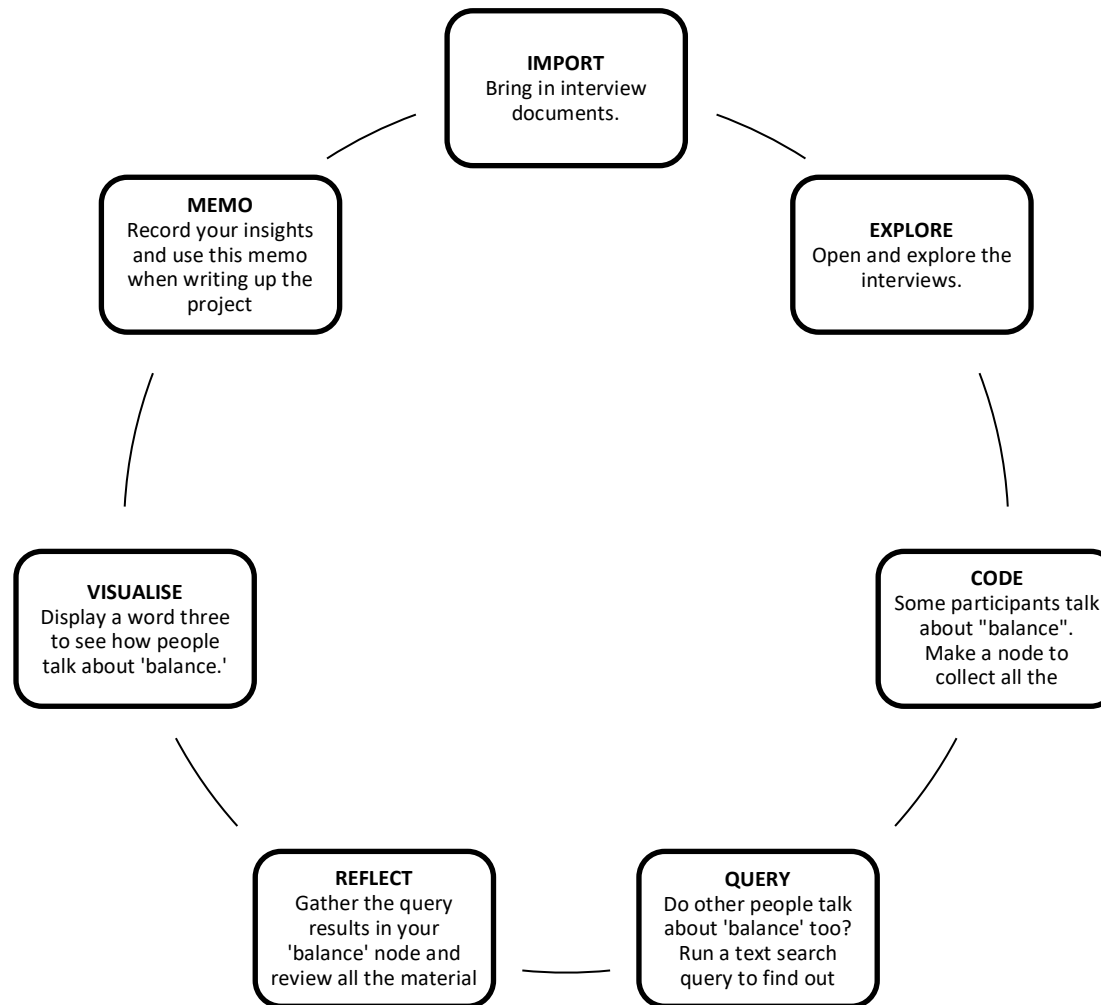
This research aimed to generate a greater understanding of the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs and the role of cross-cultural competencies and ethnic networks in dealing with these challenges and employed coding for themes to highlight the main findings. Coding to recognise themes is the recommended method for analysis of cross-cultural studies, according to Belotto (2018). Furthermore, conventions detailed by Gioia et al. (2013) for using first-order codes, themes and sub-themes were used for identifying themes from the raw data. Software such as ATLAS.ti, QUALPRO, TEXT-BASED, and NVivo are also available for this purpose and may be used by a researcher based on their comfort level of using the software.

NVivo software was used for the organisation of the data and assistance in the analysis of this study (Belotto, 2018; Lewis & Saunders, 2017). NVivo had been selected as the software of choice for data analysis because of its familiarity and ease of use for the researcher who had attended the university's regular training courses on NVivo. Moreover, there was also the availability of suitable software professionals within the campus who could be reached in case of any software-related queries. The data from the English translations of the interviews were imported to NVivo and sorted into categories. The main advantage of using NVivo is its ease of use, the data and subsequent themes can be easy to manage, and it requires fewer time and energy resources for data classification.

The key disadvantage of using this software is the heavy time investment in learning the software initially, and also, NVivo can be expensive for an individual researcher to purchase (Dollah et al., 2017). However, these disadvantages were easily overcome for this researcher due to the university providing NVivo training and the availability of professional experts for consultation. Moreover, the software was downloaded for free into the laptop provided by the University of Salford, mitigating the cost factor. NVivo was thus the first choice for a tool that enabled managing, exploring and finding patterns from the data of this study. The researcher, however, still had to keep in mind that NVivo is just a tool to assist the analysis, and it cannot replace the researcher's analytical expertise.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to gather the data for this research. The method of data analysis using NVivo (Figure 3.1) is a cyclic process which commences with the import of data, for example, the interview transcriptions. Data exploration then identifies keywords within the Microsoft Word documents; these keywords are then coded using the node feature. Then these keywords are explored using a Query function which displays all matching keywords visually like graphs or charts. The researcher may add comments or note important ideas using the memo feature throughout the entire process. The process cycle is visually depicted below.

Figure 3.1 - A step-by-step process of NVivo qualitative analysis



Source: Dollah et al. (2017, p. 62)

3.8 Interview protocol

The interview protocol designed by the researcher is essentially an instrument of inquiry. It enables asking of questions that elicit specific information related to the research aims (Patton, 2015) and can serve as an instrument for a thematic conversation about the particular research topic outlining the participants' ideologies, thoughts and experiences. Interviews make qualitative data available for researchers rich with details and offer a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences by documenting how the experiences are described and the meanings of those experiences for the participants (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Many academic resources outline the process for conducting research interviews, a crucial technique commonly used in qualitative research. A typical focus for these resources are the settings that foster quality in interviewing, for example, accessing and selecting appropriate participants; trust-building; selection of appropriate location and suitable interview length; clarity of questions, their order and quality; and general interviewing process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; King et al., 2019; Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Qualitative researchers can strengthen the interview protocol's reliability by filtering and polishing this instrument using an interview protocol refinement framework presented below. This increases the data quality of the information gained during research interviews. An interview protocol refinement framework offers rigorous steps that qualitative researchers can follow to develop their own interview protocols that are consistent and compatible with their research aim. It also provides them with a shared language to clearly outline their process for future reference (S. R. Jones et al., 2014). A study by Castillo-Montoya (2016) indicated that an interview protocol could be designed in four phases, each of which has its purpose (see table 3.2).

Table 3.2 - Interview protocol phases and purposes

Phase	Purpose of Phase
Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions	To create an interview protocol matrix to map the interview questions against the research questions
Phase 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation	To construct an interview protocol that balances inquiry with conversation
Phase 3: Receiving feedback on interview protocols	To obtain feedback on interview protocol (possible activities include closed reading and think-aloud activities)
Phase 4: Piloting the interview protocol.	To conduct a pilot interview protocol with a small sample.

Source: Castillo-Montoya (2016, p. 828)

Accurately implementing each phase enables the researcher to develop a research instrument that is both appropriate for the selected participants and consistent and congruent with their research aims (S. R. Jones et al., 2014). The interview questions need to be designed in a manner that they remain anchored to the research purpose and the interview protocol's four phases enable underpinning the questions to the research aims. The four phases, in combination, create a methodical framework that helps develop a properly reviewed interview protocol that permits the gathering of robust data that can be used to answer research questions. The following sections will employ Castillo-Montoya's (2016) four phases to design the interview protocol of this research.

3.8.1 Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions

The focus of the first phase was to ensure the interview questions aligned with the research question and its aims. This ensured that the interview questions were aligned with the research goals and provided optimal utility; each question in the set should have a real purpose and is necessary for furthering the study. All unnecessary questions were eliminated in this phase to retain only intentional and focused questions to elicit relevant responses. The complex experiences of people can needlessly generate rambling answers if the questions are not purposeful, complicating the analysis for the researcher. However, intentionally aligned questioning, careful listening, and attentive follow-up enabled participants to provide accurate renditions of their experiences, deriving rich and varied data for a deeper analysis.

3.8.2 Phase 2: Constructing an inquiry-based conversation

The interview protocol can become an instrument for a themed conversation about a particular research topic; Patton (2015) described it as an instrument of inquiry. Often inexperienced researchers assume that their objective is to achieve understanding via dialogue or that semi-formal interviews are casual conversations with the interviewee. However, interviews are potent instruments of data collection which should be effectively used to pierce through the superficial level to collect deep targeted data on the research question while keeping the interviewee at ease with the conversation. Castillo-Montoya (2016) combines the interview protocol's balanced usage of conversation and investigation to term it an inquiry-based conversation. Rubin and Rubin (2012) further this definition by noting that guiding the conversation to forward an inquiry requires meticulous care and hard work.

Phase 2 of the interview protocol design entailed that the researcher progressed the inquiry-based conversation through appropriate usage of a) clear interview questions which linked to but were worded more simply than the research questions; b) followed social conventions and rules of normal conversation; c) included variety in the questioning; d) created a script which encompassed pertinent prompt questions and the likely follow-up questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The interview protocol should promote conversation; therefore, the researcher needed to compose the interview questions differently from the more academically worded research questions. Maxwell (2012) notes that functional differences between research questions and interview questions are that the research questions are formulated to outline what the research aims to understand while the interview questions are designed to enquire from the respondents the knowledge and understanding which would answer those research questions.

The researcher needed to employ relevant interview questions, sound observational strategies, insight, and creativity to form this understanding (Jamshed, 2014). A mechanical conversion, therefore, of the research questions will not fundamentally work as the researchers' contextual understanding of the research subject will not necessarily translate into the participants' definitions of the subject. Appropriate interview questions and observational strategies designed during the interview protocol will actually determine the effective gathering of rich data that answers the research questions.

The researcher can employ their contextual knowledge of norms and usual habits of the potential participants to design understandable and accessible interview questions that the participants can relate to and answer appropriately. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) stated that research questions typically use theoretical or academic language, whereas interview questions must employ the participants' everyday language. Using commonly used terms by the participants, disallowing language containing jargon or academic terminology and asking one question at a time is considered good practice (Patton, 2015).

3.8.3 Phase 3: Receiving feedback on the interview protocol

The aim of phases 1 and 2 was for the interviewer to create an interview protocol that, while being conversational, was also focused enough to elicit data that helped answer the research questions. The next step was revising the interview protocol development in phase 3. This revision enhanced the reliability and trustworthiness of the interview protocol as a research instrument. It improved how well the interviewees could understand the designed interview questions and enhanced how easily the researcher's context was being comprehended as intended (Patton, 2015). In order to gain feedback for the revision of the interview protocol, close reading was carried out. Furthermore, a think-aloud activity was implemented to assess the viability of the questions (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2013).

A close reading of the interview protocol involves the examination of the interview protocol for length, structure, style of writing and comprehension by an associate who is familiar with the research subject (See table 3.3 for an example of a guide sheet for proofing an interview protocol). This researcher used the close reading chart for revising the interview protocol.

Strategies that were employed during this research to ensure that the study's findings had trustworthiness also included meticulously keeping records and respondent validation by allowing the interviewees to access their transcripts and translations so that any misrepresentations could be identified and corrected. The researcher also included detailed verbatim descriptions of what the interviewees said in chapter 4 of this thesis so that the findings can be supported, establishing comparative discussions to seek out the similarities and differences among the accounts from the interviewees so that all the various perspectives were represented in the findings.

Table 3.3 - Activity checklist for interview protocol

Aspects of an Interview Protocol	Yes	No	Feedback for Improvement
Interview Protocol Structure			
Beginning questions are factual in nature			
Key questions are the majority of the questions and are placed between the beginning and ending questions.			
Questions at the end of the interview protocol are reflective and provide the participant with an opportunity to share closing comments.			
A brief script throughout the interview protocol provides smooth transitions between topic areas.			
The interviewer closes with expressed gratitude and any intent to stay connected or follow up.			
Overall, the interview is organised to promote conversational flow.			
Writing of Interview Questions & Statements			
Questions/statements are free from spelling error(s)			
Only one question is asked at a time.			
Most questions ask participants to describe experiences and feelings.			
Questions are mostly open-ended.			
Questions are written in a non-judgmental manner.			
Length of Interview Protocol			
All questions are needed.			
Questions/statements are concise			
Comprehension			
Questions/statements are devoid of academic language.			
Questions/statements are easy to understand			

Source: Castillo-Montoya (2016, p. 825)

Care was taken to demonstrate clarity of thought during data interpretation and analysis to maintain the trustworthiness of the findings. Moreover, the researcher acknowledged and accounted for the fact that unwitting personal bias could have occurred during the sampling phase by demonstrating a solid decision trail and being consistent and transparent during data interpretation. These actions helped build the research results' trustworthiness (Noble & Smith, 2015).

3.8.4 Phase 4: Piloting the interview protocol

Upon completing the three phases, the researcher achieved an interview protocol that aligned with the research purpose while being inquiry-driven yet conversational. The close reading and think-aloud sessions made each question clear, simple, and answerable. The final stage of refining the interview protocol is the pilot study which was implemented using volunteers having similar desirable characteristics as the selected interview sample of the actual study (Maxwell, 2012). The researcher used table 3.4 Screening of participants to ensure that all the selected participants' backgrounds fit the research needs.

Table 3.4 - Screening of participants

Standards	Required
The participant is an entrepreneur of Chinese ethnicity.	√
The participant is a 1st generation migrant to the U.K.	√
The participant owns and operates a business in the U.K.	√
The participant's business is reasonably new.	√
The participant's business should not be franchised.	√

The differentiation of this phase from phase 3 was that the interview was stimulated in conditions that were as close to the actual interviews as possible. These volunteers were not expected to provide a commentary on their thought process, and there were no additional questions to understand their opinions regarding the questions. The improvements in this phase were centred on the interviewer's interview experience rather than the interviewee's thought process. Saunders et al. (2016) highlight the importance of pilot interviews by stating that the pilot interview is the best method to understand if the question order and wording are appropriate or not.

The interview should be conducted professionally, simulating the process, consent, rapport, space, recording and timing of the actual interviews and is essentially a trialling of the research instrument (Malmqvist et al., 2019). The researcher was able to gain a realistic sense of the length of the interview and if the responses were accurate, enabling the gaining of answers to the research questions and highlighting weak spots which could be improved in the interview protocols before launching the actual study (Maxwell, 2012). If the researcher lacks the resources to employ a pilot phase of their study, the phase 3 (feedback) section should be used to refine the interview protocol crucially. However, a pilot stage was highly recommended and implemented during this research.

3.9 Pilot study

Malmqvist et al. (2019) state that a pilot study is essential before the researcher conducts a full-scale study. The pilot interviews are used to evaluate whether the interview template is suitable for full-scale data collection (Wray et al., 2017). Therefore, pilot studies are sometimes also defined as feasibility studies (Whitehead et al., 2014), although Blatch-Jones et al. (2018) argue that this classification is erroneous as pilot studies are simply smaller versions of the actual study to be conducted and is used to gain a deeper understanding of the subject while refining the procedural elements of the methodology while giving the experience of the practicalities of research for a novice researcher (Jessiman, 2013). On the other hand, feasibility studies ideally focus on parameters of the study such as availability and willingness of the study participants, the time resources the researcher needs to collect and examine the data and compliance, among other parameters (Wray et al., 2017).

A pilot study minimises the probability of problems arising, such as the respondents not understanding a question or assessing if the questions can elicit the appropriate responses that address the research aims and also evaluate for issues like if there is a problem in data recording. This rehearsal also allows the researcher to assess each question's clarity, simplicity, and necessity and analyse the confirmability and reliability of the data that is going to be collected. Any misunderstood questions can be rephrased, new pertinent questions can be added, and selections can be made to make accurate decisions regarding eliminating inadequate questions and other issues that the pilot interviews may highlight.

A new researcher is able to build their knowledge of how essential processes need to be carried out, access to suitable participants can be assessed, and the researcher becomes familiar with the basics of data collection. The practical experience gained during a pilot study increases the competence and confidence of a new researcher in carrying out a full-fledged study (Wray et al., 2017).

The ethics approval confirmation letter for this research was granted on the 2nd of February 2018 (see appendix 1). Relevant documents were carefully prepared, including the participant invitation letter, participant information sheets and research participant consent form (see appendix 2, 3 &4). These documents were translated into Mandarin Chinese and provided along with the interview guide questions. The interview guide questions were designed based on the literature review and the research objectives.

The sample size for a pilot study has no clear definition and standard (Lewis & Saunders, 2017). Yin (2018, p. 96) has suggested that the sample size and selected participants should be decided based on “*convenience, access, and geographic proximity*”. Correspondingly, Saunders et al. (2016) have advocated that the sample size of the pilot study should be based on the research questions and objectives, the resources of time and finances available to the researcher and the planned size of the actual research study.

Furthermore, the researcher should consciously attempt to choose the most complicated cases for the pilot study as this would result in nearly all problems regarding data collection being encountered during the pilot study itself. In this manner, pilot studies can provide considerable insights into the questions and procedures used, and the researcher can make appropriate adjustments to the question bank ultimately used for the actual study. Taking into consideration the suggestions of Yin (2018) and Saunders et al. (2016) and based on the aims and objectives of this study as well as the anticipated sample size of the actual study, five interviews were chosen to be the suitable sample size of the pilot study for this research.

The original interview protocol was designed based on the conceptual framework and edited based on the issues identified during the pilot study. The main issues are listed below:

- 1) Some questions, such as the highest education and age, did not seem necessary for this project.

- 2) Some questions used academic terminology, which may be difficult for the interviewees to understand.
- 3) There were no clear instructions for close-ended 'yes and no' questions.
- 4) Several questions started off as leading questions based on the researcher's own presumptions. The researcher should be able to maintain objectivity without assuming or presuming the interviewee's answers.
- 5) The questions should not follow the researcher's framework; instead, they should be linked with the flow of the interviewee's story. After the interview, it becomes the researcher's responsibility during the data analysis phase to restructure/categorise the interviewees' responses according to the dimensions of the conceptual framework.

Based on the feedback from the pilot study (see appendix 5), the interview protocol was revised. The main changes are listed below:

- 1) Deleted any inadequate questions, which reduced the 41 questions from the original version to 30 questions in the final version of the pilot study.
- 2) Reworded most of the questions to avoid vague sentences and leading questions.
- 3) Used commonly used words to replace the technical terms used in the literature review. For example: using the word 'change' instead of 'adjust'; using the words 'general public' instead of 'local market' or 'mainstream market'.
- 4) Insert IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.X. in yes or no questions but no follow-up questions when the participant's answer is no, to give more precise instructions to the researcher while conducting interviews and also for the interviewees.
- 5) Created another version without following and probing questions for interviewees to use in order to keep the questions neat and short.

The pilot study took place from the 17th of October 2018 to the 23rd of October 2018. After conducting the pilot study, any inadequacies in the questions and issues were identified, and any necessary revision was done before conducting the full-scale study.

3.9.1 Samples of the pilot study

Five Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs were interviewed to ensure that the data emerging from the responses were appropriate, exhaustive and unambiguous and that the findings effectively

answered the research questions and aims. Table 3.5 shows the participant's information sheet for the pilot study of this research.

Table 3.5 - Participant's information sheet for the pilot study of this research

Code	Gender	Date	Sector	Employee No	Time in the U.K. (N)	Migration route
P-1	Female	17/10/2018	Section N- Administrative and support service activities	1-9	8 years	Spouse visa
P-2	Female	18/10/2018	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	1-9	13 years	T1 entrepreneur
P-3	Male	19/10/2018	Section I- Accommodation and food service activities	1-9	17 years	T1 entrepreneur
P-4	Female	21/10/2018	Section L- Real estate activities	1-9	14 years	Spouse visa
P-5	Female	23/10/2018	Section L- Real estate activities	1-9	11 years	Spouse visa

3.9.2 Interview process of a pilot study

The instructions below were used for the interview process:

- 1) Start with self-introduction to the participant(s).
- 2) Asking the participant(s)' preference of using either English or Mandarin Chinese for conducting the interview.
- 3) Sit comfortably, set up the audio/video recording device and have a notebook handy.
- 4) Switch on recording equipment.
- 5) Give the interviewee a copy of the participant information sheet and review the information with them.
- 6) Give the interviewee a copy of the Consent Form and review the information with them. If they agree to be a part of the research interview, request them to sign the consent form.
- 7) If needed, give the interviewee a copy of the interview protocol/questions so that they can follow along more easily.
- 8) Start the interview session by identifying the interviewee with a pre-selected code name to conceal their identity for privacy reasons. Clearly state the date and time when the interview session is beginning.
- 9) Start the interview by asking the first question from the structured interview protocol.
- 10) To ensure clarity, ask follow-up questions, encourage in-depth answers and repeat the points as needed.
- 11) At the end of the interview, thank the interviewee for their time and ask them for any suitable referrals who might give similar interviews.
- 12) After the interviewee is willing to receive the transcription, their email address is taken.

3.9.3 Reflection of the pilot study

- 1) A brief introduction about their business was necessary at the beginning of the interview. Because some interviewees linked their answers to the questions to their particular business and experience, it would be quite difficult to get involved in their stories and ask pertinent follow-up questions if the researcher has no

information about their business. Therefore, the participants of a full-scale study were asked to give a short introduction about their business as an ice-breaking exercise to allow the interviewee to get comfortable.

- 2) Likert scale to be used for giving a more explicit definition to the questions assessing a level. For example: how familiar are you with British culture? The first interviewee asked for a scale for measuring and was given an example from 1-to 10. Other interviewees also found it difficult to answer 'how much/ to what degree' questions; therefore, the Likert scale was introduced for these questions. Despite this not being a quantitative study, it was considered appropriate to add a Likert scale for ease of answering some questions (for example: How familiar were you with British culture before you arrived in the U.K.?) because those questions did not directly answer the primary purpose of this study. However, the responses could be useful in correlations during the data analysis phase and therefore were retained, and Likert scales were added to them.
- 3) Sampling: the researcher gained information about some companies via public sources. For example, the yellow pages in Chinese magazines and Chinese forums such as Cuclife, Powerapple, Londonchinese and Go2uk. The researcher sent an invitation letter along with the participant information sheet and participant consent form to the company website. However, none of those invitations received any replies. On the other hand, the success rate of invitation acceptance was 100% when the researcher contacted potential participants via her personal and friends' contacts and through participants' referrals.
- 4) Interview time: Considering that the participants were business owners, they were busy at work during usual working hours; therefore, the interview time needed to be reduced from 60-80 minutes to 40-60 minutes and the interview method needed more flexibility. The mode of administering the interviews was modified to face-to-face interviews via Skype and other social media apps such as WeChat. The computer version of Wechat was used because it has an option to record the voices of both the interviewee and the interviewer. The final interview protocol had been reduced from 30 to 25 questions.
- 5) Data protection: The participants were hesitant to record their personal and company information. Therefore, the personal and company information was removed from the interview protocol to achieve data protection and participant anonymity.

- 6) Sector: Some participants found it very difficult to choose their business sector. In order to not get the wrong information, the researcher decided to take company information via the company house. Furthermore, the business sector was distinguished by assessing the nature of business (SIC).
- 7) Ordering: The participants answered some questions outside the original interview order. Therefore, the researcher slightly changed the order of questions again for the final interview protocol in order for it to fit the logical flow of the interviewees' stories.
- 8) Consent form: One interviewee signed the consent form after finishing the interview, which is against the ethics rules. Care was taken that no interviews were started before gaining signatures on the consent form in the full-scale study.
- 9) Language: All five pilot study participants chose to be interviewed in Mandarin Chinese. It showed the necessity of providing a Mandarin Chinese translation. The new version of the final interview protocol for the full-scale study was created in two versions - English and Mandarin Chinese for the interviewee's preference.

This study aimed to discover challenges that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face in the U.K. and how they can use their cross-cultural competencies, co-ethnic networks and cross-cultural intelligence to overcome them.

The final interview questions (see table 3.6) were designed based on the research questions, research objectives, literature review outlined in chapter 2 and reflections from a pilot study.

Table 3.6 - Interview questions

Warm-up	Could you please introduce your company simply?
Communication	Have you faced any problems when you communicate with your customers/ suppliers/ distributors/ retailers of another culture? Do you often use Mandarin Chinese in the U.K. for business?
Cross-Cultural Intelligence	Did you take any cross-cultural training courses before you arrived in the U.K.? (e.g. English language courses, overview of British culture and practices) Did you study or live in the U.K. before setting up your business? How familiar were you with British culture before you set up your business in the U.K.? Have you continued to be motivated to learn about the British culture after settling in the U.K.?
Acculturation	Do you think people from the U.K. have any misconceptions about your culture? Do you think there are any significant differences in working styles between your home country and the U.K.? Do you think that your working styles now tend to be more English way or Chinese way? Do you need to interact with people of other cultures in the U.K.? Do you find it easy or difficult? In your experience, have you found it easy to fit into British culture?
Challenges and issues	Did you face any issues related to institutional challenges while starting your business in the U.K.? For example, business start-up and operating regulations or immigration laws for yourself or any employees? In your experience, how easy was it for you to get information about setting up the business? Have you ever financed your company from a U.K.-based bank/financial institution? Did you experience any culture-related challenges while setting up your business in the U.K.? Did you face any other kinds of challenges when you were setting up your business in the U.K.? In your experience, were there any positive aspects of setting up a business in the U.K.? In your experience, were there any negative aspects to setting up a business in the U.K.?
Co-ethnic enclaves and Networks	Have you ever joined any Chinese association? Would you suggest that a new entrepreneur gets involved in the Chinese association? Does your business cater mainly to Chinese customers? Do you prefer hiring people of Chinese descent?
Other questions	Why did you choose to set up a business in the U.K.? Would you recommend people to choose the U.K. to set up their business? What issues do you think new immigrant entrepreneurs may expect before coming to the U.K., and how do you think they can overcome these issues? Is there anything else you would like others to know that we may not have included here about your experience of setting up your business in the U.K.?

3.10 Full-scale study

The full-scale study commenced on 08.11.2018 and ended on 29.05.2019 until saturation was reached. In total, 25 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. Although the initially planned sampling size was 30, the saturation level was the main target being considered.

The final study sample had 12 interviewees who were from Taiwan, while 13 interviewees belonged to China (see table 3.7). The majority of the participants of this study were female, as 72% of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs that the researcher was able to access were women. This is largely due to the snowball method of sampling used; the researcher, a Taiwanese female, was able to use her network to contact other ethnically Chinese women more easily compared to an equal number of male interviewees. The average number of years the participants had spent in the U.K. was 13.12 years; however, a wide range of representation was seen from 4 years in the U.K. to 25 years.

Despite the time spent in the U.K., a majority of the respondents had been entrepreneurs for a shorter duration, with the average coming to 6 years. A significant portion of these immigrant entrepreneurs had arrived in the U.K. as a dependent family of a U.K. resident. The respondents reported a low level of English language skills on arrival (2.36 on a scale of 5) and showed some improvement in their command of the local language (3.84). However, most of them still reported feeling uncomfortable communicating exclusively in English. The interviewees had enterprises in a wide range of business sectors, but wholesale and retail trade dominated, with 40% of the interviewees working in this sector.

Table 3.7 - Participant demography

	Total (N=25)	Chinese (N=13)	Taiwanese (N=12)
General information			
Gender	M: 28% F: 72%	M: 38.5% F: 61.5%	M: 16.7% F: 83.3%
Average years in the UK	13.12 year (from 4-25 years)	13.76 years	12.41 years
The average company set up years	6 years (from 2006-2018)	6.2 years	5.8 years
Migration route			
T1 General entrepreneurs	20%	23%	17%
T1 Graduate entrepreneurs	12%	8%	17%
Family (partner or spouse)	40%	38%	41%
Permanent residence	28%	31%	25%
English level			
When I arrived in the U.K.	2.36 (from 1 to 5)	2.30	2.41
now	3.84 (from 1 to 5)	3.61	4.08
Sector			
Wholesale and retail trade	32%	38%	25%
Transportation and storage	12%	0%	25%
Real estate activities	12%	8%	17%
Information and communication	8%	15%	0%
Media representation services	20%	23%	17%
Administrative and support service activities	12%	8%	17%
Accommodation and food service activities	4%	8%	0%

Table 3.8 shows the completed list of interviewee participants' information sheets for the full-scale study for this research. While conducting the interview, the researcher mentioned to the interviewees that they could view the transcription so that they had a chance to review what they had said before the translation was done. The researcher has also asked for the interviewee's email addresses if they indicated that they would like to check their transcription. After doing the transcription, the researcher sent an email to the interviewees who requested the transcription to double-check that the transcription had truly reflected their interview.

Table 3.8 - Completed list of interviewee participant's information sheet

Code	Gender	Date	Study/living experience	Sector	Nationality	Time in the U.K. (N)	Migration route	Set up year
I-01F	Female	08/11/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section H- Transportation and storage	Taiwan	7 years	T1 Graduate entrepreneur	2018
I-02M	Male	12/11/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	China	15 years	Permanent residence	2014
I-03F	Female	13/11/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section L - Real estate activities	Taiwan	17 years	Spouse visa	2009
I-04M	Male	21/11/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	China	14 years	Permanent residence	2014
I-05F	Female	30/11/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section J- Information and communication	China	11 years	T1 entrepreneur	2013
I-06F	Female	04/12/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section M- Professional, scientific and technical activities	Taiwan	3 years	T1 Graduate entrepreneur	2018
I-07M	Male	05/12/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section N- Administrative and support service activities	China	11 years	T1 entrepreneur	2015
I-08F	Female	06/12/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section L- Real estate activities	Taiwan	21 years	Permanent residence	2015
I-09M	Male	09/12/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section H- Transportation and storage	Taiwan	19 years	Permanent residence	2013
I-10F	Female	14/12/2018	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	China	9 years	T1 entrepreneur	2015
I-11F	Female	16/01/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section M (73120) - Media representation services	Taiwan	5 years	T1 entrepreneur	2016
I-12F	Female	18/01/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Taiwan	15 years	Spouse visa	2006
I-13F	Female	20/01/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section J (63990) - Other information service activities not elsewhere classified	China	7 years	T1 entrepreneur	2016
I-14F	Female	21/03/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section G-	Taiwan	15 years	Spouse visa	1998

				Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles				
I-15F	Female	29/03/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	Taiwan	7 years	Spouse visa	2006
I-16F	Female	08/04/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section I- Accommodation and food service activities	China	13 years	Spouse visa	2017
I-17F	Female	15/04/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section M- Professional, scientific and technical activities	China	14 years	Permanent residence	2017
I-18M	Male	18/04/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	China	16 years	Spouse visa	2004
I-19M	Male	25/04/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section L - Real estate activities	China	25 years	Permanent residence	2010
I-20F	Female	02/05/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section M- Professional, scientific and technical activities	China	16 years	T1 entrepreneur	2007
I-21M	Male	09/05/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section N- Administrative and support service activities	Taiwan	9 years	T1 entrepreneur	2015
I-22F	Female	15/05/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section G- Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	China	15 years	T1 entrepreneur	2011
I-23F	Female	21/05/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N	Section N- Administrative and support service activities	Taiwan	4 years	Spouse visa	2011
I-24F	Female	22/05/2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	Section H- Transportation and storage	Taiwan	15 years	Permanent residence	2014
I-25F	Female	29/05/2019	<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N	Section M- Professional, scientific and technical activities	China	11 years	T1 entrepreneur	2009

3.11 Qualitative rigour

Qualitative rigour is defined as the quality of the research that builds trustworthiness. It encompasses credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which are alternatives to the internal validity that is critical in quantitative research (Campbell et al., 2017). Moreover, in the process of conducting qualitative research, reliability can be taken to be the same as stability (Hayashi et al., 2019) in ensuring the accuracy of the findings (Cypress, 2017). A rigorous reviewing process of interview transcripts helps achieve credibility by thoroughly checking for the representativeness of the collected data (Hayashi et al., 2019). At the same time, dependability can be achieved by clearly documenting and ensuring the traceability of the procedures followed in the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Dependability in qualitative research is comparable to reliability that informs quantitative studies (Stenfors et al., 2020). It is the consistency and stability employed during the research process and the procedures and methodological techniques that ensure the results' replication (Hayashi et al., 2019). Dependability in a qualitative enquiry may be achieved by providing a detailed methodology section demonstrating the purpose of the study, recruitment of participants, detailed data collection process, the length of time required during data collection, the transformation of data during analysis, an extensive deliberation over findings and by highlighting specific techniques that may be used for attaining credibility (Campbell et al., 2017; Stenfors et al., 2020).

As the dependability of the qualitative findings is enhanced by the clarity and transparency of the research methodology, the selected research methodology for this research was clearly outlined and followed to ensure that the research findings were reliable and consistent. Following the same research methodology, outside researchers can verify the results. However, it must also be noted that due to the qualitative nature of the study, an exact replication of the responses may not be recreated as qualitative results are essentially indicative rather than absolute.

In order to achieve four elements (credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability) of qualitative rigour, the researcher employed the methods as below:

1. Each interview was recorded to ensure the transcription did not miss a single point.

2. The researcher's prolonged engagement in the research setting so that the interviewees' perspectives were understood and represented accurately.
3. The research of this study was conducted bilingually; therefore, interviews were transcribed and translated into English by the researcher who conducted the interviews so that the researcher could describe not only the words but also the emotions observed during the interviews.
4. After the draft transcription was done, the researcher sent the transcripts to a bilingual professional to double-check the accuracy of the translation. The final transcription (containing the original Chinese conversations and their translation to English) was sent to the interviewees for a double check to ensure their viewpoint was translated accurately before starting the data analysis.
5. The quotes were used verbatim to ensure that the participants' perspectives were represented accurately.
6. After all of the data collection and transcription were finished, the researcher imported the 25 interviews into the NVivo software and used it to further develop first-order codes and link them to their associated quotes.
7. The first-order codes were reviewed three times to ensure credibility, dependability and confirmability.

Other techniques that can ensure the rigour of qualitative studies include having more than one researcher independently analyse data and peer debriefing (Cope, 2014). However, these techniques are not suitable for PhD-level research, which an individual does.

In qualitative research transferability of the findings is comparable to the external validity of quantitative research (Houghton et al., 2013), and it denotes the 'generalisability' of the inquiry. Therefore, in the qualitative research methodology, transferability is concerned with getting analytical generalisability of the outcomes arising from the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). While qualitative findings are not transferable in the strictest terms due to the dynamic nature of feelings and perspectives, transferability means finding resonance and meaning with people who are in similar situations but are not part of that particular study (Daniel, 2019) and if the readers of the research are able to identify and associate with the research findings (Cope, 2014).

A solution for ensuring the transferability of the results was to clearly describe data sources

and the population studied by providing a sufficiently detailed portrayal of the geographic and demographic boundaries that limit the study (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). Criteria for recruiting the research sample were clearly identified for establishing transferability during this study. The participants considered suitable for this research were 1st generation immigrant entrepreneurs of the Chinese ethnicity who could belong to either Mainland China or Taiwan and who owned/managed small-sized entrepreneurship in the U.K.

Confirmability in qualitative studies is comparable to objectivity, which is helpful in quantitative research. This element of qualitative rigour was obtained after the research findings had achieved credibility, transferability, and consistency (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016). Credibility was achieved with the replicability of the research findings, which have been grounded on a wide range of empirical evidence (Cuervo-Cazurra et al., 2016).

Confirmability was achieved when the researcher was open to the results that unfolded and conducted a self-critical reflection (Silverman, 2020). Moreover, research became confirmable when the researcher mindfully followed the direction of the interview rather than leading it. The researcher made efforts to ask the interviewees for clarification as required rather than make inferences later. This research ensured that the four components of qualitative rigour were carefully maintained throughout the data collection and analysis process.

3.12 Ethical considerations

Any research involving participants must carefully consider ethical issues, which becomes more relevant in qualitative research, as the participants and researcher share a close personal interaction during the data collection process. Ethical considerations ensure that the participants of the research are shielded from detrimental consequences arising from the research process (Iphofen & Tolich, 2018). Therefore, the researcher undertook their ethical responsibility solemnly and with integrity (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020).

A key consideration of research is the confidentiality of the data and the participants (Ellingson & Sotirin, 2020). Such confidentiality becomes more crucial for certain marginalised groups than others (Adrianna Danuta, 2018). As such, the researcher endeavoured not to indulge in unethical behaviour or disclose confidential information during or after data collection.

Anonymity and confidentiality were assured to the participants before starting the interview process.

Another major consideration of ethicality is the use of coercion or the researcher's misleading conduct (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). Consequently, research participants were informed that this was a wholly voluntary study and was under no obligation to participate. Moreover, ethical issues can arise if the researcher wilfully twists or misinterprets facts regarding the research. This study did not engage in unethical behaviour (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). Furthermore, stringent ethical guidelines for ethical practices set out by the University of Salford were strictly followed.

3.13 Limitations of this research

The qualitative methodology has fewer limitations than the more structured methods because it aims to discover a deeper understanding of the perspectives and make sense of the participants' feelings (Lester et al., 2020). However, qualitative research methodology also has some limitations, which also impact the results of this study.

1. Qualitative research is resource-intensive. As the breadth of information is the desired outcome of qualitative research, a broader sample base is required. However, as a single researcher conducted this research, it was time-consuming. It required more finances to reach a suitable research sample from many areas in the U.K. Access to the required resources is not readily available to this PhD researcher, creating limitations.
2. Verifiability of the results. As the results of qualitative research are based on the perception of the individual interviewees, the results are indicative rather than absolute. Therefore, the verifiability of the results of this research is limited.
3. Qualitative results can not be statistically representative. As the results cannot be analysed mathematically and there is greater reliance on individual insights and discernment, the results of this study and their interpretation may be limited by the biases of either or both the interviewees and the researcher.

3.14 Conclusion

Chapter 3 presented the research design and methodology used to conduct this thesis's empirical research. The researcher decides to employ a qualitative or quantitative research methodology based on the research project's requirement (Dodgson, 2017), its aim, objectives,

the research setting's context and the precise research problem (Ritchie et al., 2014). The aim of this study was to identify the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and to understand how their acculturation process can be eased by developing specific competencies and if using ethnic networks helps in this process. This study aimed to explore challenges specific to Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and gain a deeper insight into these challenges to add knowledge to a gap in academic literature. Because the aim was not to quantify how many Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs experience similar challenges, the qualitative methodology was considered the most appropriate for this research.

The qualitative method is regarded to be naturalistic, dynamic, context focussed, yet emergent. Many techniques are applied within this naturalistic enquiry method to explicitly impart structure and identify broad patterns amongst the rich and varied experiences while remaining true to the individualistic perspectives of the interviewees; thus, the qualitative methodology is fundamentally considered to be interpretive (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018) and is suitable for theory building based on the research findings. Qualitative methodology extracts rich accounts from the participants, inspires deeper points of view and attempts to draw sense from the subjective opinions of the interviewees; therefore, it complements theory building (Saunders et al., 2016). This qualitative research, therefore, attempted to understand from the interviewees' perspective a wide range of opinions, notions, feelings and beliefs about the phenomenon being investigated.

As the literature review in Chapter 2 revealed a lack of systematic empirical research on this subject, a qualitative enquiry was considered the most suited to comprehend the cross-cultural perspectives and problems that immigrant entrepreneurs routinely face. Qualitative research allows an exhaustive deliberation over the behaviours and opinions from the standpoint of the research participants (Ritchie et al., 2014). Moreover, the aim of the research included the valuation of the competencies that ease the acculturation process. Competencies belong to behavioural dimensions; therefore, a qualitative approach was best suited to explore why the respondents displayed particular behaviours and thoughts in certain ways.

Additionally, the paucity of qualitative enquiries in international business (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and particularly in cross-cultural research, as per Stahl and Tung (2015), offer a gap in comprehending the complexities of cross-cultural adjustments. Thus, there was a requirement for a detailed study which could capture the inimitability of the cultural contexts and elucidate

behaviours appropriate in those contexts (Stahl & Tung, 2015). A study by Aliaga-Isla and Rialp (2013), which studied 45 journal articles, proposed that the lack of qualitative studies in the subject area of immigrant entrepreneurship has led to the scarcity of theory-building. Moreover, the research of Malerba and Ferreira (2020) conducted a systematic review of 67 suitable studies from extant literature to recognise issues around strategy and their usage in business creation and growth.

Consequently, a qualitative enquiry was considered the most suitable approach for this study to gain comprehensive knowledge of the immigrant entrepreneurs' perspectives on challenges and resolutions for more accessible adaptation to the host culture. This study collected data qualitatively because the aim was to go in-depth into the subject and gather a wider variety of opinions. The aim was to fill gaps in existing knowledge rather than assess how many people had a particular opinion. In order to find new information or data, an explorative qualitative methodology was most suitable as it permitted the identification and investigation of topics that were not considered earlier by this researcher. The qualitative methodology allowed the researcher to add knowledge and build theory based on the new knowledge.

Chapter 4 Results and discussion

4.0 Introduction

The results and discussion chapter summarises the interviewee responses to provide an idea of the opinions gathered from Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs during the interviewing process. Semi-structured interviews were selected as the primary research method for this exploratory research as this method suitably gathers a wide variety of opinions on a subject with little prior scholarship (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019), as discussed in detail in Chapter 3. The responses from the primary research were categorised under broad classifications of mixed challenges, mixed strategies and emergent themes. Each of these headings was divided into subheadings at the individual level, socio-cultural level, and institutional level for clarity in this chapter. Some of the interviewees' most informative and edifying opinions were used to reinforce the themes expressed in the results section. Further, the findings were discussed and critically analysed in detail in relation to the extant literature on the subject before concluding the chapter.

The results and discussion chapter aimed to address the objectives of this study and find the answers to the research questions from the interview responses that were collected and recorded in an earlier phase of the study. In order to fulfil the objectives for the empirical research, a question bank was prepared that was used to guide the semi-structured interviews (see appendix 6). These questions were designed based on the conceptual framework of this study which is underpinned by the mixed embeddedness theory (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018; Storti, 2014), the ethnic enclave theory (Bagwell, 2017; Pruthi & Wright, 2017; Tavassoli & Trippel, 2019) and elements of the human and social capital theory (Glinka, 2018).

4.0.1 Data Coding and analysis

The semi-structured qualitative data gathered during empirical research was structured into patterns and themes for analysis. Verbatim interview transcripts of each interview were mined for quotations relevant to the research objectives. The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed for this study had been assigned unique alpha-numeric identification codes to maintain anonymity while providing easy differentiation between the individuals. Essentially qualitative data coding involves taking pertinent quotation excerpts from the interviews and categorising them systematically to find patterns and identify themes.

Appropriate first-order quotes (interviewee) are identified, grouped and synthesised to second-order themes (new interpretations) (Elliott, 2018) and classified and arranged with the help of NVivo software (Bootsma et al., 2020). These second-order constructs were then aggregated into suitable dimensions or conceptual categories (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). The aggregated dimensions were then sub-categories. This process of thematic analysis enhances the replicability and transparency of the qualitative research results (Aguinis & Solarino, 2019).

Table 4.1 - Overview of Data Structure (A)

Data Structure Chart (A) - Challenges			
First-order quotes		Second-order themes	Aggregated dimensions
Statements related to challenges of English and local language.	→	Lack of local language skills	Cross-cultural communication challenges
Statements talked about challenges in verbal communication, e.g., accent.	→	Difficulties in verbal communication	
The statement mentioned challenges in writing communication.	→	Difficulties in written communication	
Statement related to local relationships and networks.	→	Hard to build the local relationship	Cross-cultural Intelligence challenges
Statements related to challenges occur because of deep cultural contexts.	→	Hard to understand deep cultural contexts	
Statements regarding the lack of cross-cultural intelligence.	→	Insufficient cross-cultural intelligence cause challenges	Cross-cultural Acculturation challenges
Statements mention that Chinese people tend to make friends with their own kind.	→	Disinterested in intermingling and blending in with locals	
Statements about integrating into the mainstream society are very difficult.	→	Inability to easily integrate into the host society	
Statements mentioned not having enough time.	→	Lack of time inhibits the social interaction with the host society	
Statements talked about insufficient cross-cultural intelligence training.	→	Lack of comprehensive training	Ethnic enclaves and networks challenges
Statements related to ethnic enclaves and networks have limited or no ability to help.	→	Ethnic enclaves and networks have only a little or no ability to help	
Statements mentioned about the purpose of ethnic enclaves and network tends to be more individual.	→	Ethnic associations serve only personal purposes	
Statements regard that the right business contacts were not found in ethnic enclaves and networks.	→	Ethnic enclaves may not be suitable for building business contacts	
Statements mentioned joining the co-ethnic network or associated spending too much time and resources.	→	Too many associations can be draining on time and finances	
Statements regarding bureaucracy and discrimination from co-ethnic groups.	→	Co-ethnic groups have inherent integrity issues	
Statements mentioned there is more than one culture in the U.K. society or multicultural.	→	Various cultures from different countries in the U.K.	Socio-cultural challenges
Statements regard stereotypes from different ethnic groups.	→	Friction can also be seen with other ethnic groups and ideologies	
Statements about different work styles from the host country and home country.	→	Differences between attitudes of locals and immigrants	
Statements mentioned about the U.K. culture is very different from home country.	→	Dissimilarity with the host culture causes unexpected problems for the immigrant entrepreneur	
Statements regard it is hard to understand local legal and complicated terminology.	→	Difficulty understanding complex terminology and cultural contexts	
Statements related to opportunities and disadvantages.	→	Better opportunities for locals over immigrants	
Statements mentioned racial discrimination.	→	Discrimination	
Statements talked about no help from family or friends, and most things have to be done by themselves.	→	Missing support system and familiarity with the home country	
Statements regard stress caused by the need to adopt a cross-cultural environment.	→	Stress	
Statements regard local rules and regulations.	→	Complex local rules and regulations	
Statements talked about the differences in rules and regulations between the host and home country.	→	Regulation differences from home country	Politico-institutional challenges
Statements about unpleasant experiences with local laws and enforcement.	→	Dissatisfaction with local laws and enforcement	
Statements regard about necessity and expense of hiring professional intermediaries.	→	Additional expenditure to navigate unfamiliar rules and regulations	
Statements about challenges that occur when applying for a visa.	→	Visa challenges and Unclear visa regulations	Financial challenges
Statements about their thoughts and experiences about applying for a loan in the host country.	→	Difficulties with Loans and financing	
Statements about the difficulties in entering the mainstream market.	→	Inability to expand in the local market	Organisational challenges
Statements mentioned about business culture between the U.K. and home country.	→	Business culture is different from home country	
Statements related to working styles and attitudes between the host and home country regard staff.	→	Differences between employee attitude and relationship with employees	
Statements mentioned experiences about why it is so hard to find a suitable professional intermediaries.	→	Difficult to find suitable professional intermediaries	

Table 4.2 - Overview of Data Structure (B)

Data Structure Chart (B) – Solutions			
First-order quotes		Second-order themes	Aggregated dimensions
Statements like help from the translator or using translation software.	➔	Translators and software	Solution for Cross-cultural Communication challenges
Statements related to the business are a priority more than other things when facing any challenges.	➔	Setting aside differences for the sake of business.	
Statement related to how to use a positive attitude to solve challenges.	➔	Positive attitude competency	
Statements like knowing English will be beneficial and help.	➔	Knowing the local language is beneficial for starting a business.	
Statements like how immigrant entrepreneurs try to use a different way to overcome their challenges.	➔	Problem-solving attitude	
Statement related that the interviewees had previous studying experience in the U.K. before setting up a business.	➔	Language Advantage from the experience of studying and living	
Statements regarding using different cultural knowledge to transfer challenges become an advantage.	➔	Benefits of prior exposure to the host culture and other cultures	Solution for Cross-cultural Intelligence challenges
Statements about the importance of having business integrity when setting up business in the U.K.	➔	Business integrity	
Statements related to how important to set aside any challenges that occur due to cultural barriers when doing business.	➔	Business prioritised over cultural differences	
Statements talked about how to use interpersonal skills to turn disadvantages into benefits.	➔	Uses interpersonal skills	
Statements like how the importance of respecting other cultures.	➔	Respect eases interaction	Solution for Cross-cultural Acculturation challenges
Statements mentioned how important to have an interest and aptitude for trying to interact with local people.	➔	Interaction with locals	
Statements regard the benefits of hiring local staff, using the local resource and changing the western working style.	➔	Attempt to integrate – staff, resources and working style	
Statements related to how important to reflect on past experiences.	➔	Learnt from past mistakes	
Statements talked about how immigrant entrepreneurs acculturation through observation.	➔	Observation ability	
Statements like how the importance of having the motivation and how to create motivation.	➔	Motivation	
Statements mentioned that a solid tendency to be flexible and resilient would make overcoming obstacles more manageable.	➔	Resilience and willingness to overcome any obstacles.	Solution for ethnic enclaves and networks challenges
Statements related to the experience of gaining help from local government.	➔	Seeking any government assistance	
Statements mentioned how helping of seeking training courses and extra support.	➔	Training and support	
Statements talked about experiences and benefits of joining local trade and labour unions.	➔	Join local trade unions and labour unions	
Statements like what help can be gained from co-ethnic community.	➔	Use the co-ethnic community as a starting point	Solution for Socio-cultural challenges
Statements regarding how to use co-ethnic enclaves to establish and expand personal networking.	➔	Establish personal networking	
Statements mentioned helping gain from co-ethnic friends.	➔	Reliance on a co-ethnic friend for advice	
Statements related to how to gain niches from the co-ethnic market.	➔	Market niches can be found from co-ethnic	
Statements talked about personal experiences about how to use a creative way to solve challenges that occur from cultural differences.	➔	Creative means	Solution for Politico-institutional challenges
Statements related to how immigrant entrepreneurs increase confidence, familiarity and adjustment over the time.	➔	Increased exposure to local culture increases familiarity	
Statements talked about the benefit of using a professional intermediary to solve problems resulting from differences between the host and home country.	➔	Hire professional intermediary	Solution for Financial challenges
Statements about how to use personal savings and friends to gain funds.	➔	Personal investment or friends	
Statements mentioned financial help with the suppliers.	➔	Credit from supplier	
Statements regard financial help with personal credit or loans.	➔	Personal credit/overdraft	
Statements talked about the way to build a credit history.	➔	Build credit history	Solution for Organisational challenges
Statements like the importance of starting with a small business and then scaling up later.	➔	Scale-up	
Statements regard interviewees' suggestions to new immigrant entrepreneurs or those who plan to come.	➔	Plan before moving to the U.K.	
Statements like the importance of assessing the market before considering setting up business in the U.K.	➔	Assess market	
Statements related importance of gaining experience before setting up own business.	➔	Gaining experience	
Statements take about the importance of surveying market differentness between home and host country before setting up business in the U.K.	➔	Understand the market differences	
Statements talked about their experiences of gaining help from the university.	➔	Utilise university entrepreneurship centre	

This chapter summarises the results of the empirical research by charting the challenges of the immigrant entrepreneurs and the different solutions and recommendations offered by the interviewees for combating the challenges. Furthermore, an in-depth discussion has been undertaken in this chapter to deliberate on the various findings and their implications and to discover their correlations with each other.

The findings were critically analysed by linking them to earlier literature and theories. This chapter is broadly divided into the headings - challenges, strategies, and a thorough discussion is carried out for each. Each of these headings is then subdivided as per the conceptual framework designed based on the literature review and presented in Chapter 2.

Following the themes identified above, the different sections of this chapter are subdivided into the individual level (concerned with cultural intelligence, language skills and acculturation), the socio-cultural level (regarding ethnic enclaves and socio-cultural interactions) and the institutional level (related to the political and legal framework and those that impact the organisation such as access to market and employee-related challenges). These contexts form the crux of the immigrant's embeddedness into the host society. See figure 4.1 and table 4.3

Figure 4.1 - The embeddedness framework

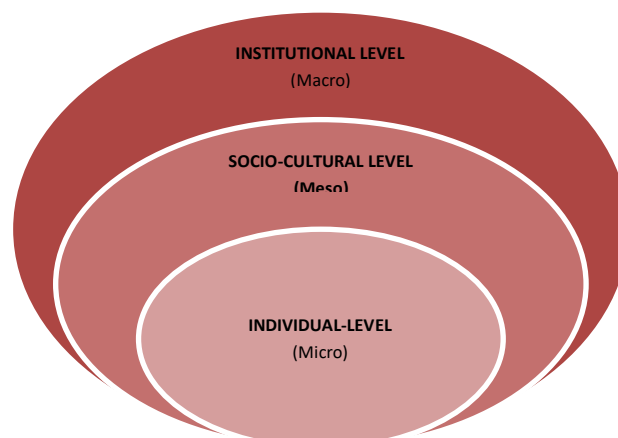


Table 4.3 - **Preliminary conceptual framework** (underpinned by the mixed embeddedness framework)

MIXED EMBEDDEDNESS			
UNDERPIN THEORY	INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	SOCIO-CULTURAL LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural communication • Cross-cultural intelligence • Cross-cultural acculturation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic enclaves and networks • Socio-cultural

The main challenges and strategies identified from the empirical research were outlined in the following sections. This chapter presents the most noteworthy specific findings of this research under each of these categories. The notable quotes and commonly expressed sentiments from the research participants were also mentioned to present the findings. This study's findings underscore the common issues affecting Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. Therefore, it can be said that the findings of this research identified which challenges were commonly faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and what strategies could be implemented to counter these challenges. These findings are outlined and discussed below.

4.1 Mixed Challenges

Some of the critical cross-cultural challenges that the immigrant entrepreneurs experienced have been documented and organised below based on the individual, socio-cultural and institutional levels.

4.1.1 Individual Level

4.1.1.1 Challenges in Communication

The importance of communication skills cannot be negated, especially as earlier researchers have previously drawn positive links between language proficiency and cross-cultural effectiveness (Selmer & Luring, 2015). This section on communication challenges found that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs most commonly faced communication challenges due to a lack of fluency in the local language. Literature notes that communication is a crucial competency that is essential for conducting business in a different culture (Thomas & Peterson, 2016; Tyers, 2017).

Language skills have also been linked to cross-cultural effectiveness by many prior researchers (Selmer & Luring, 2015). There is also some amount of literature on the difficulties faced, especially by Chinese immigrants, due to their lack of local language proficiency; however, these studies were not based specifically in the context of the U.K. (Nel & Abdullah, 2015).

Not surprisingly, lack of communication skills was the most reported challenge experienced during this study, even though most interviewees agreed on its importance. Lack of preparedness was the main reason the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs had poor communication skills, which affected every aspect of their personal and professional lives. In the extant literature, language has also been reported to be the first challenge immigrants face in their host countries (De La Garza & Ono, 2015; Nel & Abdullah, 2015). It ranked highly over even cultural, financial, and regulatory challenges. Language skills form an integral part of human capital that immigrant entrepreneurs depend upon to successfully set up and manage their businesses and function in the host country (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016; Sui et al., 2015).

- **Lack of local language skills**

A plethora of existing literature points out the importance of local language expertise in immigration and expatriation studies, for example, Chelariu and Osmonbekov (2014). Thomas and Peterson (2016) stated that immigrants without local language abilities tend to face greater barriers. Croucher and Kramer (2017) state that having a basic level of communication competence is crucial for newly arriving immigrants to function in their host country. Similarly, a substantial number of the interviewees required English language expertise for the functioning of their business, as I-01F and I-03F both declared that they needed it to communicate with most of their customers who were host country natives.

Similarly, I-07M points out that the language requirement was not just for the U.K. natives but also the other ethnicities represented in the local population. While I-05F and I-04M stated that they needed to be fluent in both home and host country languages as their suppliers speak English while the customers speak Chinese. English is widely spoken worldwide and has become the international business language; it would not be remiss for the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs to learn it before arrival (Tyers, 2017). I-15F echoes earlier researchers such as Brzozowski et al. (2014) when she says there is a requirement for being fluent in the local language and a need for continued learning.

Lack of local language skills was also found to be responsible for many other challenges experienced by the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, such as challenges in understanding the local rules and regulations and challenges in filling out documentation. I-01F and I-02M both note the need for language fluency because of the business formalities, as I-02M says:

"If you have a basic understanding of English, it is very convenient in all aspects, from setting up an account with a company to negotiating contracts with your suppliers, including communicating with some accountants and so on. Including all aspects of the company's daily operations are much more convenient".

Literature reiterates this point as Malki et al. (2020) had proposed that immigrants often faced difficulties in financial loan procurement due to language challenges as they found it harder to understand the required administrative documentation. Other researchers who consider language to be a crucial skill include Azmat and Fujimoto (2016) and Sui et al. (2015), while Salgado and Bastida (2017) stated that language fluency could help reduce cultural distance.

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs also reported feeling uncomfortable and underconfident in local interactions due to language limitations, which could prove challenging in accessing the local market. Sui et al. (2015) note that linguistically challenged entrepreneurs cannot break into the mainstream market or leverage their potential regional market advantages. As I-02M notes, obstacles to English cause difficulties in conducting business and accessing the local market:

"a certain degree of difficulties exists for us to integrate with local socio-culture in the U.K.; therefore, most of our business focuses on the Chinese market".

This point links to literature; Arrighetti et al. (2014) argue that entrepreneurship is possible without foreign language competence by focusing only on the limited co-ethnic market in the host country. However, in a multicultural environment, such as is prevalent in the U.K., sometimes just having the local language competency is not enough. Moreover, as I-04M stated:

"Mostly all of my customers speak Mandarin Chinese, because our customer base is all Chinese, so if they all speak Chinese. This is no problem. But Chinese has Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese. I especially learnt Cantonese for three years. I watched Hong Kong shows to practice and listen to Cantonese every day".

The statement by I-04M also raises the point that even if an entrepreneur chooses to stay within the co-ethnic market exclusively, knowing only one language is insufficient. The Chinese languages are also not only limited to Mandarin Chinese, and knowing only one language might further limit the immigrant entrepreneur's business.

- **Difficulties in verbal communication**

A key issue that arose during verbal communication for the interviewed participants was the challenges faced in understanding the accent of not just the local natives but also of the other ethnic groups living in the U.K. I-21M said:

"...if it is really difficult to understand like the Indian accent is a bit heavier, the general solution to the situation that we ask for is another email so as to have it in writing in black and white".

Thomas and Peterson (2016) note that differences in culture-based conventions make significant changes within a language. These changes and differences in native accents can cause difficulties in understanding even when the entire conversation is carried out in the same language. This point is reiterated by I-21M who lives in Scotland and finds it hard to understand the Scottish accent.

While clear and simple communication can help maintain business relationships and negotiations (Tenzer et al., 2017), personal conversations can have contextual connotations that are harder to master. A weak command of the host language can cause unnecessary misunderstandings (Thomas & Peterson, 2016), especially in a multicultural country like the U.K., where people of other cultures also live (Jolliffe, 2016). I-25F added to this point when she says that it is not just language but also how you use it that matters in how you are perceived. According to her, the Chinese straight and dry way of talking could be misconstrued as rude.

"When a foreigner speaks, he will use phrases like "could you please" or something, and we will say, you do this today, you do that tomorrow, so they say you seem to be very bossy, you come and tell me what I should do very unkindly".

Similarly, I-25F's experience indicated that tonal differences could cause miscommunication, especially if a person talks a little faster or louder, which may be perceived as arguing.

Interaction style differences between the two cultures could cause such misunderstandings (Peng, 2016), as agreed by I-25F, I-15F, and I-17M.

- **Difficulties in written communication**

I-02 M notes that he sometimes needs to guess the meaning of the conversation, which gets harder while using telephonic communication. Non-verbal communication, including facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, tonality etc., was still found to be extremely important, as outlined by Thomas and Peterson (2016). Telephonic conversations had these drawbacks and were not one of the most favoured business communication methods (Aricat & Ling, 2018). For an immigrant entrepreneur, telephonic conversations in an unfamiliar host language take away the much-needed non-verbal cues and visual stimuli, which often augment understanding during face-to-face communication (Thomas & Peterson, 2016).

Many interviewees recommend getting written instructions to avoid such errors, such as I-01F and I-07M also prefer written communication to reduce the chances of error. This system works well in the U.K., as some of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported that the preferred method of communication in the U.K. was written communication via emails and/or social media. I-10F notes that unless it is

“Particularly urgent, British people are more accustomed to using emails”.

While written communication reduced the miscommunication error rate substantially, this means of interaction cannot convey nuances of the communication (Tyers, 2017). Moreover, the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs also found this method very slow as per their working style, influenced by their home country's fast-paced working style. I-03F made another interlinked point about written communication requiring time. I-03F notes that written communication that may take a local entrepreneur 20 minutes to complete can take 2 hours for her, spending more of her time.

Furthermore, the interviewees revealed that it was very hard to understand deeper cultural contexts during written conversations. This is why the study findings reported that despite the challenges in verbal communication, many interviewees found that face-to-face communication was their preferred communication style for immigrant entrepreneurs because they could rely heavily on non-verbal and visual clues to decode the message.

Communication richness builds and maintains deeper and more effective business relationships (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). A variety of methods such as phone, email, and internet-based data exchange systems could be regularly used based on the requirement of business communications (Aricat & Ling, 2018). Literature notes that a variety of media is commonly used by newly arriving immigrants to aid familiarity and to stay in contact (Croucher & Rahmani, 2015); for example, I-01F reports also using social media Facebook, Twitter, I.G. and Wechat for business communication as it aids understanding because its written communication but it also has the speed of reaching people instantly that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs prefer.

- **Hard to build local relationship building**

Lack of language skills hampers the building of lasting local relationships and networks. Academics have often stated (for example, Liu et al., 2015) that proficiency in local language helped build relationships and extent, literature has proven a clear link between language skills and cross-cultural proficiency (Selmer & Luring, 2015), even though little evidence of following this was found in practice. The interviewees noted that the lack of language skills hampered them from learning about the locals and communicating with them. I-14F states there were a lot of cultural differences, and it was hard to learn about the local culture as her language skills were poor and she could not understand.

I-25F says that talking to customers strictly about business as possible, but any deeper conversations were not understandable to her because of the lack of language.

“When I talk about business with customers, all I can understand is how the product is made, then what price it is, how it is shipped. Most of my clients are foreigners. Apart from these topics, they will also talk about other things about China, about how things are here in Britain, and then about life. In this case, when they talk about topics other than business, then I can't understand them”.

Thomas and Peterson (2016) note that differences in nuances within the language can cause unease in understanding the basics. Meanwhile, context becomes vital in communication due to the differences in interaction style in low and high-context cultures, which may lead to communication and business misunderstandings (Peng, 2016). Similarly, I-07M noted it was

harder to understand the context of a local person as sometimes the literal meaning of the words was different in usage than in the language.

I-15F makes a valid point that direct interaction builds closer relations that cannot happen over formal communication channels alone.

"But it is hard to establish a guanxi (relationship) in business by using email all the time, and you still need to talk to them".

This led to the host country natives feeling annoyed, as reported by I-14F. Lack of language skills, when coupled with the fear of annoying the local people, means that the immigrant entrepreneurs take considerably longer to interact with the host country nationals. This phenomenon is called language anxiety (Sevinç & Backus, 2019). It becomes a vicious cycle because lower language skills cause anxiety which causes the immigrant to avoid using the language with locals and, therefore, cannot improve their language (MacIntyre, 2017). Lower language proficiency thus deters them from building deep and lasting relationships in their chosen host country. Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs should work on building familiarity and language skills. I-14F says,

"It is good to meet people to develop connections".

A majority of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs also contrastingly stated that simple business-related conversation was not a problem to manage, especially as there was a limited number of topics that were discussed during the business conversation but having contextual personal conversations were hard for them due to differences in culture-based conventions and this hampered their ability to form relationships within the host country (Thomas & Peterson, 2016). Participants such as I-06F stated that for her, there were language obstacles. However, she did not consider them major problems, indicating that individual outlook also influenced whether something was considered a challenge.

Further, because all stakeholders were willing to set aside cultural and language differences for the sake of business, these challenges could be solved easily by the individuals. This kind of positive attitude, which values cultural differences amongst people, is an important entrepreneurial competency (Omoredede et al., 2015). Language skills have been linked to cross-cultural effectiveness by many prior researchers (Selmer & Luring, 2015). An entrepreneur who gets well-adjusted in a general environment displays a greater level of satisfaction and has

a reduction in cognitive stress load. Their social interaction is enhanced, and they build more lasting relationships, and networks which help them effectively manage their enterprise (Wang & Warn, 2018).

A key reason for communication challenges was the lack of cultural knowledge that resulted in low self-confidence for the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who, despite having basic language skills, found themselves facing considerable communication challenges. Communication and interaction are vital for building trust with customers and suppliers (Tenzer et al., 2014). However, extant literature notes that knowing the local language is essential for immigrant entrepreneurs to exploit mainstream options in the host country (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). This study also found that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs could find creative solutions to mitigate all the challenges they faced. Most importantly, they displayed a problem-solving attitude which helped them ease over the barriers with a good work attitude and some humour.

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs should proactively aim to improve their language skills. A good way to become fluent in verbal communication is by extending their interpersonal relations to include locals and immigrants from other cultures. Extant literature documents that increased exposure to other cultures and the host country's natives improve language skills and enable better communication skills (De La Garza & Ono, 2015).

4.1.1.2 Cross-cultural Intelligence challenges

Cultural intelligence is the ability, knowledge, and motivations an individual can use in cross-cultural interactions. The cross-cultural intelligence of immigrant entrepreneurs enhances their ability to interact and conduct business with individuals and organisations of another culture (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014). Cognitive cultural intelligence is acquired from personal experience and education and relates to the knowledge of the practices and norms of the local culture and other cultures (Lorenz et al., 2018). The immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed reported a wide range of experiences about prior exposure to the U.K. culture before starting a business in the U.K.

A key feature of accepting and being accepted in the host environment was respecting other cultures and having an open mind about accepting the differences. Moreover, the immigrating

individual has a higher likelihood of being accepted if they were able to use culturally appropriate words, familiar gestures, culturally appropriate facial expressions, and body language and modulate their voice tonality to match those of the host country natives as this increased communication effectiveness (Ko et al., 2015).

Interviewee I-16F summed it up by saying that the normal business and social conversations were fine. However, her deeper conversations involving cultural contexts or jokes were not understood clearly, causing communication barriers.

“I think for me, it is ok for normal chatting, but I can't communicate very deeply because I don't know much about their cultural background. Or maybe because I can't express myself very clearly”.

This point links to behavioural cultural intelligence, stronger interpersonal relations and personal interactions that can result from making a few changes to achieve a better fit (Ko et al., 2015) and successful cross-cultural interactions (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014) and are indicative of higher cross-cultural intelligence.

However, with low levels of cultural knowledge or intelligence, the immigrant is likely to experience dismissive attitudes as their lack of trying to interact can lead to the host country's natives feeling annoyed, as reported by I-14F.

“Maybe they may not understand what you are talking about, so they feel very annoyed, sometimes. Because of the differences, like myself, I think language barriers always exist. In my own professional matters, there are generally not too many problems, but if I jump out of my professional area, then there will be some miscellaneous things because there are some things for which you don't know what the professional term is, and you sometimes may describe it in a confusing way, and then he did not understand what you're saying, so they don't pay attention to you”!

- **Hard to understand deep cultural contexts**

Several interviewees, such as I-02M, I-05F, I-10F and I-11F, stated that they had difficulties understanding deep conversations and cultural contexts. I-02 M said:

“But when you want to chat more deeply, which involves cultural nuances, then you may find out that you can't understand. When English people are laughing, you may have no idea why they are laughing. You will have a feeling that why is this funny”.

Similarly, I-08F noted:

"There are cultural gaps, say, for example, making jokes or some slang words you don't necessarily understand. Maybe they don't understand some of the cold jokes that you tell, and then the guests laughed, or everyone was silent, and that silence tells me that they did not seem to understand that joke, the British have a lot of black humour, and being a foreigner, we still have a poor understanding of it".

These responses indicate that a lack of language skills induces stress in their entrepreneurial experience and possibly affects even simple daily activities (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014). Despite living in the host country, some participants cannot get comfortable in personal or contextual conversations. I-01F says that cultural differences cause communication barriers. She states that it is important to understand the local culture and integrate into it because that is the only way to learn a culturally contextual language. Similarly, Liu et al. (2015) note that not understanding cultural contexts also bars immigrants from developing vital relationships with stakeholders in the host country.

However, workarounds could be made if there was little verbal fluency, such as getting the information in writing and smoothing over gaps in conversation with a pleasant demeanour. Behavioural cultural intelligence can be employed to deal with such challenges as the aptitude to display culturally appropriate verbal and nonverbal behaviours in interactions. Such behavioural modification will allow the individual to be accepted more readily in the diverse culture because they exhibit culturally appropriate words, facial expressions, gestures, body language and voice tonality.

This can further lead to stronger interactive relations in personal and work environments (Salgado & Bastida, 2017), especially when there is little familiarity with cultural variations in the local language. Literature notes that individuals with high cultural intelligence can communicate much more effectively in new cultural contexts (Froese et al., 2016). This suggests that individual competencies might be of substantial importance in the communication process, and this aids acculturation.

- **Insufficient cross-cultural intelligence cause challenges**

Another important finding of this study was that challenges were caused by cultural challenges rather than a lack of language skills.

I-13F stated:

"Although when I first came, I felt my English vocabulary was not good enough, this problem can be solved in a few months. But the cultural challenge is the real problem. You might often feel that there is a problem with language communication, but in fact, it is not because of grammar or vocabulary problems. It is because you lack knowledge of the subject, you don't know what kind of words to say and which words are suitable and where they are not suitable. These cultural gaps cause us to be deficient in language expression".

While I-19M also noted that the issue was deeper than language skills, he pointed out specifically the lack of management skills in the host country rather than generalising it as cross-cultural challenges.

"At the beginning, we didn't have enough experience, and there were some management aspects that were not in the right place. For example, the British people are quite detail-oriented when they sign the contract. They will spend a lot of time in front of it in order to avoid arguments later. But our Chinese culture will ignore it, sign it first and then argue later; after a quarrel, we can negotiate and resolve the problem. In this way, the issue is not a question of English. I personally don't think it is a question of the English language, and it is a professional issue. It is not a simple matter of buying something like "I wanted an apple; she gave me a pear" kind of simple communication problem like this".

However, I-13F circles back to the point of cultural challenges which stem from a lack of local knowledge related to cognitive cultural intelligence when she says,

"Yes, because, in fact, everyone thinks that they can't speak the language well because they don't know enough vocabulary, but they ignore the fact that most of the students who come to study in the U.K. need at least a score of 6 or 6.5 in IELTS, which is quite a good score. Their skills of communication are not very good, maybe because they are shy. In fact, there are cultural reasons behind even personal self-confidence problems, so it is not just language issues".

This indicates that the immigrant entrepreneurs who did undertake some mandatory tests such as IELTS were also not suitably prepared or comfortable in using their language skills in the U.K. as such theoretical tests were not geared for practical application as suggested by I-11F,

“After coming here, I found that there were many deficiencies in my expression of language. I found the English language here was not the same as the English I had learned before. I didn’t understand a lot of things”.

However, literature has addressed this point and noted that Chinese migrants and especially students had lower levels of understanding of the English language, despite achieving minimum required levels of IELTS scores (Clark & Yu, 2021), indicating that IELTS training and scores alone were not sufficient language preparation for newly incoming immigrants especially those who had a lack of cross-cultural awareness and a need to develop their communication skills along with cross-cultural intelligence.

Cultural challenges are effectively broken down with sustained positive contact between the host and the immigrant. The acculturative cultural and psychological change process can begin only when there is sustained contact between individuals of the two diverse cultures (Berry, 2015). I-12F advises that time increases familiarity with the host country, and it can bring advantages, especially in communication skills that directly correlate to all the other challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs.

“of course, my language skills improved. If we talk about direct help, it must be in the language. My listening and reading became better, and my speaking was more or less better. I think there would be some advantages compared with entrepreneurial immigrants coming directly from the country”.

Human capital can be built in this manner. The human capital of the individual is influenced by their skills, education, work experience, cultural and emotional intelligence, and social skills. Local environments also impact attitudes and expectations, as do personality traits like propensity for hard work, innovativeness, personal habits and creativity (Acemoglu & Autor, 2019).

4.1.1.3 Cross-cultural Acculturation Challenges

Acculturation is the process through which individuals of different ethnic groups adopt values and practices of each other and learn to adapt and adjust to a diverse cultural environment (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). Acculturation process is an ongoing and perpetual process, while it is often seen as the minority group adopting the ways of the majority group; however, acculturation, especially in countries with lower discrimination, often prefers the integration strategy, which is a reciprocal process with both sides adopting some of the characteristics of each to some extent over time (Berry, 2015).

Acculturation is often almost involuntary as small modifications filter the inhabitants' dietary habits, clothing choices and language as the home and host culture imbibe aspects of each other. This kind of acculturation has also been called the Cultural Fusion Theory (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). A good example could be the pervasiveness of Indian and Chinese cuisines within mainstream British society's dietary habits, which have formed over consecutive generations of Indians and Chinese settling in the multicultural U.K.

An interesting point was raised by I-03F, who says:

"I think the U.K. itself is actually a very diverse place, so in fact what the British you describe are the kind of "pure Britain", in fact, I think it no longer exists. Especially London, because I don't live in a small fifth-tier city, London is an international, cosmopolitan city. I don't really think that here one requires knowing the British culture to survive. Although you are under a British system, the individuals are comparatively free".

Acculturation commonly begins on first contact (Berry, 2015), but if the immigrant is unwilling to give the host country and its culture a chance, the acculturation process cannot begin. While some interviewees indicated a reluctance to acculturate into the host society owing to the large cultural distance, many others noted that they experienced an inability to acculturate into the host culture because they could not interact with locals freely. This point finds as mentioned in literature as well. Beckers and Blumberg (2013) make a similar claim that first-generation immigrants often find it difficult to acculturate compared to 1.5 generation (those who arrived between the ages of 6 and 13) and 2nd generation immigrants who display higher degrees of social integration.

Acculturation is often confused with assimilation. However, acculturation has a distinctive advantage over assimilation as the immigrant group does not lose their own distinct cultural identity during this process (Berry, 2015). During assimilation, however, the individual evolves to the point of eventually becoming a cohesive part of the host culture leaving behind their traditions, culture and practices to seamlessly blend into their host culture (Kivisto, 2015). However, it has been argued that due to their marginalised position in the host society, immigrants are more likely to mingle only with their co-ethnic counterparts rather than with the host society (Efendic et al., 2016).

They are also more likely to find better opportunities through co-ethnic networks (Zolin et al., 2016). Moreover, such strong intra-ethnic solidarity often detaches the immigrant from the host society (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011) and builds resistance between both host and immigrants, further hampering the acculturative process. The term acculturation for this study was used to represent the outcome of integration which is a balanced strategy as it adopts crucial facets of the host country's culture without giving up the immigrant's cultural heritage, as per Ndika (2013). This definition of acculturation was also propagated by De La Garza and Ono (2015), who notes that acculturation is a continuous, dynamic process of psychological and cultural changes which naturally occur with sustained contact amongst culturally diverse groups of individuals.

- **Disinterested in intermingling and blending in with locals**

Davies et al. (2015) deduced from their 299 people study that longer stay durations increased the level of adjustment for the immigrants; however, this was possible only with sustained contact with the mainstream society. Continual contact between two cultures leads to changes and challenges (Ward & Geeraert, 2016). However, some of the respondents of this research showed little interest in meeting and blending in with locals.

I-24F reports

"Many Chinese people are studying here, but they may not really communicate with local people very deeply or at all levels".

This disinterest might be because immigrants tend to intermingle only within their co-ethnic communities and therefore are not comfortable or willing to socialise with people of the host

culture. However, literature notes that this is not a desirable strategy because ethnic markets are limited and developing networks outside of the co-ethnic enclaves is beneficial for breaking out into the mainstream markets, as per Gast et al. (2016). As I-02M states

"If you just live here, I am afraid that most Chinese people tend to contact Chinese groups, so you don't have a good English environment".

Contrarily, I-07M finds that it is the host society that is reluctant to mingle with the immigrants and says:

"I don't know about this because there is not much personal contact, because the British are more conservative and are not willing to establish a personal guanxi (relationship) with others".

Jacquemet and Yannelis (2012) noted that newly arriving immigrants face more discrimination than 1.5 or 2nd generation immigrants, possibly because the latter are better acculturated into the host society, display greater levels of cultural intelligence and social embeddedness within the host country insulates them. Furthermore, some participants indicated that limiting the interactions to the co-ethnic groups can bring about more than just home culture familiarity. Such as, I-04M exclusively hires employees of Chinese descent and elaborates that there is an opportunity motive that can be fulfilled within co-ethnic relationships:

"But Chinese always chat with each other. This is why you see most Chinese do only take-away shops and open supermarkets. Because there are so many Chinese who understand this sector, so most of them do the same things because they can easily do it after understanding it".

This feeling was echoed by I-16F, who does not feel the need to try and acculturate into the host society as their business exclusively caters to the Chinese community:

"For right now, yes. Maybe because, like what I told you, the business we're doing now, we're still in the Chinese community. So, we don't have such issues; but if you talk about things like fitting into the local community as we didn't get involved in".

Building networks with the host society will not likely bring business opportunities or develop helpful entrepreneurial associations. Therefore the limited time available to new immigrant entrepreneurs is often spent within their co-ethnic niches, as per the findings.

Pre-formed ideas about locals put interviewee I-05F off from trying to acculturate after one bad experience.

“I think it will definitely be, now basically I only look for Chinese staff. After I was not bound by visa regulations, I basically didn't hire British people anymore”.

On the contrary, I-04M states that there is little reason to be involved in the host culture unless you cater to the mainstream market.

“Because even if your life is not integrated into the mainstream, your business actually won't be affected”.

Literature notes that acculturation is an ongoing process of social and psychological acceptance of the cultural changes experienced in a multicultural setting. This enables the immigrants to integrate into the host culture and bring elements of their own culture. At the same time, all the stakeholders learn to accept and live with the cultural differences to achieve the desired outcomes (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). On a contrary note, Heine (2015) states that acculturation dilutes both cultures and therefore is not desirable. This stance seemingly resonates with the findings quoted by some of the interviewees outlined above.

Further, many of the current immigrant entrepreneurs can have transnational linkages due to technological advancements impacting their social position and opportunity structures (Pluss, 2013). It can be questioned if acculturation is a crucial strategy for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who do not need to rely on the local market or social structures to gain opportunities. However, other researchers have noted that acculturation, especially the integration strategy, is a reciprocal and balanced process that is both natural and inevitable over time (Ndika, 2013).

The integration strategy of acculturation encourages the immigrants to adopt some host country facets to ease the cross-cultural interaction, but they can do this without losing their cultural heritage (Berry, 2015). Moreover, another compelling argument is that there are negatives of not attempting to acculturate or build social networks within the host society as this leads to isolation and eventually marginalisation of the migrants (Ndika, 2013). Not adjusting to the host culture and acculturating to some degree can build resentment from the host culture natives

(Moon et al., 2014), who can perceive this as taking advantage of the benefits their country offers without involving themselves or offering cooperation.

- **Inability to easily integrate into the host society**

It was also noted that a large majority of the immigrant entrepreneurs felt they faced great difficulties in their personal and family life as they found it hard to adjust to the local culture. Integrating into a culture which is very different from the home culture is inherently difficult. As I-04M simply puts it across:

"It's difficult. I don't think most immigrants will fit into mainstream society for a lifetime".

He also admits he does not see the need to fit in as business is his primary motive.

"So, if there are business opportunities, the mainstream business won't deny working with you even if you are in non-mainstream business. So, it doesn't affect. It doesn't matter whether you have fit into society or not".

Researchers, however, note that breaking out into the mainstream market is harder if the immigrant entrepreneurs are not socially embedded in the host society (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018) and that such separation can substantially limit the scope of the business. Consequently, having social and business networks outside the co-ethnic enclaves is integral for business growth in mainstream society (Gast et al., 2016). Still, fitting into the host culture can be hard; as I-02M said:

"I think the main thing is the ethnic estrangement between lifestyle and language challenges. Sometimes you may find that it is ok to chat with English people. But when you want to chat more deeply, which involves cultural nuances, then you may find out that you can't understand. When English people are laughing, you may have no idea why they are laughing. You will have a feeling that why is this funny?".

I-19M agrees with this point and says he knows a lot of Chinese who cannot get along with the British people.

I-25F echoed similar sentiments; however, the case for I-06F was not just the lack of time but also that of access as she and her husband started a business and had no access to British friends.

I-19M continues

"The hard thing is learning about this kind of social integration; it's the hardest. And the hardest thing about learning about another culture is that you're not in the social circle, your kids are Chinese, and your wife is Chinese. Your business partner is also Chinese. It is impossible to force yourself to be with a British family. You won't enjoy it. When you go out to dinner with your Chinese friends, you may not talk about the same topics as your British friends. Of course, there will be a bit of conversation with the British, but that conversation soon dries up. Unless you have some common interests with them".

Tata and Prasad (2015) state that having a stable personal and family life is critical for entrepreneurial success. Therefore, it could be surmised that the inability of the individual or their family to adjust to the host environment was negatively associated with entrepreneurial success. Moreover, the large numbers of other immigrant cultures in the U.K. seemed to make these difficulties more pronounced in adaptation (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). While integration can be difficult, an important breakout strategy suggested by researchers to ease this process is to hire locals and immigrants from other ethnicities to build multicultural and diverse organisations. Such organisations are better equipped to adapt to the host culture (Arrighetti et al., 2014) and access the opportunities in the mainstream markets.

However, they also reported that from the perspective of the enterprise, they seemed to have few difficulties due to the cultural differences (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). I-05F noted in the unpopular opinion that often, there was little need to do so because business and personal interactions could be kept distinct from each other:

"I don't think there is any impact on the entrepreneurial efforts. It's just that life still feels like there is no big difference from living in China. I also have this feeling in London that so many people speak in Chinese. I know a lot in that circle, so sometimes I feel that if someone doesn't know English at all, I think they still can survive in the U.K. Maybe the quality of life is slightly worse, but they all survive; I feel like this".

Moreover, immigrant entrepreneurs with extremely different lifestyles in their home culture cannot accept the differences. I-05F says that the food and social habits are so different that

she cannot make or sustain friendships with local people. I-07M notes that the difficulty in integrating into the host society arises because of cultural differences, which can become a challenge to building a trusting Guanxi relationship and would impact his ability to sell his products.

This point is also agreed to by I-16F, who also agrees that she does not face any problems because she exclusively caters to the Chinese community and has limited or no interaction with the host community. Without cultural adaptation, an immigrant entrepreneur will likely find it difficult to break into the larger mainstream market and get limited within the social enclave (Chand & Ghorbani, 2011).

While I-06F states that having a good team to rely on is crucial for the acculturative process as:

"I think I can't do it alone. It's not easy if you want to quickly integrate into the place in a short time if you rely only on yourself".

I-25F states:

"But about fitting into the whole British culture, I don't think it's possible yet, the differences in lifestyle and culture make it not simple to be with the British, for example, these foreigners, they go out, they meet friends after work. But even if I go to a bar to drink beer with them, I still don't know what to talk about, but they have a lot to talk about, whether it's football or news or something they're interested in".

And:

"it's hard to fit into the British lifestyle, into the British community".

When the home and host country have greater cultural distance, a greater amount of adjustment is required from the immigrant entrepreneur. The need for greater levels of cross-cultural capabilities is therefore required for acculturation. Thus it can be said that the need for cross-cultural capabilities and the acculturative process is closely linked to the cultural distance (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). Research notes that if the immigrant entrepreneur becomes fluent in the local language, their integration into the host society becomes easier (Salgado & Bastida, 2017). Moreover, if the immigrant entrepreneur attempts to build their human capital and attempt to engage with the host country's social capital before the migration and after, then their acculturation in the host society becomes easier (Berry, 2015).

I-23F, however, attributes the difficulty of acculturating to the attitude of the locals, who, in her opinion, have not been very welcoming.

"I think it depends on the individual. To be honest, I don't think Britain is such a tolerant place. I think they are very polite, but they don't take you in completely".

Moreover, the point put across by I-12F is

"I cannot hope that I can enter their private circles. In fact, I think that is still very difficult. Actually, what I mean is that you don't expect to make personal friends with them unless, of course, you actually get along with someone very well".

This challenge that is identified through empirical research links directly to the disadvantage theory, which outlines the discrimination that immigrant entrepreneurs face in their host society (Liu et al., 2014; Omisakin, 2017) and also the blocked mobility theory as the disadvantaged immigrants have lesser access to opportunities (Gast et al., 2016). However, Yiu's (2013) study draws the debate back to adaptation and acculturation because their study on Chinese immigrants in Spain discovered that adaptation helped them overcome discrimination (Ng et al., 2017).

I-12F also notes that

"I think in terms of the more personal aspects if you want to fit into, I think it's still difficult for the first-generation immigrants like us".

Indicating that integrating into the host society is difficult for first-generation immigrants, it gets easier for those born in the host society or who arrived very young. This challenge is also noted in literature by Xu et al. (2019).

- **Lack of time inhibits the social interaction with the host society**

Another common issue was the lack of time for the incoming immigrants who had to settle into a diametrically different culture while settling on their new entrepreneurship journey. Many interviewees indicated that they lacked time to make an effort to get along with the host society. While the immigrants were new in the host culture, they had to adjust to the changes in their personal and family lives and grapple with the huge demands of entrepreneurship. Many of these interviewed immigrants were first-time entrepreneurs. They had to learn how to do

business and learn about their host country's specific legal and regulatory requirements, often without any support from personal or professional networks.

I-18M stated:

"The main thing is that I don't have enough time now because I have a family and need to manage my company".

Similarly, I-22F says

"Yes, learning from life, and I don't want to learn on purpose because I don't have the time, because I have to take care of a family and other things. But if I have the opportunity to learn, I will".

I-04M says that lack of time and access does not permit Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to know more about their host culture.

"Because you don't know much about this society, you need to spend a long time to understand all its various small things, what cultural festivals, and all kinds of things, you have to spend many years to know and understand it. It is like if you listen to lots of advertisements every day in China, then you will know a lot of things, but here we spend most of our time managing our enterprise, so this information we explore is less. And if we talk with people who are only Chinese, the information we absorb also will be less".

Furthermore, the time required to learn about the completely diverse host culture may not be easily available to immigrant entrepreneurs who are concurrently attempting to set up a new business. Wilson et al. (2017) noted similarly in their paper that cross-cultural adaptation and time share a complex relationship. It is also dependent on the individual and their motivations, so while some individuals can fit into the host society in a shorter time, others never feel comfortable in their host society. Hoelzel (2018) notes that the time taken by an individual is dependent on their abilities to deal with psychological aspects like emotions. The length of the adjustment period is dependent on not just the individual's motivation to acculturate but also on the acceptance level of the host society and the cultural distance between the home and host cultures.

To form a better fit into the host culture, the immigrant needs to place higher importance on it and find the time to learn about the host culture and acculturate to it over a while. Research indicates that acculturation is an ongoing process; therefore, individuals must make time (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016).

- **Lack of comprehensive training**

A glaring observation was made during this primary research that when the participants spoke about training and preparedness, their overarching focus was on the English language and related tests such as IELTS, which is mandatory for immigrant visas. No further training or preparations for their move were mentioned specifically, and none of the responses indicated that they had had any planned focus on adjusting to the different cultures of their host country.

Acculturation is important for individuals' psychological well-being and is crucial for effective social functioning (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018). Moreover, pre-arrival and post-arrival training can help strengthen this cultural interaction to the point where friction is avoided. For example, Okpara and Kabongo (2017), extant literature notes that cross-cultural training is positively correlated with an individual's general, psychological, work and interaction adjustments. Glinka (2018) similarly note the need for training as a basic human capital for acculturation into the host society.

The extant literature provides examples of the need for training to improve cultural intelligence. Moreover, several kinds of training approaches can be applied like passive methods, which include classroom training and lectures or more involved methods that involve role-plays, experiential and stimulation games etc. (Bücker & Korzilius, 2015; Nosratabadi et al., 2020), cross-cultural management course, experiential training projects etc. (Lorenz et al., 2018). Most of the recommended training times were between 1-12 weeks showing that a robust amount of preparation was necessary to build cultural intelligence.

Therefore, training can be considered an essential tool for competency building. However, despite the growing evidence of its value, there seems to be little to no availability of training for incoming immigrants as per this research. In their study, Nel and Abdullah (2015) also pointed out the lack of availability of such training, and their findings corroborate the findings of this research. However, the common consensus on the training and preparedness undertaken

before arrival appeared minimal. Nel and Abdullah's (2015) study reported that lack of training before or on arrival was one of the common reasons why immigrant entrepreneurs faced challenges.

Similarly, Ferraro (2021) notes that in order to gain success in the host culture, there should be mindful preparation and continued learning. However, I-13F says there was a lack of training and readiness for immigrant entrepreneurs:

"For example, I think that before we come to the U.K., we can actually prepare only for some things. After all, China and the U.K. are eight time zones apart, and then both of them are countries with a long history. In fact, the difference is very large; it may be so large that we cannot prepare through some very simple courses".

Moreover, she further notes:

"There may be no way for you to prepare beforehand".

The interviewees felt that the lack of preparedness was so pronounced in some cases that the incoming immigrant entrepreneur often did not even have basic tools such as moderate fluency in English (Ferraro, 2021). Marvel (2016) notes that human capital such as training, innate knowledge and experience is essential for adjustment to the host country. Extant literature documents that training has improved overall levels of cultural intelligence (Juang & Syed, 2019). However, respondents like I-01F reported that immigrants routinely came without basic preparation.

Extant literature similarly postulates that preparedness should begin before arrival, but continued learning is just as crucial for success in the host culture (Ferraro, 2021). Cultural awareness is also called meta-cognitive cultural intelligence and can be enhanced with training and engagement (Fang et al., 2018). Training, if freely available to the immigrants, can help ease some initial difficulties and form a solid basis of good cultural knowledge that the immigrants can use to forge strong relations within the host society. Better cultural understanding can develop trust and deepen the ties between diverse communities. It can further reduce friction with other ethnic and local communities and create desirable harmony within the host society.

Research notes that training is most effective in improving overall cultural intelligence, and while classroom training was most effective in enhancing meta-cognitive cultural intelligence (Lorenz et al., 2018), experiential training was successful in developing other dimensions of training like behavioural and motivational cultural intelligence (Irfan & Siddiqui, 2020; Ko et al., 2015). Moreover, considering language was one of the most common challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs and also that Okpara and Kabongo (2017) note that language and cultural intelligence are positively linked, immigrant entrepreneurs should consider taking comprehensive language training classes before migration because higher language skills can improve their socio-cultural embeddedness in the host society.

Extant literature notes that acculturated immigrant entrepreneurs have better access to local market knowledge and financial resources and find it easier to expand their businesses (Azmat & Fujimoto, 2016). Additionally, Munkejord (2017) and Davies et al. (2015) found that immigrants with local spouses displayed a greater level of adjustment to the host culture and therefore had much easier access to host country resources such as bank loans, and third-party associates and business advisors. This indicates that greater adjustment levels benefited the entrepreneur and the enterprise.

As I-15F says:

"We work very hard; in fact, all Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs need to work very hard in order to achieve acculturation".

While the immigrants did not always find it easy to acculturate, it was found that a majority of the respondents were open to the idea of acculturating and tried to learn from their previous mistakes to make better choices in the future. The interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs tried hard to fit into the local business culture by using local employees, adapting to the local ways of working and sourcing local materials to fit in better while remaining profitable. Similarly, in literature, Arrighetti et al. (2014) stated that enterprises that do not want to stay limited to their co-ethnic enclaves and expand to the larger mainstream markets need to have diverse employees and build a multicultural environment within their organisation, so they are better equipped to adapt to the local business environment.

4.1.2 Socio-cultural level

4.1.2.1 Co-ethnic enclaves and networks - challenges

An ethnic enclave is a demarcated geographic area with a high concentration of ethnically alike people. Business conducted within ethnic enclaves largely is delimited to members of the same ethnic community (Terzano, 2014). Co-ethnic enclaves (for example, Chinatown) are business neighbourhoods. They offer a strong business network for entrepreneurs, but they also serve as a social meeting place for people of the same ethnicity (Danzer & Yaman, 2013). Extant literature indicates that co-ethnic networks and enclaves play an important role in helping a new migrant become socially adjusted (Partanen et al., 2014; Sullivan & Ford, 2014).

This was the opposite of the findings of this research; most of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs stated that the most ethnic enclaves were places where one could socially meet co-ethnic individuals and have a meal with them. However, the interviewees did not receive tangible economic or opportunity benefits from being embedded in the socio-cultural context of ethnic networks and associations. However, this crucial finding does not diminish the importance of the other co-ethnic individuals' role in their lives. Some interviewees reported socialising exclusively or largely within ethnic communities as they could not connect personally with local individuals due to language and cultural barriers. The opportunity structures available to the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are linked to their embeddedness in their socio-cultural level (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

- **Ethnic enclaves and networks have only a little or no ability to help**

A surprising finding of this study was that ethnic enclaves and networks have limited or no ability to help. This contrasts with earlier literature. Could this indicate a slow-down of the power network enclaves had once wielded? A study by Muhammad and Jan (2018) found that recent immigrant communities no longer access or depend on co-ethnic enclaves as much as they used to a few decades ago. Another recent study by Schüller (2022) notes that highly skilled immigrants' employment chances are reduced if they rely exclusively on ethnic enclaves, while the low-skilled immigrants tend to benefit from them. Moreover, she suggests that for highly skilled immigrants, the labour market success is reduced in ethnic enclaves. Recent immigrants, therefore, prefer to depend on other business contacts and networks for opportunities to achieve entrepreneurial success.

Like I-06F declared that she found help through co-ethnic individuals that she interacted with regarding immigration regulations when she was applying for her visa; however, this help came from individuals and not from the co-ethnic associations and societies that she was a part of:

"For immigration regulations, they are helpful, but not through societies, but through individuals".

Many participants did not recommend joining any such associations and networks to get entrepreneurial or professional opportunities as they considered it a waste of resources such as time and money. This indicates that formal ethnic societies and associations no longer seemed to have the ability to provide structured assistance; however, the contacts made through these associations did help out in an individual and informal manner. Few Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who were interviewed mentioned that they got some help from co-ethnic individuals whom they had informally met during these social interactions at the ethnic enclaves.

While there is plenty of earlier research noting the importance of ethnic enclaves (Wang, 2015), there has been some research that has begun to question the applicability of these findings in modern times, when the spatial limitations of ethnic enclaves seem to be dissolving while areas of ethnic concentration spread out into the suburbs (Chen et al., 2019). It could be possible that the ethnic enclaves could not offer help to the interviewed entrepreneurs because they no longer hold power over the ethnic markets. New age immigrant entrepreneurs seem to thrive on their transnational ties and have access to financial capital (Wang & Warn, 2019) from their home country, and thus it has become increasingly common for the ethnic-owned organisations to begin operations in mainstream markets of their the host countries (Smart & Smart, 2015).

Agreeing that ethnic enclaves were not much of help, I-14F elaborated further on the lack of assistance:

"In fact, the main practical help from an association to the individual or companies is limited".

Correspondingly, I-03F notes that help was given and received from co-ethnic individuals rather than from networks and associations. She uses her professional knowledge to help other co-ethnics, but she does not get much help. It might be theorised that this lack of requirement

might have also contributed to the demise of traditional ethnic enclaves as business and power centres. However, since many interviewees still chose to operate to some extent within the ethnic markets, it can be seen that networks within the community and maintaining co-ethnic ties remain as important for newly incoming immigrant entrepreneurs as it was before. However, the management of such ethnic associations needs to ensure that their services are freely available and relevant to the current business environment.

Moreover, she continued to add that more than answers she had sought, she got questions from other immigrant entrepreneurs who were in a similar situation of not knowing whom to ask for assistance. Therefore I-03F said she took it upon herself to find out the information and offer help to those whom she could help with this information. I-05F also noted she received no help and instead:

“I feel like I have more information for others”.

The above responses seem to indicate that there are no formal networks that can assist Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs; however, this raises the pertinent question – are immigrant entrepreneurs able to tap into the informal networks of co-ethnic individuals and small groups? There was no clear answer for this in the findings of this research; therefore, it can open up a new area of research for the future.

Though it should be noted that I-08F, I-11F, I-20F, I-16F, I-21M, I-22F and I-25F, among others, reported that they had no assistance at all from co-ethnic networks and associations as well as from co-ethnic individuals, as I-13F puts it succinctly that she used to visit initially but then stopped going as there was no major assistance:

“I have because, in fact, it is easy to convene here because the regional relations will make it easier for everyone to come together, but my experience is not particularly good, so I did not go to such events again”.

- **Ethnic associations serve only personal purposes**

Similarly, some of the participants noted that ethnic associations served more personal networking purposes rather than being of professional assistance. As I-19M notes:

"The U.K.-based associations are more focused. Like the Chamber of Commerce, and many forums, in which they talk about industry-related things. The Chinese associations mainly organise a banquet for eating and drinking".

It can be questioned if ethnic associations and enclaves are becoming obsolete, at least for business purposes (Shizha, 2019), yet the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs were socially embedded in this circle. Recent studies have indicated that centralised ethnic enclaves such as China Towns that used to be business centres and popular among immigrants in the previous decades are now dissolving and have become tourist hotspots rather than co-ethnic business hubs (Kye, 2018).

Part of the reason for this dissolution has been the fact that Chinatowns typically were in the city centres, and now the land they sit on is highly valuable and is being converted from small affordable housing for incoming low-wage immigrants to new, luxurious condos and apartments for well-earning Millennials (Semuels, 2019; Thien, 2017). Moreover, these ethnic enclaves were spatially constrained away from the host country's main economy to internally function like a labour market (Ojo & Shizha, 2018). However, only a few of the respondents of this study were exclusively tied to the co-ethnic markets with no plans to expand out of it. Most interviewees also showed a willingness to expand into the local markets.

Moreover, I-12F states that personal friendships could be formed to know people from similar cultural backgrounds but other than that, the ethnic enclaves were no longer of any use:

"I don't know because I don't know these Chinese enclaves, what are their purposes, the nature of their businesses. After all, these groups might be just a way of developing a friendship or the kind to help you alleviate your homesickness. I think the main thing is that when you join any group, you need to know what your purpose is to join this group. If you just need a kind of comfort from a fellow countryman, of course, you can join a Chinese association".

I-14F stated emphatically:

"There was no such association, if there were any so-called associations, they only gathered for eating, so I didn't go after".

While I-16F clarifies that such associations may be of some assistance to migrating individuals who need basic assistance like filling out forms, they were not useful for immigrant entrepreneurs who are likely to require specialised assistance for their enterprises.

"Yes, and there is another association called Wai Yin Society, they also offer some help to the Chinese. I have an employee who doesn't speak English very well. So, he goes to the Wai Yin Society to ask them to help him fill out forms or something quite often, but I think I can do that all by myself, so I don't go to them".

I-19M reiterates that it might be better to join local associations like the Chamber of Commerce for business-related matters because their interactions are more focused on industry matters. Furthermore, I-23F feels that she is a misfit in the Chinese associations:

"Yes, of course. The biggest problem with these large Chinese associations in the U.K. now is that they are generally comprised of people more senior in age, probably between 60 and 90 years old. I'm not saying that I don't get along with them, but that I'm actually too young relative to their ages in these associations".

Also, they need not fall into the bureaucratic trap that older associations tend to fall into. Moreover, their support for incoming immigrants needs to be suitably advertised, as many interviewees reported being unaware of what support systems were available to them.

Finally, the I-13F questions:

"I suggest that you should not be too enthusiastic about joining any organisation, because in the end, whether you are building a career or just being a person, success is in your own hands. Of course, it is better to have some organisation where everyone can talk to each other, but I think everyone must also have caution and think carefully, what you want to get? If you want to get something, is finding a Chinese organisation the best way?"

This indicates that the purpose for which these co-ethnic business associations were initially formed was no longer being served and that these associations were merely hosting networking, cultural and private events where co-ethnics could meet and maybe carry on informal, private relationships of their own accord. This finding in itself is a major finding of this research. It brings empirical evidence that the ethnic enclaves were not as powerful or helpful as they used

to be for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and that they had to figure out the details of setting up their enterprises in the U.K. by themselves.

- **Ethnic enclaves may not be suitable for building business contacts**

A sizable number of interviewees noted that the right business contacts were not found in ethnic enclaves or through ethnic networks.

I-03F felt that it was better for the immigrants to participate in associations suitable for their business rather than go to co-ethnic associations.

"Right, because they are quite strict. Actually, we have to abide by them. Joining the groups or not is another matter. Many people in the U.K. are also landlords, not just the Chinese. As long as you have an aim, such as making a real estate investment or learning how to run Airbnb, I think it is best to disregard nationality. You have to go to a more specialised event that is based on the theme that can help you".

I-06F echoed a similar sentiment:

"Yes, but I personally feel that sometimes networking is not necessarily effective networking. You have to put your energy in the right place. This is the most important thing, so I belong to the kind that will not casually go to any event all the time; you're wasting your time. You need to know if the network is useful to you. So, if it's useful to you, I'd recommend".

And by I-12F:

"Actually, I found out later that not every networking event is suitable for everyone, so you have to find the one that works with you, because the main thing is to see if the hosts are suitable for you as they have a great influence, so I think that when you are here, you just want to find a group that suits you, and you feel comfortable".

Moreover, other research also claims that conventional enclaves have given in to the rise of multi-ethnic areas which see a congregation of multiple similar ethnic cultures, such as Vietnamese businesses in the Chinese ethnic enclave or 'Chinatown' (Chen, 2018). However,

such ethnoburbs are no longer business powerhouses that control ethnic markets and businesses as tightly as the earlier ethnic enclaves used to.

Extant literature also emphasises the importance of networking within the main socio-cultural level of the host country to improve their opportunity structure and as a key breakout strategy (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020). However, this sentiment was not echoed by the entrepreneurs interviewed for the empirical research.

Only one interviewee, I-16F, recommended joining ethnic organisations and suggested that they helped the new immigrant entrepreneurs fit into the host culture. She recommended that they advertise this service more aggressively.

"I think that's right. If they can do more promotions, that's really good. But actually, like the Manchester Chinese Centre, their principal, actually I think he's very enthusiastic. What he does in this regard is to help Chinese immigrants to fit into the local culture; it is quite helpful".

I-08F contrarily felt that joining co-ethnic networks was counterproductive because:

"I asked some Chinese people, but I found that some Chinese people were not willing to share information. They were afraid you would ask to check their company account or something. I don't know what to say, but I found that Chinese sometimes take great precautions, so you can't ask them".

Furthermore, while I-21M did find some business from the ethnic networks, he claims:

"Yes, but in our total turnover, that was maybe only a tiny percentage".

I-07M, on the other hand, did not find ethnic networks particularly useful for his enterprise, but he mentioned it might be better suited to some other entrepreneur.

"It's hard to say because it depends on what you want to get from it. As far as I am concerned, at this stage, I have not used these resources on my own. I will say no need to go to the Chinese community for their resources. I now have my own resources to use. But it depends".

While I-14F recommends joining local groups instead of co-ethnic networks as long as they suit your business format:

"The U.K. has a local group called Business Champers; I joined one. This is mostly about social events and networking, and the events will be held by different sectors; if today I was in the finance or insurance industry, the contacts are important. But for me, who specialises in a certain sector in the hardware technology, as far as our industry is concerned, those social gatherings are not practically helpful for me".

I-13F vehemently said co-ethnic networks were not useful:

"No, absolutely not. I think if I want to join some clubs, I will go to join English groups because I think Chinese people are behind in getting information".

I-23F also seems to feel this is the case:

"So sometimes I don't really know much, and the associations may have only old Chinese people and everybody's experience, and background is actually completely different. What we are looking for is also different from what they know, so it is actually a little bit difficult to integrate into their circle; I myself feel so".

I-21M felt that his business was very large and beyond the scope of the members of the co-ethnic group:

"Most of the Scottish Taiwan Chamber of Commerce members are some old overseas Taiwanese, so in fact, most of them do not have their own company here. They are just individuals, and then there are some small businesses that they are running that aren't quite the size of my company".

This leads to the question if the current generation of incoming immigrant entrepreneurs, who have access to large resources from the economically strong China, is similar to the immigrants that settled in the U.K. 2-3 decades ago. As per extant literature, the new-age immigrant entrepreneurs are opportunity entrepreneurs who are pulled into entrepreneurship in high-growth ventures which are niche-specific and thus non-viable to local entrepreneurs (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018).

They have higher levels of education, advanced skills and sometimes cross-border experiences and transnational business ties as per (Wang & Liu, 2015), which they leverage for value-added entrepreneurial activities (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). If these Chinese immigrants are not similar in terms of their requirements from the ethnic enclaves, then based on the findings of

this study, can it be theorised that the traditional ethnic enclave is becoming outdated for business assistance? This could potentially become another subject area for future research.

- **Too many associations can be draining on time and finances**

Joining several co-ethnic networks or associations can drain the limited time and resources that new entrepreneurs do not have to spare. I-01F said:

"The advantage of joining a Chinese association is to get to do more networking; your connections can be considered to be money. When you get to know more people, you can get more business opportunities which are very helpful. But you might have no time to join the event or activities to build your networking. Even if you join lots of associations or institutions, you might find out that you even don't have enough time to join their event, which is a very big problem".

Similarly, I-04M stated:

"Yes, it was almost not helpful for starting a business, because when you are starting a business, your time is very tight every day for running the business. You have to do everything by yourself. How will you then have time to join these associations?"

and

"Joining any Chinese association usually requires you to have time and money, so it means that your business has to go well before you are able to join these associations".

While I-07M said:

"I thought about it. But I have just arrived in London from Sheffield. So, I have yet to establish such a link, and my customers are in China, so I don't need to deal with so many local Chinese societies. I don't have time. I don't have that much time to do it".

A sizable number of respondents noted that they had little time to spend on ethnic enclaves, especially because they did not find the ethnic enclaves and networks to be very helpful for their enterprises.

- **Co-ethnic groups have inherent integrity issues**

In theory, co-ethnic groups should be supportive of the immigrant entrepreneur (Munkejord, 2017), but in reality, as per the findings of this research, they were bogged down by bureaucracy, political ideology and discriminatory and close-minded opinions. There were also some reports of arrogance amongst association committee members.

As an interviewee I-13F says:

"Yes, because you would think that if everyone is from the same background and the same situation, you may help each other more, but I didn't get such a feeling at the time, and I felt that there was some bureaucracy in China that they brought here, even political trends can easily be brought to such ethnic Chinese groups. Then I think if they spend too much time with each other, then they develop an arrogance; that they feel that there are so many Chinese and we are so powerful so why we should learn from anyone else? Sometimes, there were even some discriminatory views toward others. I feel that the entire atmosphere was not very open at the time, and it was very clear what people were doing in this organisation; that is, people were seeking psychological encouragement. I think that environment was not very suitable for me".

While the experience of I-05F was:

"When starting a business, we were told that there seemed to be some chambers of commerce, but they didn't like small companies like us. I just wanted to know more about such people, but there was nothing in fact, and I think a lot of people said that they were very nice, but in fact, some of them didn't even do it. They just spoke very well about it and said it was very good".

And I-14F said:

"No, because there were not many people before. Our associations are also quite different. Actually, I don't think Taiwanese business people support each other much. I feel these associations need several improvements such as the association's main job is actually to promote Taiwanese companies' visibility".

Their responses indicate that Ethnic enclaves, like all old institutions, tend to get biased, one-sided and inflexible. This may be one of the reasons why new immigrants have found such little support from the ethnic organisations and why they do not recommend spending time in

these. Educated and financially strong immigrant entrepreneurs are no longer likely to need the security of traditional ethnic enclaves. They are no longer exclusively limited to working long hours for minimal wages in co-ethnic businesses due to their disadvantages, as were immigrants a few decades earlier.

A supposition is that the approach that ethnic enclaves were critical for the survival of immigrant entrepreneurs was driven by an assumption that the immigrant entrepreneurs were entrepreneurial simply because they lacked suitable human and financial capital (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018) and had to engage in entrepreneurial activities for economic survival reasons as suggested by Shinnar and Zamantılı Nayır (2019). The blocked mobility theory can be linked here to a lack of communication and potentially career-related skills, reducing their employability (Xu et al., 2019) and will thus push them into entrepreneurship. Moreover, in such cases, social networks were effectively used to gain opportunities, and the opportunity structures available to the immigrant entrepreneur were directly related to their socio-cultural embeddedness (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

Prashantham et al. (2015) note that networking is essential for business and ethnic communities still offer personal and professional networking. Tata and Prasad (2015) espoused the importance of ethnic networks for building and maintaining social and personal contact. As several interviewees also responded that they felt most comfortable interacting within their co-ethnic communities, it can be said that ethnic networks and enclaves still hold importance; however, their role is changing with the changing business scenario.

4.1.2.2 Socio-cultural challenges

Some of the most noteworthy challenges immigrant entrepreneurs experienced were the socio-cultural area. The challenges experienced were exacerbated by the cultural differences between the host country nationals (locals) and the immigrants from a different culture. Extant literature notes that cultural distance between the home and host cultures can predict adaptation ease (Xu & Chen, 2017) as it negatively correlates with cultural adjustment, as per Salgado and Bastida (2017). These differences are increased due to language challenges and the lack of cultural knowledge that people of both diverse ethnic groups often display. While language has been well documented in literature as one of the primary challenges (De La Garza & Ono, 2015),

which reduces opportunities that can be accessed by the immigrant entrepreneurs (Moon et al., 2014), I-13F notes that language challenges are usually solved in a short time but

“Cultural challenge is the real problem”.

She also notes that lack of knowledge of the subject or suitability of words in specific situations can be learnt to enhance the level of adjustment of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneur and their family:

As per literature, general adjustment is concerned with the daily life of the immigrant entrepreneur and his/her family (Adendorff & Halkias, 2014). It involves variables like food, housing, health care, living cost, shopping and driving. Immigrants who achieve greater levels of general adjustment display higher control in their professional settings, perform better and are better acculturated to the host society (Selmer & Luring, 2015). Whereas, extant literature also notes that where family and personal life are not properly adjusted, it can lead to the failure of the immigrant in the work sphere and cause them to want to return to their home country as per Erogul and Rahman (2017).

The length of the adjustment period is also culture-dependent. While some cultures offer acceptance and an open welcome, other cultures have stronger barriers that make it harder for immigrant entrepreneurs to adjust (Shi & Franklin, 2014). Extant literature agrees and defines the difference between the home and host cultures as 'cultural distance' (Salgado & Bastida, 2017), which can predict adaptation ease; the lesser the distance, the easier it is to adapt to the new culture (Demes & Geeraert, 2014).

A wide cultural distance between the two cultures is one of the main reasons that challenges continue to be experienced by the immigrant entrepreneurs years after they move to the host culture (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). There is a higher demand for competencies from the individuals to act as a coping mechanism (Vandor & Franke, 2016b). Greater cultural distance increased the time required for cross-cultural adjustment, as per Salgado and Bastida (2017). However, the cultural distance between China and the U.K. is rather large (Hofstede-insights, 2021).

Although there are some minor differences between China and Taiwan, such as the use of different characters (simplified vs. traditional), in terms of culture, according to McEneaney

(2019), the majority of Taiwan's population can trace their roots back to China, and so it is inevitable that the two will share many traditions and cultural practices. Therefore, there are no significant differences regarding challenges between China and Taiwan. Salgado and Bastida's (2017) study also noted that cultural distance is negatively interconnected to cross-cultural adjustment, which means that cultural adjustment for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. was difficult.

Moreover, the immigrant entrepreneurs have to adjust to immigrants from other diverse cultures, which increases their challenges in fitting into the host culture. Present literature focuses on the concept of super-diversity that challenges established concepts of belonging and identity but also connects people from different cultures based on value systems, shared experiences and attitudes (Eduardo & Giacomo, 2018; Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). However, challenges such as cultural stereotyping can lead to discrimination, making it harder for immigrant entrepreneurs to adapt to their host country and may even cause friction (Kazlou & Klinthall, 2019). These challenges can be exacerbated by fewer opportunities available to newly arrived migrants than host country nationals, especially if the incoming immigrants display little knowledge of the host country's language and cultural sensitivity.

- **Various cultures from different countries in the U.K.**

The U.K. is a multicultural country; therefore, all the participants had the experience of adapting to people from several cultures (Malik, 2013). However, certain customer-facing businesses tend to have a stronger focus on interacting with people, and such immigrant entrepreneurs have to adjust to people from a wide range of cultures, as I-01F states:

"I contact all kinds of people in different sectors because I sell food especially, as the U.K. is a multicultural country, so you meet lots of people including local English people, old immigrants, new immigrants, different international students".

I-04M says:

"Learn from their character and how they speak. If people like to use dirty words when they talk with a friend, we can also act the same way with this kind of group; if people are polite, we are also polite. Just learn from different kinds of people".

Similarly, I-03F gives an example,

"For Jews, you cannot contact them on Saturdays, but I don't think it's a difficult thing to pay attention to".

Indicating that with some thoughtfulness and respect, it was easy to adjust to a diverse culture, especially if the immigrant has had prior experience with another culture, and I-20F agrees with her. I-03F, I-05F, and I-06F report having studied in multicultural classrooms, and this prior exposure I-06F states allows people to be flexible.

Similarly, I-03F further states:

"I came here when I was 18 years old. I think because I was still very young, so I feel like I adapted quickly".

Signifying that the age at which the immigrant moved to the host country also had some bearing on their ease of adjustment to the host culture; however, the immigrant had to cultivate the ability to listen, observe their whole attitude, and try not to say something personal about politics or religion.

I-08F offered the opposing view and noted:

"It was not easy for me before. I am not an outgoing person, but my current job basically does not allow me to be introverted".

Nevertheless, despite not praising people much, she preferred to carry out her duties and seriously studied the other's preferences and backgrounds to adapt to people of other cultures successfully. I-09M further reiterated the importance of learning about the general knowledge, such as climate, politics, history etc. and having informed conversations with natives that go beyond business conversations. I-11F, on the other hand, believes that prolonged exposure

"Gets you comfortable speaking to international people".

And I-13F agreed. I-14F pointed out that there may be some negative aspects of encountering differences in cultures, but you learn to deal with those as you do business

"Yes, it is very interesting. Probably because of the computer industry, because in the computer industry the manufacturing plants are mostly are in our home country. There was a company called Times, a bit like P.C. world. I directly found their manager, with my broken English. They thought I was directly from the factory. I was actually from

the factory; I also told them so. Then I talked directly to his boss; an ordinary local distributor would not be able to do this. This was an advantage for me. But there are negative aspects as well. Some clients would say I will not do business with you. There are clients from Pakistan, India and so on. They do not want to deal with women in meetings. So, these are the cultural differences. You cannot do anything about it, but you learn how to deal with it over time".

As well due to discrimination stemming from cultural differences, which only has to be dealt with because there is little a person can do about it other than learn to deal with it. I-19M also states that you have to see and understand whom you meet even if you do business with several countries. He insists that the immigrant entrepreneurs must learn to respect the local cultures, but they must not change themselves substantially to try and become like the natives of the host culture.

I-19M said:

"Because I don't just do business with Britain, I also do business with America, Italy, France and Australia. In my opinion, you have to become more respectful, and you have to understand their culture, but not change yourself. For example, to a child, you have to understand his character to be able to better guide him. You have to be more aware of their cultures, but you don't have to become them. In my opinion, we are who we are, that is, you don't have to cater to them or anything, just respect them. I can't make myself British, and I don't think we need to".

I-22F sums it up quite well,

"I think first of all it's not that difficult if you overcome the language challenge, because Britain is also a multi-ethnic country. It's not just a single race here. It now has, for example, South Asians, Chinese, Vietnamese, and so on. It is also a multicultural country, so it's not that hard, I think".

- **Friction can also be seen with other ethnic groups and ideologies**

Due to the large number of ethnicities represented in the U.K., there is likely to be friction with some of the other ethnic groups and ideologies; as I-11F states that she faced problems in communication,

“there must be a stereotype. If you make a call without a local accent, the person will start to distrust you. They will think you are not a native, so where did you come from? He will think that you and they are people from different worlds”.

I-18M agrees that:

“Language was the greatest difficulty, and secondly, there was some conflict in the cultural context, because when we first came to the U.K., the people whom we came into contact with the most were Indians or people from Pakistan, maybe there were some conflicts of cultural backgrounds”.

I-06F offers an explanation of why such friction is likely to happen and states:

“I think this is a shortcoming of our Asians. Maybe your background knowledge is not enough, and you may not have as much experience as them, so your critical thinking part is not enough”.

I-11F said:

“I think yes because you have gotten used to it for two years, for example, how to get comfortable speaking to international people. When I arrived in the first year, I found it difficult to integrate, even in the international team, because you find that students come from India and so on, and you are not able to get used to their accents. Every country is a lot different. For example, the West is more inclined to express things instantly. Our culture is more composed. After listening to what others say, I will finally express my opinion, but the problem is that they will think that if you don't speak out, it means that you are not good enough, and if you speak after I have spoken, it means you did not keep up, and we have already discussed it, it's too late to tell me this, so you have a lot of problems”.

- **Differences between attitudes of locals and immigrants**

A vast majority of the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs reported substantial differences between the attitudes of the local individuals and the immigrants. I-08F notes that she had no one to ask for help among her British friends because they did not understand her motivation to become an entrepreneur:

"They were more likely to be workers with regular salaries without high pressure. They even would think, why do you want to start your own business? They don't really love entrepreneurship. They don't like to be an entrepreneur as much as the Chinese do".

I-08F also noted that there were attitude differences in how Britishers and Chinese employees handled situations:

"Our culture means being humble, so employees are more passive, but British employees dare to fight for it, and dare to break through by themselves, so because I am an entrepreneur, I would like to say that my employees should go on their own initiative to do something, rather than what should I set".

Therefore, indicating that having cultural differences was not always considered to be negative. I-10F noted that there was a need to hire more local staff as there were differences in the way product promotions were done between the two countries.

Some of the other differences pointed out was related to the way of life in the U.K. and the difference in population size from the home country, as I-10F said:

"I felt that it was very direct. I felt that there were fewer people and that it was quieter. I felt the pace of life was slower in the whole society".

This sentiment was also reiterated by I-12F, I-13F, and I-14F, who noted that the Chinese favoured speed and efficiency (I-17F) in doing things and solving matters, and there was greater pressure on the workers. At the same time, the British locals were more likely to speak up about facing challenges than their Chinese counterparts. Literature notes that the socio-cultural adaptation of the individual is based on their aptitude for cultural learning and acceptance, the language skills they develop and their bicultural flexibility (leveraging two cultures) (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022).

Basic language competency and flexibility from the immigrant entrepreneurs are crucial so that the host culture natives are able to communicate with the immigrants. It can also include their adaptability to the local social skills and business practices and directly relates to the individual's learning skills and personal interests (Wilson et al., 2017). In a similar vein, I-25F noted that personal interests varied too, as the locals like to finish work on time and spend the evening laughing with friends, preferably over a drink, while the Chinese immigrants preferred

to work longer and have quiet evenings at home and noted that this lifestyle did not suit them.

I-05F says:

"I think that the attitude of Asian Chinese to work and the attitude of British people to work is not the same. For a Chinese, I think he will work harder and harder; that is, he cares more about the work he does by himself, so he is more attentive".

It was important to discover these differences, I-16F noted, especially if the entrepreneur hopes to attract more local clients because of the differences in choices and communication culture between locals and immigrants. I-19M stated that, unlike in China, the U.K. natives tended to favour personal emotions even in business, and I-13F noted that family culture was most important.

Furthermore, I-19M noted that the business culture in the U.K., unlike the business culture in China:

"Did not provide extra services... and convenient logistics".

And I-24F as their culture and their customer service was pretty straightforward because the natives prescribed to the belief that,

"You have to take responsibility for your own actions".

Moreover, I-05F noted that she faced challenges in hiring employees, while I-15F reported that

"Foreign staffs seem to find it very hard to integrate with our Chinese staff".

Indicating employment-related challenges that arose from cultural and attitude differences. Despite these differences between the two countries, the overarching feeling was that the U.K. was a fair environment for most things. As I-10F says:

"There is no absolute fairness, but for the most part, it is fair and transparent".

- **Dissimilarity with the host culture causes unexpected problems for the immigrant entrepreneur**

Nearly all of the study participants indicated that they faced unexpected challenges due to the cultural differences experienced. Some like I-01F experienced differences in services, especially contract related, due to lack of local knowledge and difficulty in communicating

face to face. In contrast, I-04M stated that business culture was a cause for unexpected problems.

"In the U.K., it is very black and white in terms of business culture".

Due to the cultural differences in employee attitude, I-14F faced problems with her employees; she agreed that the straightforward manner was off-putting initially. But this experience taught I-14F to

"Talk straight forward about any issue".

Similarly, I-03F noted:

"When I entered a workplace environment, I think I felt the cultural gaps or differences more when I started to work".

I-01F felt that just feeling the differences was not enough, and immigrant entrepreneurs had to work proactively on identifying alternate solutions to be able to work in a culturally different country,

"because of geographical location and cultural differences, so you have to find an alternative solution by looking for suitable local ingredients".

While others still experienced unusual banking-related challenges because of a lack of knowledge of local rules and regulations, such as I-02M stated:

"For example, my company account was closed at the beginning because there was more cash deposited. In the traditional Chinese culture, depositing cash into your business account is very normal because that is your business income. In the contract, it will cause some problems if you deposit too much cash in the bank in the U.K. Bank did not explain. It even didn't give me a chance to explain".

Moreover, he compared the British and Chinese business systems, with good personal relationships taking precedence even in banking. Similarly, not following the local rules and regulations could mean unwittingly breaking some rules and regulations because

"You have to understand them and implement them step by step. Especially those related to health and safety or some relevant safety laws and regulations which are very important".

Furthermore, I-04M notes that due to the high familiarity with your home country, setting up a business is easier while you have a steep learning curve in the host country.

"In the U.K., things are completely different from Chinese".

I-06F and I-12F also agreed with this point. The difference in the attitudes and working styles can cause friction between the Chinese immigrant entrepreneur and the local employees, as noted by I-05F, whose employees felt her hard work was too extreme. However, the study found that, in general, employers and employees both made efforts to work together despite cultural differences amicably.

Other immigrant entrepreneurs such as I-15F also reported that while the local customers were harder to please initially, they eventually were very loyal customers leading to the assumption that the initial hiccups may possibly be explained by the lack of understanding of the local market needs and she reiterates that.

"Please don't try to bring Asian business concepts into the U.K. market. Don't try to copy and paste".

highlighting the need to tailor the business as per local market needs because I-15F

"Maybe the way you do business is fine in your home town, but it doesn't mean that it will fit the host country".

Also, the rules and regulations to be followed in the U.K. are more stringent as per I-16F,

"Everything needs to be submitted to the government".

While I-24F notes:

"We often have to intervene to let our customers know what the local culture is like here".

- **Difficulty understanding complex terminology and cultural contexts**

Participants reported that there was difficulty in understanding legal and complicated terminology and sometimes cultural contexts during conversations with locals. I-02M notes

"When you buy or sell real estate or go to an auction house for auction, he will give you a lot of legal provisions which you even don't recognise".

While I-04M reported not understanding contexts even after

“I check for information online”.

Therefore, making it difficult to fit into the local culture. I-05F missed opportunities because of a lack of understanding of documents, and I-06F stated that the problem stemmed from the fact that she and her co-ethnics had a lower level of language skills than immigrants from other places like

“Egypt, Spain, Portugal, then Italy, Germany”.

Further, I-08F stated that information was easy to find and her English ability was acceptable, but the official language and context were too hard to understand

“I know every single word, but I still don't understand the content”.

I-10F, I-12F and I-14F found it harder to understand the legal and official fine print, and this caused them to have fears in communicating.

I-07M, however, found that a system of communicating, feedback, and written instructions worked well in dealing with communication challenges. Moreover, I-16F noted that communicating in general terms was easy, but it was hard to really relate with the local suppliers.

“We can't really get very close with them”.

I-10F reported that the locals were mostly willing to explain contextual lapses, but I-19M felt that getting along with a single person was easy. At the same time, it was harder to understand contextual nuances in larger groups. He stated that Chinese entrepreneurs without specialities could also fit in with basic English skills as the government regulations are very simple, with little red tape or bureaucracy in the country.

I-25F made an important point that it was easier to communicate for the sole purpose of business but

“They will also talk about other things about China, about how things are here in Britain, and then about life”.

- **Better opportunities for locals over immigrants**

The participants of the study noted that immigrants often got fewer opportunities than locals because of the challenges blocking them. I-03F noted that visa rules stipulated hiring a local with a minimum salary base, making it harder for immigrant entrepreneurs to sustain their new business. As I-07M noted that

"You don't have any advantages in the host country".

And

"As a foreigner, we still have to stay connected to our home country to use our advantages. We serve as bridges for people from our country, rather than purely doing business in the local country. Your advantage is that you know both sides".

He further notes that with limited language skills, immigrant entrepreneurs were likely to remain at the bottom of the hierarchy in the host country, which would not offer any advantages.

This can easily be linked back to the blocked mobility theory (discussed in Chapter 2 Literature review) that theorised that a key motivation for getting into entrepreneurship is the limited opportunities available to the immigrants. However, I-01F felt she also did not receive equal opportunities in entrepreneurship despite providing better quality.

"...at the same price, yet they will not give me the opportunity".

I-01F also goes on to note that,

"Maybe it can be said that their level of acceptance is not so high because they already have stereotypes... So when you have a different idea or offer, they can't really accept it".

This indicates that while immigrants can generate better opportunities for themselves using entrepreneurship, there were still blockages for them that hampered their growth in the host country.

I-07M makes a different point when he says that opportunities are fewer in the U.K. than in China, indicating that while some of the lack of opportunities can be attributed to a lack of competencies or discrimination, a key point to consider was market size.

As I-19M elaborates, because of the difference in the size of the market between the fast-growing Chinese market and a more matured market of the U.K. therefore, the opportunities are fewer for Chinese entrepreneurs in the U.K. unless they leverage their home country's advantage. He further noted

"As a Chinese, you have to do things you are good at, use your resources. If you are doing trade, you must have resources for doing trading because Chinese people might be more familiar with suppliers. But if you don't have any Chinese resources that can be used and you just go straight to be competitive with the British, it will be very difficult because you don't have a competitive advantage. If you don't have your unique competitive advantage, then it is hard to do business here".

I-08F further notes that she has the double disadvantage of being female and Chinese.

"Most of the business people are male, and among that, white people are more".

However, she also advises not to dwell on the disadvantages and focus on the advantages. Other participants also noted that immigrants had fewer opportunities than locals preferred. I-01F said:

"It is very straightforward... I still feel that most of the English will keep most of the welfare or job opportunities for their own people. For example, to join the event if there were two companies competing. One from a local city and one from another nationality. They will choose the local one".

This lack of suitable opportunities can be exacerbated by immigrants' lack of local language skills. Chelariu and Osmonbekov (2014) state that having proficiency in the local language empowers immigrants to identify and exploit mainstream market opportunities in their host country. Moreover, the mixed embeddedness approach entails that the host country's external environment influences opportunity structures. While human, social and financial capitals are crucial, external factors such as national policies (immigration or state policies) also impact the opportunities available (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). Visa issues were the most commonly cited reason for limited opportunities in this research. However, as Visa issues relate to the institutional level, they will be discussed in detail later in this chapter.

- **Discrimination**

When dissimilar cultures co-exist, there is bound to be a certain amount of friction with some individuals, and immigrant entrepreneurs report that they have faced some discrimination in their host environment.

I-01F clearly felt there was discrimination and said:

"I felt people from North are actually kinder. Because when you go to the South, you will feel some kind of racial discrimination".

While I-21M felt that while not blatant, there was subtle discrimination from the natives and stated

"For example, Scottish under some circumstances, if they have a better choice, then they won't accept Asian guests. Because there are some bed and breakfast owners, they feel that the quality of Asians, in general, is not high. For Asia in general, that is, it includes Indians. They insist that they do not accept Asian guests like this, or they say that because we have guests with children, and then maybe there will be some disruptive or out-of-control behaviour, and then they wouldn't accept my guests".

On the other hand, I-02M was highly disappointed that there was little implementation of security measures for immigrants and felt that it was due to discriminatory behaviour of the local population.

"Our warehouse was burglarised, our car was smashed, including theft in our private house. There was no result after reporting to the police, and no case was resolved. I did not even feel the police were chasing these cases. They simply made a record. That's it".

The U.K. police do not typically have an undesirable reputation, yet some of the respondents report a lack of assistance. While this may not clearly be a case of discrimination, it can be deliberated if this disinterest could be based on discrimination, especially since I-04M reports a similar experience.

"Most of the cases result like this. Yes, if the locals go to argue, maybe they will have more focus on their case".

However, cases of discrimination were reported more from individuals rather than institutions, as I-04M notes that his neighbours complained about him alone even when his local neighbour was doing the same thing.

"For example, where I lived, the people next door were doing business in their homes, and their big trucks could stop there, but my trucks could not also stop there. All residential areas do not allow the trucks to stop. My neighbour has parked there, and I also park there. But only I was warned by my neighbours, and they would even complain, make a call or whatever".

Also, his experience was that some people were intentionally unhelpful even when they easily could have helped.

"It takes time, goes slowly. When I started my business, vegetables were an important part of it. I had been looking for this vegetable market for three years before I found this market. When I asked them right at the beginning, they didn't tell me. They said that they didn't know when or where to buy; in fact, they went every day".

Furthermore, I-04M goes on to state:

"Yes, these things definitely will happen. I think this is not too bad for me because some people are even beaten by local people on the street".

I-08F says the customers often make a snap judgement of the products being sold based on the sellers' ethnic identity,

"Made in China, poor quality".

While I-14F found that while she had managed to gain respect in her industry, it was hard to get service personnel from outside her industry.

"If they were from outside of our P.C. industry and they don't know much about us, that is, they don't know that I am the boss; I feel that they don't want to talk to me, for example, if I want to find a plumber today, he might not want to pay attention to me".

I-19M states that the success level insulated the individual from some discriminatory behaviour, and while he did not face discrimination directly, he witnessed second-hand discrimination.

"When I started hiring British people, I was already quite successful. I think the British people have a different view of successful people. But when I first started working in

the U.K., in my British company, I was the only Chinese, and the rest were British. At the time, their head office was in Taiwan, so they were good to Chinese people. But later, I found out that as I was the only Chinese, a British colleague probably thought of me as one of his own kind. But when he talked about Indians and Pakistanis, he was a bit prejudiced against the Indians and the Pakistanis. He called them Paki. They will often use this word in front of you because they think you are Chinese, so it is fine”.

This point also leads to the question if there are layers of discrimination based on ethnicity or level of income and success and if certain ethnicities are likely to face discrimination more strongly than others. This point was studied by Kazlou and Klinthall (2019), who noted that there was real and sometimes perceived discrimination was often reported by newly arriving ethnic minority groups, and they noted that certain communities were more likely to report discrimination than others.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that discrimination does not exclusively have to come from the host country's natives and could also stem from the immigrant entrepreneur or people of other ethnicities co-existing in the same host country.

As I-01F reported that

“Racial discrimination is from stereotype... Orientals will avoid people from the Middle East, and people from the Middle East will avoid Orientals. The English will take caution against people who are not English. There exists some internal conflict or a certain degree of mistrust”.

And I-03F said that they automatically discarded resumes of new college graduates,

“Because we all knew that they had no visa eligibility, they couldn't stay, and you have no use in interviewing him/her. It would be a complete waste of time”.

I-21M did not feel the need to correct or respond to discriminatory behaviour and said it was better to not do business with individuals or organisations that behaved in such a manner,

“Right, if they can't communicate, you don't need to communicate with them because if the stereotype is so strong, it is meaningless for you to communicate with them. It means you have to lower your level to tell them these things. If they act like that, why do I need to give money for them to earn”.

However, while there was discrimination, some interviewees felt that it was not the fault of the host community exclusively, and the immigrants were just as liable to shoulder the blame. As I-04M bluntly puts it across,

"There is a little bit of xenophobia, and they discriminate against the immigrants. But you can't say they have such discrimination absolutely without reason. They will magnify and watch things you have done. But if we consider a wider view, they review you because you have done something that they are not happy about, and they will zero in on that".

I-08F similarly states that discrimination could have come because of the Chinese people's often stingy and sometimes dishonest behaviour.

"Because you have money does not mean you are willing to spend money on other people. And you want to take advantage of it, for example, if you have money, you will buy pirated goods, if you have money, you will copy other people's things, and it's not moral, so it is more cunning".

This point was agreed to by I-04M, who notes that immigrants need to bear a large part of the responsibility to make the relationships smoother. On a conciliatory note, he states:

"No, because if you know that they don't like it, so you have to avoid doing it. Otherwise, you will have trouble and quarrel with others very often. That's not a solution. If you don't obey laws and regulations, then that will be your fault. You also need to change your mind about why local people can do it, but we can't do it as an immigrant. You can't really think like that; otherwise, you're just looking for a fight with someone!".

Similarly, I-11F says there may be discriminatory issues to survive in the host country.

"It is necessary to try out. The difficulty is that the number of rejections after you try is still very high".

I-08F had an interesting perspective on discrimination and noted that the feeling of being discriminated against stems from internal weakness and an inability to carry out the work to the full capability on the part of the immigrant rather than come from the host natives.

"If I say that I feel that if I have something that I can't do well, it's not because I have been discriminated against, but because I don't have the required strength. It's not

enough. I won't be discriminated against because of the relationship between Chinese people. I think the competition in the whole society is a fair state. You can do it if you have the ability. You only need to be serious and work hard for your products to be good enough”.

Moreover, similarly, even-though I-01F noticed that sometimes people from different cultures get different prices, she also stated that it was not all negative from a business perspective; business was business, and people were most willing to put aside their differences for the sake of working together.

- **Missing support system and familiarity with the home country**

The immigrant entrepreneurs often have support systems and are familiar with their home country; however, they need to learn to be self-dependent in the host country with limited support networks. I-20F reports:

“in China or in your hometown, you have many relatives and contacts and can get a lot of help. But when you go abroad, you may have to depend on yourself for everything, that's the difference. Maybe you need to spend more time building Guanxi (relationship)”.

Community or family support or social capital is an important resource that immigrant entrepreneurs lack. It can refer to support that families offer via unpaid labour and knowledge via experience or shared capital and resources that entrepreneurs are normally able to access in their own countries (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014; Tata & Prasad, 2015). However, I-21M said he had no social capital to help him when he was in the host country.

“I think most of the things have to be done by myself”.

- **Stress**

All these challenges can add up to undue stress for the immigrant entrepreneur I-01F states:

“It must be the stress. Because you are in a foreign country with which you are not familiar”.

She further states that being a student before starting the business increased her level of familiarity.

“But even so, I still have lots of things that are not familiar and are unknown to me. In terms of stress, the worst part is that we don’t know how to deal with or release it”.

Such stress can manifest in many ways; moreover, it can hamper building relationships within the host country (Cheng et al., 2014). Often immigrant entrepreneurs have limited time to build such relations, and cultural and language challenges cause further stress, thus not allowing the immigrant entrepreneur to forge lasting connections. A key breakout strategy is building local language skills (Wang & Warn, 2019).

I-02M says:

"For example, a supplier; you might give an order to him daily and then pay. This simple operation is not a big problem. But if you want to negotiate with him, tell him about my own business plan and hope that he will give me more support, such as discounts or extended account periods; such relationship building will take a while to achieve".

Wang and Warn (2018) note that enhanced familiarity helps with the adjustment process. Immigrant entrepreneurs who get well-adjusted within their general environment display greater levels of satisfaction and greatly reduced cognitive stress. Moreover, they are easily able to interact socially and build relationships more efficiently.

4.1.3 Institutional level

Institutional challenges relate to rules and regulations of the country, which concern the immigrant entrepreneurs' legal status in the country (Visa) as well as those that govern the enterprises. Extant literature notes that local tax laws, national and state-level regulations and governmental rules affect all entrepreneurs; however, their cost impact is greater on immigrant entrepreneurs, for whom these can become substantial challenges (Yeasmin, 2016). Moreover, the opportunities that are available to be accessed by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are dependent on the institutional embeddedness of the migrant and the local area rules (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

4.1.3.1 Politico-institutional

The political-institutional level is defined by the rules, laws and policies of the host country that directly or indirectly impact immigrant entrepreneurs' business and/or immigration activities (Ram et al., 2017; Steenbeek & Schutjens, 2014). This means that unfavourable policy changes could impact the incoming immigration of future immigrant entrepreneurs, while positive changes could improve it. Some of the key institutional challenges were related to rules and regulations, and the respondents claimed that the local laws were complex.

A noteworthy point in the above findings was that while there were clear guidelines available on government websites with regard to setting up a business, this seemed to be of little assistance to immigrant entrepreneurs personally because it was hard for them to understand the formal administrative language which is harder than conversational English. The responses of the interviewees seemed to indicate that they struggled the most in comprehension of the regulations. Unfamiliarity with the local culture plus difficulty in understanding complex terminology of documentation was identified to be the key reasons for this challenge (Chen et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2019).

- **Complex local rules and regulations**

One of the most common regulatory challenges reported by a majority of the immigrant entrepreneurs was that the local rules and regulations were fairly complex. Huang and Liu's (2019) study similarly notes that rules and regulations are similar for all entrepreneurs operating in a country; however, they have a greater effect and can become challenges to entry for immigrant entrepreneurs. I-02M says:

"The bad part of starting a business in the U.K. is that apart from poor public security, I feel that there are too many rules and regulations, and it is quite annoying".

A slightly contrary view was, however, offered by I-12F, who says:

"I don't think it is difficult, but after going through this experience, I found that, in the beginning, if you want to start a company, I think that your company's foundation must be done well for your tax filing practices. Because it is very strict here, there are a lot of regulations".

I-03F furthermore adds that despite trying to understand the complex terminology, it is hard to build more than a basic idea of some of the rules and regulations,

"These pieces of legislation are quite complicated originally, so that means you will usually only have a basic understanding, but you can't guarantee that your basic understanding of a concept does not have a more detailed article or a proviso, but then I think these things are sometimes not understood by the British themselves".

This indicates that setting a strong foundation for the enterprise is essential and that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs should learn about the applicable rules and regulations before applying. Moreover, they should note that the government offers many support services that can help them (Ram et al., 2012).

I-01F notes that official permissions and professional licences are harder to get in the U.K.:

"In addition to these paperwork things and regulations, there are more problems in a different aspect. For example: when I signed a lease contract for my storefront. I was looking for a place with permissions etc. There are many professional terms, or there are many restrictions in it".

In an illegal attempt to evade the complex rules and regulations, immigrant entrepreneurs often feel pulled toward the shadow/informal economy where they can work under the radar (Turkina & Thi Thanh Thai, 2013). However, it should be noted that this approach to entrepreneurship in the shadow economy is not beneficial to any of the stakeholders. When government policies impacting these informal economies are enforced (for example, hiring of undocumented labour, employing staff for longer hours than their legal work allowance or making cash payments that allow the business owner to pay less than the minimum wage mandate), then opportunity structures for these immigrant entrepreneurs are erased, or large penalties may be issued which can significantly impact their ability to carry on business (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

- **Regulation differences from home country**

A key reason the immigrant entrepreneurs find the local rules and regulations complex is due to the lack of cultural context and familiarity (Dheer, 2018). The differences between home and host country cultures are called 'cultural distance' as per Salgado and Bastida (2017). The cultural distance can predict adaptation and acculturation ease. China and the U.K. have a large

cultural gap which probably explains why there are distinct differences between the cultures and why the immigrant entrepreneurs find it so difficult to adjust to their new environment (Demes & Geeraert, 2014).

I-01F explains she has difficulties because her home country's environment is much more relaxed.

“It’s because doing business here is much more difficult than back in my hometown, that is because there are many kinds of documents and regulations here, and if you don’t apply first or what, you will actually have problems”.

I-16F reported a similar experience said:

“Yes, because this involves dealing with the city council, and there were some of their demands about rules and regulations which we felt like wouldn't be so complex if we were in our home country”.

Contrarily I-12F says that there is more ease of doing business in the U.K. than in her home country Taiwan.

“It is possible, in fact, we import our products, and they get the E.U. certification, so since we never need to deal with any bureaucracy like commodity bureau, in comparison, Taiwan's imports seem a little more complicated. Also, Taiwan's imports may need custom checks on any goods that I wanted to import to Taiwan, and I had to provide a lot of information to the customs bureau. In the United Kingdom, it is less complicated”.

Moreover, I-02M says that often one can overlook the rules and regulations because the individual may not even know what to look for as they have not heard about it in their own country.

“Yes, first of all, if you don’t have a similar cultural background, you may even not know to check for it. You don’t even know that there are such insurances. Just to give an example, you may not know that there is such a thing”.

Furthermore, I-04M states that the rules and regulations are not always favourable for immigrant entrepreneurs on a limited budget and trying to start a new business in an alien environment. Huang and Liu (2019) call this cost impact and say it is not favourable to

immigrant entrepreneurs. Further, Nel and Abdullah (2015) state that the high cost of initial set-up and limited access to capital/finance are common challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs. I-04M states:

"It is the lowest, but it depends on your profit. Also included in insurance, government forces you to have different kinds of insurance. So the cost is very high and having insurance is mandatory. And there are some banks which are in a monopolistic sector, so we have to use them. Just like what I just said. If you need a turnover of more than ten thousand million pounds, they will charge you about 100 thousand pounds. So, the business cost is very high".

Nevertheless, not everyone found the difference to be negative; I-13F says:

"Yes, of course. Because when I first arrived, I was not clear about everything, but I think one of the benefits of the U.K. is that official information is actually very complete and easily available online. And also, I had joined the University's entrepreneurial centre when I started my business, so I would ask them a lot of questions when I didn't understand. It was necessary that I relearnt all aspects of laws and regulations because they are not the same as in China".

The government offers many services aimed at entrepreneurs to overcome institutional challenges (Ram et al., 2012). However, Xu et al.(2019) argue that these services are not tailored to immigrant entrepreneurs' specific needs and are not very helpful.

- **Dissatisfaction with local laws and enforcement**

Some immigrant entrepreneurs also reported dissatisfaction with the security measures offered by the local law enforcement and noted they felt nothing was being done when they faced security-related issues. The angle of discrimination was analysed against this point. While no rampant widespread discrimination was reported in the country, it was felt that individuals from the host country might have such feelings (Omisakin, 2017). A few of the respondents said that they were not satisfied with the enforcement of local laws. Ideally, in the host country, local institutions should be able to provide fair and transparent regulatory frameworks so that the immigrants are assured they will get efficiency, stability, and trust in their host environment (Yeasmin, 2016).

I-02M gave the example of a theft that their enterprise experienced and said:

"Under normal procedures, you will call the police, and they will do everything, but then I can't feel what the police have done".

Furthermore, he says:

"There is no guarantee at all. The key point is that we can't feel that the police will really go to catch the thief. It feels like, Ok, we know of this matter, then they closed the case, that is it".

A similar experience was reported by I-04M, who said:

"Yes, but if trucks are stolen by professional thieves in the U.K., you won't be able to get them back".

These respondents seemed to have very little trust in the security measures offered by the local police. It could be questioned if these incidents were isolated or were there an element of discrimination that these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs experienced. Poblete (2018) note that immigrants have often reported real and perceived discriminatory behaviour during studies; however, no clear consensus was distilled from the literature reviewed for this research.

- **Additional expenditure to navigate unfamiliar rules and regulations**

There are many institutional challenges, and sometimes handling all of the challenges can become too much for individuals. It is recommended that the immigrant entrepreneurs consider consulting a professional intermediary to guide them through these challenges so that they have more free time and space to focus on their enterprise.

I-01F recommends:

"I think it should be said that because local regulations are unfamiliar, many things have to rely on so-called professional people, such as accountant lawyers or whatever, so you have a lot of extra expenses".

However, she also notes that this can increase expenses in an already stretched entrepreneurial budget.

I-12F states that there is an abundance of information available online; however, actually using that information

"is completely different; it becomes necessary to find the right accountants because data on the Internet is very abundant and the United Kingdom government has a lot of information for you, but you are, after all, not an accountant, so in fact, it is better to go to a licensed accountant, and he can help you deal with it completely. The transformation from partnership to the limited company was handled in full for me, which cost 85 pounds".

I-17F similarly said:

"I would suggest that incoming entrepreneurs find their own business lawyer in the U.K., who will then help them with the laws and regulations in the U.K. Because, if you don't do these things well at the beginning, then it may affect the development of the organisation later. Although it can be resolved later, there may be a cost in your time. I think it's really important to hire professional intermediaries to handle specialised areas. They will help in doing the specialised things for you, so you don't need to waste too much time in these areas".

However, I-15F said that hiring professional intermediaries was expensive and depended on whether the organisation had any discretionary funds available for hiring such services.

"No, it has to be seen based on how big the organisation is. Big companies seem to have more budget to afford it. Small company like us tends not to be able to afford it".

Furthermore, additional expenditure was required to be made on professional intermediaries to reduce some of these barriers, and while it may seem like a heavy expenditure for a small organisation, this expenditure could open up much-needed time for the immigrant entrepreneur and remove crucial regulatory and financial barriers. It should be noted that spending on professional intermediaries might save the entrepreneur costs in the long run by avoiding mistakes and bringing in better opportunities. The incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs could access more opportunities in this manner.

- **Visa challenges and Unclear visa regulations**

The institutional issues experienced are exacerbated by the fact that immigrant entrepreneurs often have communication issues as well as unfamiliarity with the local rules and regulations, which may impact them (Bates & Robb, 2014). Immigrant entrepreneurs also faced visa-related issues that proved challenging for them, especially because visa rules were very specific and sometimes not in favour of the immigrant entrepreneur.

The interview participants had a wide variety of issues related to their or their employees' visa status. Visa issues are common among immigrants until they become permanent citizens of the host environment. Some of the interviewees' more interesting and startling experiences are outlined below.

I-14F noted that she faced issues in her enterprise because she had to lose a trusted employee due to visa issues. She states that the visa laws change too frequently to keep up with, and the regulations are unclear, causing much confusion amongst the immigrants and making it harder for them to remain in the host country.

"I don't think there are restrictions for foreigners! But I think there is some mess about immigrant laws because my previous purchasing manager could not get a work visa. Our company now has to have an overseas licence, and I think at this point, their immigrant laws have really changed. It's really messy. For the past 25 years, I have been in the U.K. for 25 years. I think I know that their immigration laws are changing all the time. It is sometimes strict; sometimes they are very loose, sometimes very easily, and a bunch of people get a work visa quite easily. Anyone could come to the U.K. about 10 years ago, but now it is difficult".

I-01F says that the visa application process is very cumbersome and requires a lot of repeated action for renewal. She was one of the few interviewees who was on a Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur Visa that required special endorsement from the University.

"Because our visa condition is very special, you need to have an endorsement letter from University for your first two years. University will screen your business purpose. Every University has 10 places to apply each year. After getting an endorsement letter, they only give you one year visa and do not give you two years together because University will review and screen your business in the second year. That is to say, when

University wants to check have you followed the business purpose which you submitted in your application, you have to keep all documents and records. I have been doing these things for two years. But then after, I want to switch my visa and everything needed to be redone again".

Repeated actions required from the immigrant entrepreneurs take away their precious work time and often affect the enterprise because small to medium-sized business owners are likely to hold all the positions in the organisation and be responsible for all the work.

Moreover, making small errors on the application could cause considerable delays or even rejection, as I-11F discovered.

"Yes, our visa was refused, so why we were refused? In fact, we were confident because, in terms of the regulations on the immigration bureau website about transferring from the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurs Visa to the general entrepreneurial visa, we had read all of them. I felt that we were well prepared, so we applied by ourselves because we didn't want to spend extra money. We didn't have much money left as an entrepreneur; no one supported us, so we got used to doing anything by ourselves because we also didn't want to spend money on it. So then we applied by ourselves, but we were rejected".

This brings us back to needing to use a professional intermediary for actions requiring detailed knowledge of rules and regulations. Despite the added cost, this could be considered an indirect investment in the enterprise because the enterprise can only survive if the immigrant remains legally in the host country.

In addition to unclear visa regulations, some stipulations attached to immigrant visas caused considerable challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs. I-03F recounted her experience and stated that small business owners could not fulfil some of the visa conditions due to the lack of financial stability in small owner-led organisations. One of the visa conditions that caused distress specifically was the stipulation to hire local employees at a minimum salary regulation. This figure was often the bulk of the profits the new business made, therefore leaving little to nothing for the immigrant entrepreneur herself. As I-05F noted:

"I had to apply for permanent residence at the time, and the policy required me to hire at least two permanent residents or British nationals, so there was such a requirement".

Furthering this subject, I-03F said:

"During the selection process, you cannot find beginner talents since you are not willing to pay him £30,000 in salary. I think this is where it is relatively unfair. I think it is obvious that the U.K.'s policies mean that they want relatively high-income immigrants, which means that they possess certain professional skills. Of course, I understand that they want such talents, but I don't think it is suitable for every entrepreneur".

I-05F put forward an extreme but very noteworthy example of the impact of this stipulation.

"In my first year and second year, because I did not require to hire employees in the first two years, so I was very happy without any problems. However, I must hire employees in the third year, and it became very stressful for me. Then for two employees, I would pay them at least 17,000 or 18,000 every year. Because of hiring employees, I wanted to expand my business, but after expansion, all the costs went up, and then it became very difficult for me to turn around, and participate in these kinds of the exhibition, which involved warehousing, then ordering, and booking, all of which needed to be paid in advance! I was miserable until I became homeless. I lived with this friend for a few days, and then I was embarrassed to stay for too long. Then I stayed at another friend's house for three or four days, and then I went to the airport. I even knew where to sleep in the airport now! I paid for others, and then I didn't have any money left to pay myself".

This example shows the extreme situations that some immigrant entrepreneurs have to bear to maintain the unfavourable conditions of their immigrant visas. Such visa conditions can cause unnecessary strain on the immigrants and take away precious resources that they require to become entrepreneurs and settle in their chosen host country.

Furthermore, I-05F revealed that little financial assistance was available to immigrant entrepreneurs, thus making their situation even more difficult and fraught with challenges.

"No, because the immigrant entrepreneurs cannot take a loan".

4.1.3.2 Financial challenges

Organisational challenges include loans, financing, market, and employees. The study found that, in line with previous studies such as Malki et al. (2020), one of the key challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs was financing. The internal financing option was not sufficient for the needs of a growing business, while external financing was hard to secure due to the long and complex bureaucratic processing involved in the financing industry in the U.K.

While immigrant entrepreneurs found the ethnic market in the U.K. to be exceptionally limiting yet, they also discovered that breaking into the mainstream market was not easy. This links into the middleman minority theory that states that immigrant entrepreneurs need to take the support of middlemen or agents if they want to break into the mainstream market of the host country (Chan, 2015).

- **Loans and financing**

A large number of the participants had not applied for any kind of financing from a U.K.-based bank or from another financial institution. They largely rely on their own funds and finances raised by their own family and friends. Rita and Huruta (2020) stated that the enterprise's financial capital could be internal or external. Immigrant enterprises largely relied on internal finance; however, Rita and Huruta (2020) noted that surviving on internal finance alone was inadequate for SMEs as their capital requirement was often more than the immigrant could internally raise.

Moreover, as I-05F revealed, visa issued could also be a challenge for raising finances,

"If I use the Tier 1 visa, I cannot take the loan; I just can use my own money".

I-15F said that she was put off from getting financed by a U.K.bank because of the number of documents that needed to be submitted and also because it was a high-income rate that a small company could not sustain. A review of Nel and Abdullah's paper (2015) notes one of the most common challenges immigrant entrepreneurs face.

"Yes, but if you want to finance from a U.K.-based bank, you will need to provide lots of information as a commercial proposal, including marketing research and a personal guarantor, which is their basic requirement. It is very hard to get finance from a U.K.-based bank for us. Moreover, the interest rate was too high".

However, I-15F noted that while it might be difficult to finance the company, this was not an indicator of discrimination at play.

"I don't think that is because I am Chinese. It is not because of my ethnicity. It is more about the size of the company. In the beginning, the size of the company was too small, and revenue was too low. So they were not interested in giving us a business loan to us. But we only needed the money when we were small in size and did not have too much profit".

I-13F noted that there were stark differences between China and the U.K. with regard to access to financing for SMEs.

"Yes, if you are looking for investors, basically we joked before that if you can raise funds of about 1 million in the U.K., you can get ten times in our country. So in terms of financial support, here is weaker. There are some historical reasons because the British, in fact, now see its own economic development as being slower than China's. There is a lot of hot money in China, but when the trend shifts, many projects will fail. So, in this aspect, I think people in the U.K. invest more rationally. In China, you may get millions of investments just by showing some numbers. Many people will think that the U.K. is a very difficult place, but I feel that they do it honestly, which is commendable. In fact, I did not think that they were very stingy and would not say that it is impossible to get money; it is just that they would ask you about more details".

On the one hand, it is very difficult for immigrant entrepreneurs to gain financially from the U.K. banks; on the other hand, small immigrant enterprises often face the limitations of self-financing. Capital from external sources is critical for the growth and success of the enterprise (Rita & Huruta, 2020) and should be made more accessible to immigrant entrepreneurs by the effort of the host government. Immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed largely were unable to secure loans from local banks and had to rely on personal finance or private investors because of a lack of credit history and communication barriers. Wang & Warn (2019) had similarly documented language to be a barrier for immigrants in procuring finance, while Irastorza and Peña-Legazkue (2018) noted that lack of personal endowments and credit history caused local banks to have a lack of trust in newly incoming immigrant entrepreneurs and Wang and Warn (2018) highlighted their difficulties in securing start-up capital especially as having access to capital was crucial for the success of immigrant entrepreneurs (Wang & Warn, 2019). Some

respondents sought creative solutions like using their overdraft facility or personal loans to fund their enterprises.

4.1.3.3 Organisational challenges

1. Market

- **Inability to expand in the local market**

A large number of the interviewees responded that they could not easily access the mainstream market, even as they complained that the co-ethnic market of the U.K. was rather small. I-02M attributed this to cultural and language challenges.

"Yes, because of the obstacles of English, a certain degree of difficulties exists for us in integrating with local socio-culture in the U.K.; therefore, most of our business focuses on the Chinese market".

In literature, Arrighetti et al. (2014) and Chelariu and Osmonbekov (2014) note that language barriers often hinder immigrant entrepreneurs from accessing the larger mainstream markets. It is possible then that the lack of fluency in English blocked the immigrant entrepreneurs from expanding. One way around this challenge is to use middlemen or professional intermediaries to increase access, which links to the middleman minority theory. Middlemen play an intermediary role in bringing opportunities that improve the social standing of immigrants who otherwise feel discriminated against and disadvantaged (Liu et al., 2014).

Market opportunities are not just finding any market for selling goods and services. Arrighetti et al. (2014) state it also includes the local labour market, knowledge and skill acquisition, perceptions and discrimination. Outsider is a term used to describe the situation when an organisation enters a new market when they have no prevailing connections, and thus, they face difficulties in creating a significant footprint in the market. Yamin and Kurt (2018) named this phenomenon "Liability of Outsiders". They proposed that through learning processes, the liability of outsidership could be overcome, and trust and commitment could be built within the new market. This indicates that it is possible for immigrant entrepreneurs to enter local markets by learning about the demands and requirements of the local market while simultaneously learning about the local business culture and norms.

I-07M states that there is limited opportunity in ethnic markets.

"But it is still a very limited business opportunity that you can do because it is difficult to break the cultural challenges to get into the mainstream market".

While I-04M states that accessing the mainstream market is hard, the immigrant entrepreneur should first build a base in the Ethnic Chinese market in the U.K.

"It's very difficult. You have to do Chinese business first to build your foundation. Well, you have to build up your business-level so that you have the strength to compete with local people. After you make sure, your business size has got a certain level so that you have enough competitiveness. This is a process".

Literature notes that ethnic markets can offer collective resources and information unavailable to entrepreneurs without a distinct co-ethnic social identity in the formal markets (Arrighetti et al., 2014). Lack of language proficiency can challenge immigrant entrepreneurs to access mainstream market resources, making it harder to move from an ethnic to a local clientele (Wang & Warn, 2019).

An interesting neutral perspective was offered by I-04M, who said there was no difference as

"The purpose is to make money, which is why it doesn't matter if your business is in the mainstream and non-mainstream business".

However, while there is difficulty in breaking into the local market, there is also an urgent need for expansion for immigrant-owned enterprises. The ethnic markets in the host market are a micro-sphere and are very limited in scope. The ethnic markets have narrow parameters which are unable to support more than a few organisations (Jones et al., 2014). Newly arriving immigrants would find that the older enterprises already dominate the small market and would struggle to make a mark in a saturated ethnic market, causing their failure rate to increase, and they are forced to target the larger mainstream markets (Bates & Robb, 2014).

Moreover, ethnic communities are simultaneously confining while being nurturing, as per Beckers and Blumberg (2013). So, while some support may be offered in setting up the businesses, the likelihood of getting constrained in ethnic markets is higher, which is why there is a need for immigrant-owned enterprises to break into the mainstream markets. Arrighetti et al.'s (2014) Italian study notes that such a mainstream market breakout is motivated by some

immigrant entrepreneurs' need for more independence, higher profit margins and enterprise growth.

- **Business culture is different from home country**

The working culture between the home country, China and the host country is very different, and the respondents found these significant differences to be a major part of the culture shock.

I-13F says:

“I think there are differences in doing things because if you want to do business in China, you have to make friends with others, and then they are willing to give you some inside information. I even think that the success of many domestic entrepreneurs may now look great, but there will be political, economic and even historical reasons behind it”.

I-17F and I-19M also agreed upon this. I-14F also agrees and says that the British way of conducting business was simple and transparent:

“Yes, bribes, and then there are connections and relationships. There are not many such things here in the U.K. Some clients haven't seen me in many years, but you can still do business with them after a long time. You do not need to maintain relationships. It is straightforward. Like we give credits to our clients, if clients have insurance, we give credit; otherwise, we ask for cash”.

I-19M also similarly adds:

“I have never worked in China. I don't know, but I interviewed a Chinese yesterday. He said that the pressure is very strong in China with a lot of overtime. But here it is very leisurely; he said he wanted to stay here because it is more relaxed. Back in China, he is unable to withstand the pressure”.

It indicates that a significant portion of the immigrant entrepreneurs, especially those that take the student route to first come to the U.K., have little or no experience of conducting business in their home country and that a lot of the difference might be from second-hand information or old data which may or may not be true anymore in the home country.

I-13F suggest that it was the responsibility of the immigrant to try and adapt to the local ways of working; otherwise, they may face problems:

“In China, there are even times when all rules on the table are for show only; what matters are the hidden rules under the table. But things are so much different in the U.K. In fact, if you keep thinking in this way, you will face more problems”.

The interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs noted a fair number of working style differences, and it was noted that they had to overcome challenges to be effective in the widely different work environment. However, this was not found to be a major challenge, per this research, as it was also clear that most interviewees felt that the work culture in the U.K. was fair and transparent. They found it easier to work in the U.K., where business was separate from personal lives, rather than in their home country China where building and maintaining Guanxi (relationships) was a crucial part of the work culture, and often the entrepreneurs had to depend on personal relations to get opportunities unlike in the U.K. While Guanxi is beneficial for building relationships of trust, it also takes a lot of time and effort to build these networks (Ho et al., 2019).

The Chinese cultural norm of Guanxi which is a reciprocal exchange of favours and mutual obligations and relationship governance (Song et al., 2014), helps in all aspects, such as procuring new goods or services to gaining admission to good schools (Song et al., 2014). The interviewees noted that Guanxi is largely irrelevant in the U.K., and it was easier to conduct business in the U.K. (Geng et al., 2017), and this may be why only a few market-related challenges were identified during this research that affected the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs.

Despite the significant differences in business style, a majority of the interviewees reported that they found it easy to adapt to the business culture of their host country, the U.K. Conducting business in the U.K. was often described as simple, easy, transparent, and both the host natives as well as the immigrating individuals were willing to put aside any cultural differences for the sake of doing business. There were no complexities in maintaining personal relations and networks for business purposes as was traditional in China, and a majority of the immigrant entrepreneurs seemed to prefer it this way. Also, only some bureaucracy was experienced in the U.K., and this simplicity was appreciated by the immigrant entrepreneurs

such as I-12F, who noted that she never had to face bureaucracy, and the systems were also a lot simpler than in her home country.

2. Employee

- **Differences between employee attitude and relationship with employees**

The findings of this research indicate that there are many differences in employee attitude and the relationship they share with their employers. As I-07M stated:

“But I didn’t study management. I just felt that when they came from my country, for example, the attitudes of the people who talk to superiors are different from those attitudes of those who are working in the U.K.”.

Contrarily I-03F felt that there were no differences between employees from different cultures.

“No, there is no gap. Foreign employees, in fact, I think, have relatively strong self-confidence, and they know that this is a job and a job only. I think it's easy for me to just say what I want, and then they have to do it. If it's not done well and I'm not satisfied, I can tell them that I'm not satisfied. They won't behave strangely the next day or be scared when they see me”.

There may be extensive differences in the working styles between the host and home country. Literature notes that immigrant entrepreneurs typically prefer to hire only other co-ethnic employees (Pullés & Lee, 2019). Similarly, it was noted that a substantial proportion of the interviewees of this study preferred to employ only co-ethnic employees. However, to build multicultural and diverse organisations, the immigrant entrepreneur should consider having local business partners, suppliers and employees (Arrighetti et al., 2014). As per literature, a great strategy for crossing over from the boundaries of co-ethnic enclaves to the mainstream market was to build multicultural organisations. A diverse employee base enables the organisation to handle local market demands (Arrighetti et al., 2014).

Another viewpoint was offered by I-10F, who said that adapting to the host culture work environment worked best as it formed an equitable relationship with the employees.

“Yes, you have no way; you can only adapt to them, including your own employees. For example, if I worked in my own country, I may not feel anything if I need them to work

overtime in my own country, but as I am in the U.K., I rarely ask them to work overtime. You must pay extra for overtime, so the Guanxi (relationship) between the boss and the staff is more equal. I haven't worked in my own country very much, but I have the feeling that the Guanxi (relationship) between employees and bosses may not be quite equal in my own country".

Further, suppose the immigrant-owned organisation intends to break out in the mainstream market. In that case, they need capital and mainstream market knowledge to act upon opportunities (Achidi Ndofor & Priem, 2011) which can be acquired with the help of local employees. However, it was not easy for the immigrant entrepreneurs to hire local employees as well. I-11F faced difficulties that may be linked to discrimination as potential local employees hesitated to work within an all-Chinese organisation.

"I know that I find it is hard to find employees. People say that it is difficult for us to hire employees. In the beginning, because there were only two Chinese people in the company, the potential employee would think that this was a Chinese company and hesitate to come in. There were such difficulties at the beginning, but now it is a lot better".

- **Difficult to find suitable professional intermediaries**

Because immigrant entrepreneurs face a huge number of challenges, it becomes necessary for them to find any help that can help them settle in more easily. Hiring professional intermediaries to do specific jobs of high importance may not be a cheap proposition. However, it leads to more efficiency, fewer mistakes and reduced stress levels for the overworked immigrant entrepreneur who often handles all the jobs within the enterprise (Chan, 2015).

I-01F states that hiring a professional intermediary is necessary while setting up the organisation. She cautions against finding just any professional intermediary because the wrong professional intermediary can become more expensive than necessary by making errors at the cost of the enterprise.

"In fact, there are relatively few encounters in setting up a company because after you set up a company, you know that you still have to hand it over to a professional person, so the process of setting up a company is actually simpler than expected, as long as you have a right accountant. In this part, you will be very happy to find the right accountant.

If you find the wrong one, he will mislead you very seriously. There is also an experience".

Ultimately, it is up to the Chinese immigrant entrepreneur to learn about the host culture and adapt to and blend its positive points with the positive attributes of their home business culture to gain maximum benefits.

4.2 Mixed Strategies

The mixed strategies that arose from the empirical research were the solutions suggested by the immigrant entrepreneurs based on what worked for them when they faced some of the above challenges. These strategies ranged from the practical, such as using available tools like translator apps to counter language challenges, to the more philosophical strategies like having a positive attitude and a problem-solving attitude. Immigrant entrepreneurs are embedded in their host culture at different levels: the individual, institutional, and socio-cultural levels. The strategies offered by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs have been subdivided below into the same sub-contexts for ease of understanding.

4.2.1 Individual level

4.2.1.1 Solution for Cross-cultural Communication challenges

Gedik et al. (2015) outlined the desirable characteristics of entrepreneurs and stated that they should have the ability to plan and execute their goals and have essential communication, leadership, marketing, management and interpersonal skills. Moreover, they need to be willing, able to adapt and have a problem-solving attitude. Displaying this problem-solving attitude, some of the immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed were able to provide creative solutions that they employed to manage their communication challenges.

- **Translators and software**

Mackie (2018) stated that being proficient in the local language skills eased the expatriate's adjustment and effectiveness. To ease the language challenge most of the respondents faced, some of them stated that they used language translation services or software to reduce the gap in understanding. I-25F noted that she could not read even simple signs, and in 2009,

smartphones and electronic translators were not common, so she hired an English-speaking assistant. I-25F said:

"I hired a translator assistant at that time. He was a Chinese student who had lived in the U.K. for one to two years so that his speaking and writing skills were no problem".

Furthermore, I-18M noted:

"When I first came here, communication with customers was problematic ... I found some friends to help me with a translation".

I-01F and I-18M used a phone-based translator app to communicate important information. While I-24F often took the help of her British-born husband, whose communication skills were native speaker level.

I-02M said he took the help of people he knew:

"Sometimes you have to ask someone, for example, accountants or someone who is more professional and who can also speak Mandarin Chinese".

Middlemen and agents from co-ethnic or personal networks could be used to alleviate some disadvantages that immigrant entrepreneurs commonly face, such as the need for information, capital and/or labour (Chan, 2015). This is known as the middleman minority theory, which states that co-ethnic middlemen mediate between stakeholders who can form business relationships with each other, for example, producers and customers or entrepreneurs with ethnic moneylenders (Morris et al., 2015). Co-ethnic middlemen are used to alleviate the disadvantages immigrant entrepreneurs face by bringing them information, access to private capital resources and co-ethnic labour (Chan, 2015).

- **Setting aside differences for the sake of business**

Communication richness helps build and maintain efficient business relationships (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014). However, a surprising finding of this study was that despite language challenges, a majority of the respondents were able to effectively communicate regarding business matters as I-03F said:

"I think my business is about making money after all; as long as you have the right money calculation, they can still understand it".

Similarly, I-04M stated:

"You will accommodate each other in order to make money; try to understand them".

Occasionally the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs relied on some understanding mixed with guesswork. As the conversations were mostly about work, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs noted it was easy to communicate as the context was limited. Moreover, many of the interviewees reported that both they and the local individuals were willing to set aside cultural differences for the sake of conducting business.

I-18M said

"Difficulties and obstacles are more in life, I think, rather than in business".

And

"I find it very difficult. On the contrary, I think it is easier to fit into the business environment. I don't think it is possible for me to fit into the U.K. completely".

The experience of I-19M was similar:

"It will depend on what level of communication it is. This means that if you just say things clearly, then that's OK. And then it depends on how your environment is, generally speaking, if the communication is about business terms between suppliers and customers, then these are no problem because your theme is very clear. But if the conversation is in daily life, then it is another matter".

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed clearly advocated sticking to simple language and clear terms for conducting business which they felt was sufficient for the purpose of business because all the stakeholders are willing to set aside their differences for mutual profitability.

- **Positive attitude competency**

I-05F smoothed over issues with her amiable personal demeanour,

“In communicating, the simplest trick is, if I don’t understand what others say, I just laugh. I think it’s because of cultural differences and language, so sometimes communication is not very smooth”.

I-15F agrees that having a positive attitude is beneficial for business:

“We can still work well. The point is still pointing back to your attitude of doing business”.

It can therefore be analysed that the work attitude is more important than skills such as language. This finding links back to the research of (Omoredede et al., 2015), which indicates that a positive attitude is an essential competency of immigrant entrepreneurs. They state that this competency is linked to their involvement in the learning process, individual intentions and entrepreneurial behaviour. Adapting to a cross-cultural environment is a creative and dynamic process (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; De La Garza & Ono, 2015). The attitude and behaviour of individuals predict their entrepreneurial intentions (Schmutzler et al., 2019) and are related to their cultural intelligence (Bartel-Radic & Giannelloni, 2017; Chen, 2019). Therefore, the competency of a positive attitude of immigrant entrepreneurs, for example: valuing the differences in people of a dissimilar culture, is significantly an indicator of their involvement in the learning process, which helps in their acculturation.

- **Knowing the local language is beneficial for starting a business.**

Being comfortable in the local language was ranked pretty highly among the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs as a skill needed for entrepreneurship in a host country.

I-17F said:

"I think, of course, this is just my personal feelings; if some Chinese people ask me whether it is suitable to start a business in the U.K. or not, I would think that language is the biggest problem for them. Why do many Chinese find it so difficult to start their business here in the U.K.? I think because on starting a business in the U.K., even if you provide services only for the Chinese, you need to deal with British locals, for example, for taxes, and communicate with different U.K. business departments, rent office or warehouse, advertisement on the public websites about H.R., review advertisement or hold interviews. During such interactions, you cannot avoid speaking English. So many Chinese find it difficult to set up a business here because of this. But

other than this, I don't think it makes much difference whether you're starting a business in the U.K. or Europe or China”.

Similarly, I-19M reiterated the importance of local language expertise for starting and managing a business in the host country.

"It is for all Chinese. As long as he can speak English, even if he doesn't have a speciality, he still can also know how to set up a company by searching, but English is the key to setting up a company. That is to say, the government regulations are very simple, but it's complicated how to manage a company and what business you are doing. I mean that there is no complicated red tape, no bureaucracy, that is. But for managing and doing business, it will be another thing".

I-13F stated that she felt pretty confident about her communications skills for the purpose of her enterprise because she used a method that she was most comfortable with,

"I don't have problems because I feel that I have good communication ability. On the contrary, I often choose a method that makes me feel confident. Many times, for example, I actually have used more face-to-face communication".

Sui et al. (2015) noted that confidence in language abilities allowed the immigrant entrepreneur to leverage mainstream market advantages, while Arrighetti et al. (2014) similarly said that while immigrant entrepreneurs could still conduct entrepreneurial activity in a niche, co-ethnic markets but this would be like skimming the surface of the opportunities and letting the majority of them go. A sizable portion of the interviewees needed to use local language to either interact directly with the customers, suppliers or other stakeholders. They used Chinese only as a supplementary method for the purpose of clarification or simply because they wanted to fit into the host environment.

I-18M stated:

“Very less of Chinese, because we wanted to fit into faster”.

This indicates that even though there is a substantial lack of local language skills among the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, conversely, there is a pretty notable need for local language expertise for conducting business in the U.K. Selmer and Luring (2015) state that having a good understanding of local language and good communication skills allow an entrepreneur to

succeed even in a diverse culture. Proficiency in communication skills encourages empathy, and chances of positive outcomes of mutual interest are increased for immigrant entrepreneurs (Froese et al., 2016). An interesting linkage between language usage and proficiency is highlighted by Sevinç and Backus (2019), who notes that the more immigrants interact with the host society, the more their language skills improve, and better language skills lead to greater confidence in interacting with the host society.

- **Problem-solving attitude.**

Some of the other solutions employed showcased a problem-solving attitude among immigrant entrepreneurs (Gedik et al., 2015).

I-01F says she asked prospective customers to help her name difficult Chinese food products so that they would be able to identify with them and feel more loyal to the brand.

"I will try to avoid using my thoughts to name my product or just directly translate from Chinese. For example, Zongzi. I won't directly name it Zongzi. I just ask the local people to try it and ask them what name can be used to describe this product. For example, I call it rice parcel instead of Zongzi".

Furthermore, I-01F says that problems can be solved if you look for solutions that work for you; she offers a solution for communicating with suppliers when there are challenges.

"Either just look for product pictures or go directly to the store and go talk to the supplier and then tell him that I want this particular thing when I make an order in the future".

Immigrant entrepreneurs, especially in the service and food industry, are able to directly communicate to take feedback from their customers, and they can use this knowledge to build up their business further.

I-01F states:

"So, in terms of food, or the catering sector, it is quite easy to communicate with everybody. It is just either two ways, like it or not like it. I also will often ask for a review from my customers. I will ask about their local food, which helps me establish relationships more easily. Or like asking, 'how was your day today?' Because I am

looking to run my business for the long term, so you have to make friends with your customers".

There are many stresses involved in entrepreneurship, especially when the entrepreneur is in a culturally diverse host culture. Problem-solving is a coping strategy which enables them to manage the stress positively (Mora & Ozakinci, 2020). Positive attitude competency has been linked to an aptitude for problem-solving, and this can help reduce culture shock and emotional conflict while easing adaptation and dealing with rejection (Ng et al., 2017).

- **Language Advantage from the experience of studying**

Similarly, a sizable portion of the participants of this study indicated that their communication skills improved during their prior study period, which proved beneficial for their enterprise. As I-10F stated that even though her education was not related to her current business but she had improved her language skills as a student.

Similarly, I-12F noted:

"If we talk about direct help, it must be in the language. My listening and reading became better, and speaking was more or less better than before".

This was also agreed by I-20F, who also says that a language is a tool for communication and that what is being spoken about is more important.

Communication skill is considerably helpful for immigrant entrepreneurs in adjusting to their host country and therefore is, a much-required skill-set. The prior education experience in the host country allows the immigrants to gain this skill-set in a non-stressful manner as there are likely to be fewer pressures during student life than being an entrepreneur. Socio-cultural adaptation includes cultural acceptance and empathy, a social initiative like acquiring host language skills and obtaining bicultural flexibility (Wilson et al., 2017; Croucher & Kramer, 2017). Moreover, if there is local language expertise, communication challenges were considerably reduced as the immigrants displayed some integrative behaviours (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022). On the other hand, without basic local language skills, the immigrant entrepreneur might not be able to function in their host society (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). A

plethora of existing literature points out the importance of local language expertise in immigration and expatriation studies, such as Chelariu and Osmonbekov (2014).

4.2.1.2 Solutions for Cross-cultural Intelligence challenges

However, it must be noted that while there are little direct preparation and support avenues available for the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs, they can still manage in the diverse culture as they can apply their resourcefulness to devise creative methods to circumvent the challenges presented to them. This point was noted by Thanh Thai and Turkina (2013), who claim resilience and the will to survive in the host culture give rise to such creativity. To counter their unfamiliarity with the host culture, immigrant entrepreneurs often relied on advantages that they gleaned from the fact that they belonged to a different culture. They also gained language advantage from prior studies and prior exposure to multiple cultures where applicable to eke out opportunities for themselves.

Cognitive cultural intelligence, which is concerned with basic cross-cultural knowledge and its structure, is attained through education and personal experiences, which the individual compiles into a mental knowledge bank containing information about norms, conventions, and practices of cultures other than their own. Familiarity with the local culture helps enhance the individual's behavioural and cultural intelligence, which eases the acculturative process and the adjustment time required by the immigrant entrepreneur (Wang & Warn, 2018). Individuals displaying high cultural intelligence levels are able to effectively interact in diverse cultural contexts, as per Froese et al. (2016). They may be able to leverage their ethnicity to access opportunity structures.

- **Benefits of prior exposure to the host culture and other cultures**

Many immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed had first come to the U.K. for further education, and most of them considered this period of study to be advantageous to them during their entrepreneurial experience. I-01F links this to the higher level of familiarity with the host culture as she says:

"Because you are in a foreign country where you are not familiar. But my advantage was that I was a post-graduate student. I have been living here a while before setting up the business. So, the degree of familiarity was higher. I can say I am more familiar compared with others".

However, she also goes on to note that despite the familiarity, there were difficulties. *Cross-cultural adjustment* is defined as the extent of familiarity and psychological comfort the immigrant feels in their host culture. Advantage due to the study experience was also reported by I-04M, who had not studied but had lived in the U.K. before becoming an entrepreneur and also I-07M, who says he knew a little of everything because he had some prior experience in the country. This point on prior experience being advantageous because of familiarity with the market was also noted by I-11F, who said:

"I have been living here for two years, so I am familiar with it. Because in the two years, you will definitely look at the local market and then look at things in the local industry; and you will be more familiar with what is happening in this country".

Extant literature notes that immigrant entrepreneurs who can leverage their prior exposure to other cultures and home country advantages to further their business can apply such varied cultural knowledge effortlessly by employing metacognitive cultural intelligence via advanced mental processes (Huff et al., 2014).

However, I-05F, she felt though her study experience was advantageous, that advantage was minimal as the study period was short,

"The time was actually very short; only one year was inadequate. I had just adapted to the U.K. life, and then I graduated. So, English was just for exams. But it is a learning process after all, so there definitely was some help".

The acculturative process is easier for immigrants who move to the host culture early, Beckers and Blumberg (2013). But overall, the experience reported was that the prior exposure and study period helped the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs gain a level of familiarity with the host culture, and this helped them leverage this familiarity into their entrepreneurial journey and integration to some extent (Taušová et al., 2019).

Psychological adaptation and well-being signify if the individual feels happy, anxious, comfortable, or stressed in the host culture (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). However, all immigrant entrepreneurs may not be able to benefit from such a comfort level and familiarity with the host culture, especially if they directly arrive for entrepreneurship rather than studies. However, they can build up familiarity by learning the local language, which eases communication

challenges allowing them to interact with the locals at a deeper level. Moreover, television and other social media usage have also increased familiarity for some of the interviewed individuals.

Some participants who had not been in the U.K. earlier reported having prior exposure to other countries and were able to leverage this advantage in their enterprise and immigration experience. I-06F stated:

"I had been to many countries before I came to study masters, maybe six years in Australia, and then I studied in Canada and so on".

While I-23F says:

"I studied in the United States, so when I came to the United Kingdom, for visa application or other things, they fully recognise the American education".

Moreover, credit their upbringing for the advantage. I-23F states:

"I think to be a bit more open-minded was how I was raised by my parents. My parents were also very fond of meeting all kinds of people. So, I grew up in this kind of environment, so it was natural for me to be in contact with different people".

Furthermore, I-03F, I-20F and I-23F also report similar experiences of interacting with multiple cultures on arrival. I-23F summarises the advantage simply,

"I think it definitely helped. I think in the U.K., and everywhere else, if people are exposed to different cultures and different backgrounds, it's really good for you, whether you're starting a business or working at a job. It also helps a lot in life because you may become a little more open-minded, you may be more accepting, and you may be a little more diverse in the people you meet".

Furthermore, some of the respondents noted that rather than being a negative, their belonging to a different culture proved to be an advantage to immigrant entrepreneurs; as I-05F succinctly put it:

"But I think in my personal situation, this difference gives me a lot of advantages since others have a higher tolerance for me. Because when others are making a deal with me, they know that I am a foreigner, so they seem to be more tolerant; this is my own personal feeling about this. When I go to the exhibitions then it is more joyful, the

atmosphere is not very official or very formal, so despite my weak language and cultural differences, it has brought me a lot of benefits".

She continues by explaining:

"because of the different cultures, I feel they are more tolerant, but if you do something that is sometimes wrong, it may be easier to forgive me... Often, someone talks to me in my warehouse and asks me something about business or how to purchase goods just because I have an Asian face; there will be such opportunities".

and

"The biggest difference is that Chinese people know where to get these things. Europeans don't have an account, and they don't know how to get it. Some people use some kind of purchasing agency, so this difference is also a cultural advantage".

I-07M further elaborates on this,

"I feel that as a foreigner, we still have to stay connected to our home country to use your advantages. We serve as bridges for people from our country, rather than purely doing it in the local country. Because you don't have any advantages in the host country. Your advantage is that you know both sides. As a bridge, you can introduce Chinese businesses to the U.K. or vice versa. Previously I worked as a programmer in a Cambridge company, and I did it for the first half of the year. There was no advantage there because your language is certainly not as good as locals, you will stay at the bottom of the technical levels, and that won't play to your advantage very well".

The responses from this empirical research indicated that despite their challenges and language barriers, the immigrant entrepreneurs were still able to resourcefully use their ethnicity to their advantage by claiming home country advantages for a business that spanned both the countries. It is likely that such ethnic advantages would not be available to host country natives, while immigrant entrepreneurs engaging in activities that did not require home country knowledge would also not be able to harness these benefits. As I-07M stated earlier that getting jobs in the U.K. which did not require any home country knowledge was not going to be very advantageous for an immigrant:

"There was no advantage here (in the U.K.) because your language is certainly not as good as locals, you will stay at the bottom of the technical levels, and that won't play to your advantage very well".

I-01F stated:

"But the relative advantage is you have the chance to know different cultures because the U.K. is a multicultural country. Their inclusivity is quite strong. Another advantage of the different levels is you will feel you have lots of possibilities".

This indicates that the inclusivity of the U.K., which is a multicultural country, was a prime reason they were able to bear the challenges faced by them, demonstrating that adaptation in the host country is a two-way process that was the responsibility of the host country natives as much as it was that of the immigrant entrepreneurs to use and enhance their cross-cultural intelligence.

I-14F noted,

"Large companies will have a gatekeeper-like associate, who will not let you directly approach their manager or purchasing man. But as long as you talk to them, show them that I am an entrepreneur from Taiwan, and then he listens to your accent, and he would like to make direct deals, factory deals. So, there is a better chance that they will let you talk to the manager. If a British person went to find their manager, he would not be able to approach. But when I make this call in my foreign accent, I can find someone".

This clearly indicates that the immigrant entrepreneurs were able to cleverly manipulate their lack of language skills and foreign accent, which could have been their disadvantage, into an advantage to gain more contacts and generate more opportunities for themselves. Such immigrant entrepreneurs display higher levels of cultural intelligence (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014). Creative use of their cultural background enables them to leverage their home country's background and knowledge into successful outcomes.

- **Business integrity**

The interviewees were largely in agreement that having business integrity was of prime importance for them as entrepreneurs rather than the challenges brought by cultural differences.

They carried on their entrepreneurial activities despite challenges from cultural differences and language challenges. Moreover, interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs suggested maintaining a positive work attitude because conducting business effectively was prioritised over the challenges that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs experienced in the U.K. However, in their personal lives, the impact of the cultural differences could often be noted.

I-07M says it helps to have a problem-solving attitude:

"Yes, there will be misunderstandings. Some things may not be expressed very clearly in oral communication. Well, maybe sometimes. But this should not be regarded as a cultural difference. It is also not considered an unpleasant experience. When we face a problem, then we just solve the problem".

And that there were fewer cultural challenges because I-07M states that the nature of the relationship defined the attitude.

"I have never had any foreigner colleagues. So, I don't have any experience with it. And for my suppliers, to be honest, I am their customer, Right! So, their attitude to me was nice".

I-03F similarly said that while some matters had to be learnt for the sake of business, the rest of the differences did not really matter:

"I think the British culture, because you know that the comparison I don't need for a guide or an academic fact or an education, so actually I think I don't really need to study it very deeply, I may really say that with regard to the work culture, for example, if there are some administrative systems here or something related to my profession, then there are a lot of things to learn, this is certain".

Moreover, I-03F notes:

"About the cultural conflict... There is no conflict, because doing business is kind, so if there are some difficulties, it's okay, there are some things to pay attention to... As for those people of other cultural backgrounds, we also correspond with the suppliers, such as furniture stores, or workers, for example. Or a cleaner, he is also a supplier, and he provides a service, so at that time we are customers".

I-07M finally adds on managing cultural differences at work:

"I don't know how to cultivate the ability, just listen to them when you deal with them, observe their whole attitude, and try not to say something about politics or religion or something very personal, we try to talk about business as much as possible, and then express something as gently as possible".

While I-15F advises having integrity in business:

"Because they know us, our customers always say we are a very reliable supplier. So, it is really depending on the person's working attitude. If today an English person sets up a company with integrity, customers will come, but if they do business without integrity, they will not have customers even though they are an English company. I also felt I had more support from English customers than Chinese customers when I came to set up my business in the U.K. "

- **Business prioritised over cultural differences**

The findings of the research indicate that despite the large cultural distance between the two cultures and the differences in working and cultural styles, the stakeholders (entrepreneur, customer and suppliers) were willing to set aside those differences so that they could conduct mutually beneficial business together. I-10F says:

"No, as I said, you are doing a business. Like if you are talking to a business person, he will not mind whether you are British or Chinese; they will not have these thoughts because they do business to make money. For example, if I talk to a British entrepreneur. I said that I wanted to sell your stuff. I have never met the kind of person who thinks you are Chinese, so they don't want to cooperate with you. No, he will only maybe pay attention to how much business you can bring to him".

While I-11F advises not to give cultural challenges too much thought or importance:

"Cultural challenges? I don't think like this, because as long as there is such thinking, you will not become a good team with them. The way we think is that views of people in the outside world do not affect me".

I-12F agrees:

"I think they are all right because most British people are very polite, we did not have any kind of difficulties, in fact, the language part is okay, because you know your product well".

She adds that while they make adjustments for business, it does not mean that the host country nationals will become friends as everyone prefers to socialise with those whom they have commonalities with. As I-12F says:

"it's actually a bit of a challenge between different cultures and languages, but in general, they are very friendly in business affairs. He doesn't necessarily think he can be friends with you, but they separate formal business issues clearly from the private ones. Even when it is a group of all British people, they will still be very harmonious and are very friendly to everyone. You will not feel isolated. Of course, you need to take the initiative; you cannot just stand there and expect other people to come to chat with you; people will not. Indeed, British people have their own small groups beyond those public events. You may not be able to go along with a small group, but you should not care too much. It does not mean that they are xenophobic. You might just not be able to get along that well with such people anyway. If you want to have a small but close group yourself, you will also find someone with the same language. It is human nature. You will also enjoy your time talking to people who speak the same language. After all, we have not grown up in here".

And

"In fact, there is no problem in fitting into the environment, but I think that in terms of business development, it depends on the individual. I am a perfectionist; I hate to think that others don't think I am good enough in English. Now everyone thinks you are very good at English, but you know that you are not a native. Basically, I think it's something you demand from yourself. I thought that I had to be perfect before starting to connect with customers. But in fact, after two years in the business, I understand that it is all right if you can communicate with them, if they think you have good products, you can communicate, and your enthusiasm can touch them, that's enough".

As I-24F summarises, having an open mind and a collective goal makes the process smooth:

"I think, yes, they will be different from our way of thinking, but in fact, our goals are the same. In the process of communicating with them, I find that because the education

we receive in our country is different from the education in the U.K. or in other parts of the world, they think differently from us. But I think those points are also very good; because it makes me aware of new ideas, and then together, we can find a goal you collectively want at the end and find a place where everyone will have a consensus. To complete such a contract or a task is quite fun".

The above findings clearly indicate that in their professional life, the immigrant entrepreneurs do not face too many cross-cultural challenges, even their lack of local language skills can cause small issues, but it does not majorly cause challenges in their entrepreneurial journey. The stakeholders in the business have been able to find mutual respect and avoid problems by overlooking minor cross-cultural issues as is inherent in the traditional Chinese value system (Blair, 2017).

- **Use interpersonal skills to change first impressions and create opportunities despite having challenges**

Some of the immigrants reported using their perceived disadvantages to produce advantages through their interpersonal skills. They created a good first impression and thus eked out some benefits for their enterprises. Interpersonal skills are an important form of social capital for immigrant entrepreneurs (Wang & Warn, 2019). The lack of cultural intelligence leads to anxiety and loss of confidence (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014). Similar sentiments were also echoed by I-12 F and by I-22F, who said:

"When I started my own business, I found it difficult when I had to answer the phone. I felt very nervous. I was afraid of remembering the wrong address".

Positive interactions with host country natives, on the other hand, enhance the immigrant entrepreneur's feeling of well-being and correspondingly feeling satisfied with themselves and their circumstances; it also enables the migrant to build positive interpersonal relations, and they are able to accomplish their tasks more efficiently (Dheer & Lenartowicz, 2018).

I-13F stated:

"And also, I am not very tall, so the people there felt that I was not only the only woman but am also an Asian and young. In fact, at a lot of these events where I go, people first think, "what are you doing here". But this attitude is not so offensive to me because

sometimes they may have a different fresh attitude. In fact, after really communicating with me, they might change their expectation about me. I think it is good to leave a good impression on them, which also works as a good steppingstone".

And

"Yes, because, in fact, if you think about it, if a person's attitude towards you at the beginning is more scornful, then they will think you are stupid before you actually speak, and their expectation will be very low. But after I actually speak, because I speak well and have excellent knowledge about my sector, most of the time, these people think I could be a native when I talk to them, and this can produce a big instantaneous contrast. In fact, I think it becomes my benefit in many cases. Networking for me actually has a better steppingstone effect".

I-14F had a similar story to relate:

"I really know that, because we are in the computer industry, girls are very rare, and this is actually quite advantageous sometimes because most of them are boys. If boys call, they will reply that they are busy. But when girls call, they would like to talk to girls".

I-23F agreed:

"As a person, if you want to make a name for yourself in this place or give yourself exposure, you still have to push yourself; you have to push yourself in some way to expose yourself as much as possible".

While cultural intelligence is distinct from personality traits, Thomas et al. (2015) indicate that there is a moderate correlation between the two in predicting intercultural effectiveness. While Li et al. (2016) state that people who are likely to form interpersonal relations have open and agreeable personalities and are more willing to adapt and learn from culturally diverse people. These individuals tend to display higher levels of interpersonal competencies.

- **Having respect for other cultures eases interaction**

This theme linked well to the previous theme as the immigrant entrepreneurs suggest that having respect for other cultures is essential for smooth interaction.

I-18M notes simply that:

"I don't think it's difficult to communicate, because it is like this, that is to say, if you respect someone, if you respect their culture, then you can communicate, you have to respect it first, and then you won't have so much trouble when communicating".

While I-19M elaborates that a good way to learn was from:

"News on the Internet, just look at some of their local news networks. Then for different religious cultures, you can also be interested to learn about them, to learn about different religious cultures. It doesn't necessarily mean that you have to accept that culture accepts that religion, but you can understand them. They also have a system of the reasoning behind it. You need to know why, even for Muslims. Right? They also have their theory behind it, it doesn't matter if it is right or wrong, but it must have the theory behind their religious beliefs".

I-20F relates her own personal experience by saying:

"I don't think there is any communication problem. Maybe because I am more accepting of different cultures. Every place has its own culture, and in fact, you need to understand it and accept that every culture is different from your own. Then, you also have to respect the culture of each place. You cannot feel that this is different from your culture, so that it is not good or it is good. Because they have their culture because of the history they have lived. So, you can only try to understand the culture better so that you can communicate better with the people in that place".

Respect for other cultures is integral to Chinese values (Blair, 2017) and is considered to be reciprocal. Respect for other cultures is part of a positive attitude that includes gratitude and valuing diversity. It is a cross-cultural competency which is integral for psychological adaptation. I-21M notes that the concept is rather simple:

"Actually, I don't think there is any distinction between nationality and race. I think this is a basic respect for people".

I-24F elaborates that understanding people of other cultures is dependent on the individual's intention and their own personalities:

"I would think that you and I are just people on the earth and that you are different from me just because you are not from the same environment in which I grew up. I know that the essence of all of us is good, and based on this principle, I want to understand them. I feel that I am also a very good person, and I hope you will come to understand my country through me".

Cross-cultural intelligence is an essential cross-cultural competency that also enhances organisational success (Aslam et al., 2016). Furthermore, according to Li et al. (2016), individuals with higher levels of cultural intelligence interact more effectively in new cultural contexts and find it easier to acculturate into their host environment.

4.2.1.3 Solutions for Cross-cultural Acculturation challenges

The interviewees of this study offered some solutions to the issues they faced in acculturation. While some interviewees did not feel the need to acculturate or noted that it was hard to integrate into the host culture; a considerable number of immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed, however, were excited to become a part of the host culture and indicated a willingness to be open about the process of acculturation. As per Ndika's (2013) study, integration is a balanced strategy as it allows the addition of some of the facets of the host's culture and retaining some features of the immigrant's own cultural heritage.

Moreover, sustained intercultural contact is not linked to a bland cultural homogeneity and dilution of the personal cultures of the individual (Berry, 2017), especially when the integration strategy of acculturation is implemented. Therefore, immigrants are not expected to lose their own cultural heritage or adopt all the aspects of the host culture in the integration strategy of acculturation. The interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs were unwilling to give up on their own culture by a substantial majority. However, most of the interviewees showed a healthy respect for the other cultures and a willingness to adopt some of the aspects of the host culture. As I-19 M states:

"What I meant was that you need to keep your own way, but you also need to understand others more quickly".

While older research noted that assimilation is the logical final outcome of acculturation, newer studies (Ndika, 2013) indicate that assimilation is the least preferred outcome as immigrants

do not want to give up their home culture entirely. Other outcomes of acculturation were: integration, marginalisation, rejection, or transmutation (Ndika, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the term acculturation indicates the integration strategy.

- **Heightened interaction with the locals**

A majority of the respondents have an open and welcoming view of intermingling with and acculturating to the local culture.

I-08F said:

“Absolutely, because the main service content of my job was not for the foreigners at first, they were all locals at the beginning, so I had to understand the local people’s thoughts, culture, background, and public sentiment; and just like they thought, I considered myself English”.

I-09M states that the degree of acculturating into the host culture depends on the individual’s own interest and also their family background and education as he was taught from an early age to learn and respect other cultures, and that makes it easier for him to interact with people from various cultures. I-24F and I-13F also agree with this point that the interest and aptitude of the individual make integration easier. I-13F says

“In fact, I think that these things, whether culture or economy, are ultimately related to individuals. I had a lot of contacts to learn about British culture at that time because when I was working in a charity store, I would have conversations with English elders, and I met some retired professors when working in a second-hand bookstore”.

Similarly, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs also reported that with increased exposure to the host culture, they discovered different aspects and layers of it both in personal and business interactions. They recommended sustained interaction as it is considered the best way to engage with and understand the local culture. I-13F said that one aspect of the culture could be learnt from the media. However, as culture is nuanced and complex, therefore, interactions with the locals are essential to learning about the different aspects of the local culture:

“Yes, because we usually, for example, do reading, so we may see a lot of English culture from dramas or books, which is one aspect. Then you can communicate in daily life, and then you slowly go into a more nuanced direction”.

I-17F and I-24F advise that the immigrants must closely interact with the locals, which can prove beneficial and should be incorporated into regular habits. However, this is not very commonly practised by Chinese immigrants, as I-24F says

"Many Chinese people are studying here, but they may not really communicate with local people very deeply or at all levels".

Sustained intercultural contact is likely to encourage cross-cultural respect and cooperation. Lack of cooperation between people of different cultures in a multicultural country can lead to a lack of opportunities and affect the balance between competition and cooperation (Guercini et al., 2017). Moreover, Dheer and Lenartowicz (2018) note that socio-cultural and psychological adaptation are interlinked and that sustained, positive interactions with host country nationals are conclusively related to the feeling of satisfaction and well-being in the immigrants. Such individuals are better at acculturating into the host environment.

- **Attempt to integrate – employees, resources and ways of working**

I-02M said that the first step to integration involved having more interaction by way of hiring local employees:

"First of all, culture will influence. To be honest, we can't understand the needs of the local customers as much as our Chinese customers. If I want to enter the local market, I think I need to adjust my employees. Most of our staff speaks Mandarin Chinese at the moment".

I-01F agrees that having local employees is helpful to the business, especially with regard to language when she states:

"I am looking for help from local people by using local languages to find a way to make my customers understand what my product is".

While I-03F says she prefers to have only local staff and has not hired co-ethnic employees for quite some time:

"Staff, yes, I haven't actually hired Chinese staff for a long time, about two years".

I-10F noted:

“My solution for this problem is to hire an employee whose first language is English to offset this deficiency. He can help me express my thoughts in a more native expression”.

And

“I feel you need a local person to make up for the deficiencies of the company. If it is a Chinese-only company, there will definitely be some shortcomings”.

Furthermore, I-06F states that having an open mind is essential for acculturating,

“There is also a cultural integration; for example, you are more open-minded, and then go to talk to others. Even if they may sometimes tell a joke and you do not understand, you may just laugh and integrate with them”.

I-23F also agrees:

“Yeah, and then I would want to talk about their lives, their culture, everything about them, and I keep a very open mind about it”.

I-04M learnt that a good way to integrate into the host society is to learn how to do business and follow it.

“In fact, the British care about honesty. Generally speaking, what you tell them must be done. If you say that I will give you money tomorrow, you have to give it tomorrow. If you don't, they will be very angry; this is the credit issue of doing business with the British”.

I-06F agrees

“I also want my company's image to incorporate the European style instead of letting people say that it is very Chinese”.

I-07M says:

“I don't know if I am biased towards the Chinese style, but I try to integrate into the British way. I don't want people to feel too oppressed and so on”.

Meanwhile, I-01F learnt to adjust by making local choices that were more accessible for her business.

"So, you have to make some adjustments by looking at local resources. It is the same with my food ingredients. There are some ingredients that you even can't find in the U.K. because of geographical location and cultural differences, so you have to find an alternative solution by looking for suitable local ingredients".

Similarly, I-02M agrees that immigrants need to

"Try to reach the balance in the middle".

Furthermore, I-08F says that it is the responsibility of the immigrant to learn more about the host culture and try to fit in.

"Somewhat, as I chat with the British people, sometimes I will pay attention to what some bosses like to talk about. I mean like talk about golf, football or other things. I also can talk with them about British culture in a different accent. Or I can talk with them about current weather, affairs and politics. I think when you try to integrate with them, they will be happy to share with you".

Arrighetti et al. (2014) argue that having a multicultural hybrid strategy which amalgamates ethnic resources with a diverse workforce that brings ties to the mainstream markets is a winning strategy for immigrant-owned firms. Long-term engagement with the ethnic markets is limiting to the growth and expansion of an immigrant-owned firm. In order to integrate the firm with the mainstream markets, a simple breakout strategy is to have employees or founders who are not co-ethnic, as this creates a multicultural and diverse organisation that can culturally adapt to the mainstream markets (Arrighetti et al., 2014). Multicultural teams encourage cultural knowledge of local norms and help develop capability and bicultural competence (Light & Shahlapour, 2016; Santamaria-Alvarez & Śliwa, 2016). Limiting the organisation to co-ethnic employees can be isolating and delimiting for entrepreneurship (Stahl & Tung, 2015).

- **Learn from past experiences**

A key way to acculturate easily in a culturally different country was to gain experience and then make the best use of that experience.

As I-21M says:

"Get all the experiences slowly. It's like doing the wrong thing at first and then learning the right way for the next time. It's about slowly learning".

While I-25F says:

"in 2009, we still had a business partner because the partner was a foreigner, and he was quite cunning. Because I was Chinese, I didn't know anything. Then the foreigner did something, and we discovered some problems. Well, after we found out, we ended our cooperation with this foreigner. Well, in 2009, we had to re-register the company from zero and start to build a new company again".

I-22F states that you learn what others like and dislike and use that kind of information for further interactions:

"Yes, because I have studied the British and American culture before. Some people, such as those who say they don't like to talk about politics, don't talk about politics. You can talk about the weather with the clients or talk about children, topics that will not cause disputes. You just avoid some things that will cause disputes".

Reflecting on past experience and learning from the mistakes made was crucial for the growth of an entrepreneur, but it becomes doubly important in the case of immigrant entrepreneurs who are navigating unfamiliar cultural situations in a foreign language while taking all the risks that entrepreneurs need to take as they needed a higher tolerance for the ambiguity that they faced (Saiyed & Ricard, 2021). Reflection and learning from the inward dialogue are critical for an experiential learning process (Kolb, 2015). Reflective thinking characterises the capacity of the immigrant entrepreneurs for precise higher-order thought processes and making connections between abstract thoughts and executable ideas (Kolb, 2015).

- **Observation skills**

The immigrant entrepreneurs lacked any sort of formal training to understand the local culture and customs. They used their observation power to learn about the local culture and acceptable behaviour to overcome this issue.

I-08F said:

"I think it is because of different experiences, and I learn by observation".

She noted this was crucial for her business because:

"It is very important because real estate is related to the economy; economic affairs are related to politics. You can not understand anything, and then how do you convince others that you know? Because if you do not understand, then how have you become a consultant?"

Similarly, I-09M said:

"I don't like to chat with others, so I will always go and observe directly"

And

"I'll direct observe that person because each culture is just a general term. I want to see this man's background. What kind of experiences does he have? Where did those things happen? How did I come across him? Then I will observe how he reacts to different scenarios and figure out what kind of culture this person is influenced by. In this way, you can avoid some conflicts; you observe his behaviours"

These immigrant entrepreneurs found that the best way to learn about the local culture was to observe and imbibe behaviour and traditions from the locals. Such acquired behaviour is likely to allow them to fit in better with the host society as it finds a connection with the locals. The acculturation process is considered a multi-dimensional conception linked to identity, value and behaviour (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016), which are learning skills that can be acquired. Kolb (2015) states that learning skills are linked to four dimensions: gaining concrete experience, using reflective observation and analytical skills, and implementing active experimentation. Observational individuals are considered to have stronger capabilities in perceiving experiences from a different viewpoint and employing diverse thoughts and actions and thus are better suited for the acculturative process.

- **Motivation to keep learning**

A noteworthy number of the interviewees reported that they had continued motivation to learn about their host culture. This motivation to keep learning about the host culture can be linked to greater levels of personal and professional satisfaction for the immigrant entrepreneurs due to smoother acculturative process; cohesive co-existence in the host society of natives from diverse cultures; and improved opportunities and easier access to resources for the enterprise (Kim, 2018).

I-03F states:

"I think that continuous learning is not necessarily limited to culture, but it is in the experience of life. It should be said that it is not necessary to learn; naturally, there will be some new projects, or that there will be some new experiences and encounters, these are absorbed as experience".

I-13F states:

"I like learning new things, so for me, being able to have opportunities of communication with people from various cultural backgrounds is a good learning process, so this is what I enjoy about my work".

And also adds

"So, in the process, I started to enjoy it. I felt it was very interesting to learn the differences".

I-07M states that he needs this information for the sake of his business, so he continues to remain motivated to learn:

"Yes, because we need it for work. In the tourist sector, you definitely need to convey something to others, something uniquely British otherwise, clients do not depend on you".

I-14F says that while she is interested in learning, she is not sure where she can find such information. While I-15F says that such learning is a gradual and natural process which should not be forced in a rush:

"Yes, of course, but not going to on purpose. Learning by interest. I keep learning by chatting with my customers. For example: if today you are going to a wedding or funeral, you must know about their etiquette. How to avoid any inappropriate manners which have to be learnt from our daily life and it is nonstop. I think we should learn it not just because of business. I think every Chinese immigrant should learn about it, including how to make sure your children can adapt to school. We need to learn from the whole perspective; after all, we live in the country. I am not saying we have to worship all things foreign. I mean, we have to respect the host country's culture".

She also adds:

"I think it should be, just like table manners. If you have dinner with English people, then you have to learn the English table manners. If not, you might find your behaviour is very different when you are at a business conference. I think learning about the host culture will help. Secondly, keep learning host cultures and business habits and commit to developing talented staff".

The immigrant entrepreneurs who professed satisfaction with their life in the U.K. also displayed a continued motivation to keep learning about the host culture and were better integrated into the host society. The crucial part of acculturating, therefore, can be distilled down to maintaining continued interest and motivation for learning about the other culture, using observation and imitation as a tool when necessary, attempting to integrate using local employees, resources and methods, learning from past mistakes and using any government or other assistance available to immigrants.

While I-06F raises a pertinent question on whether the acculturative process would cause her to have a problem with identity recognition:

"The other part is because now you are doing business, you have to force yourself. So, I think it is a problem of identity recognition and transformation".

However, the extant literature on this subject notes that acculturation is different from integration. Acculturation is an ongoing process of adopting the host country's values and practices, but the individual or group does not lose their own distinct cultural identity (Berry, 2015). Immigrant entrepreneurs who have a strong cultural identity and connections with their host country do not easily lose major aspects of their home culture. Motivation is a part of cultural intelligence that deals with an individual's desire to acculturate into a cross-cultural environment. It requires giving attention to understanding diversity, focusing energies on learning and using the learnings to function fittingly in diverse cultural situations (Ndofor & Priem, 2011) and requires skills like resilience.

- **Resilience and willingness to overcome any obstacles**

The immigrant entrepreneurs displayed a strong tendency to be flexible and had the will to overcome challenges in their path with resilience. Resilience is the ability of the individual to modify their response to stress inducing or frustrating encounters (Riva & Lucchini, 2015). Resilient individuals are able to adjust due to their flexibility and bounce back and transform

themselves after encountering restricted or negative experiences in a foreign country (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022).

I-19M said:

"I think the first thing to do is to have the ability to withstand pressure. That is to say; you have to study a lot and then constantly improve yourself. This is something you can do internally. That is the outside world. In terms of others, you should not be too sensitive. In fact, on many occasions' others did not mean it like that if they say something that you don't like. Don't care too much, that is, even if he does mean it, don't take it too seriously. If he does, it is his fault, and you just do your best. Of course, people may be unhappy for a split second or half an hour or so, but then you have to use this logic to tell yourself that you will not always meet unhappy people. So just let it go".

I-13F said the immigrants should have the constant will to learn and grow:

"One of my characteristics is that I can be quite stubborn. I think challenges are the motivation for me to learn things, but many students will think it is a difficulty instead. They will think: I didn't expect it to be so difficult because most of the students' family background is well off. So, they think they can have a good job when they go back, so actually, they will miss a lot of things if they directly go back. In fact, those three years for me were a process of growth, whether it was looking for a job or learning a language and cultural learning or setting up my entrepreneurship. After spending the first year adapting, my learning curve and adaption ability entered a very fast speed. I felt it was very enjoyable".

Resilience and acculturation are interconnected. A study by Berry (2017) noted that the process of acculturation made immigrants more resilient, which in turn is positively connected to cross-cultural adaptation. Resilient and emotionally stable individuals displayed openness and flexibility in adopting suitable coping strategies when they were faced with adversity (van der Zee & van Oudenhoven, 2022). They proactively made adjustments and accessed the resources they needed to counter the acculturation challenges they faced and were less likely to have psychological health problems related to cross-cultural stress or the acculturation process (Berry, 2017).

I-11F says failures and refusals should not be taken personally:

"Because we have experience in living abroad, so we all know what it feels like to be discriminated. The feeling is very painful. But we don't take anything personally. In fact, it is quite common everywhere, including in Taiwan".

And

"After the employees came in, we think that when you decide to join us, it gave us the greatest respect and the greatest affirmation, so no matter how you came in, we are one team. I think about things like this, so I don't feel much about cultural differences because I think it is normal if cultural challenges exist. So, for me, it's not really a challenge".

I-11F also adds:

"I think you cannot say this because it has always been a process of growing. If you have not been there, and you do not have the pain, you will not realise what the real issue is. You might feel that there are too many difficulties, but when you look back, you will tell yourself that it was all-natural to a person. It was a path of growth that you have to spend time to experience".

I-20F sums it up by saying it is all about the individual's attitude:

"I think I can accept it, so I think it doesn't matter. Maybe that's why I don't see any major obstacles".

Wyrwich et al. (2016) state that fear of failure is negatively correlated to entrepreneurial intentions. Moreover, they found that such fear increases among women entrepreneurs and older entrepreneurs and is linked to the institutional environment available to the immigrant entrepreneur.

- **Seeking any government assistance available**

It was found during this study that when the immigrants were willing to acculturate, there was government assistance available regarding business-related information. This relatively eased the stress of the immigrants as they were attempting to become entrepreneurs in a foreign land with a very different business environment from their home culture.

I-05F states:

"It is not difficult. I think the information here is very transparent, and then it is very well regulated. I think it is very suitable for the development of small businesses in the U.K. because they write it clearly. If you don't understand anything, you can also call, and I still remember that there are a lot of agencies that can help you solve it. If you have any questions, you can call them and ask them; for example, if you have taxation questions, you can call HMRC directly and then ask them how".

And

"Actually, when I first started, every time I went to the library, I also went to some local governments, council, which had a lot of information about those it. I remember that in some libraries, there were even small classes that taught you how to start a business, and they were for free".

I-08F also reported a similar experience of finding easy access to information while setting up the company.

"And then I started to file taxes by myself for the first time in my life. I was confused, and then I called HMRC, and there were some government agencies. I called a lot of them, and they were actually quite helpful, and then I explained that I missed it, not intentionally, because it was my first time registering with a company, and I really didn't understand it. And then they would smile and say it does not matter. I think the British, in fact, in customer service, are better than the United States".

While I-07M states:

"In the U.K., the whole cost is very low to set up a company, and then its overall government administrative efficiency is ok, and it is very open and transparent, and for many things, you don't need to depend on personal networking".

I-10F also had a similarly positive experience

"I definitely didn't understand it at the beginning. The solution is to go to the business gateway when starting the company. They will support the newly established company, so they will teach you how to start the company and how to do it. We use a professional accounting company to help register and manage to account".

As was the experience of I-12F:

"It is the British government's support project for SMEs, and they have a lot of support schemes, including loans and more. I think for entrepreneurs, it is advisable to go to the local government programs first for a variety of resources and information...

The local government has funding, you will find that there are so many local government resources, and then there is a lot of support for SMEs. The programme certainly won't help everyone but will have different schemes that aim to, through their help, grow your small business and grow and hire more people. Then, their investment increases in its value. Investing in your small business helps you grow and promote the growth of the local economy because you probably will pay more in taxes or hire other people. So, I found that the U.K., in this area especially, actually is doing very well, at least in Lancashire, there are a lot of support schemes".

- **Training and Support**

An auxiliary finding of this exploratory research postulates that despite the strong academic focus on the importance of cross-cultural and language training and general preparedness, in the real world, there was little focus on this essential aspect which contributes heavily to cross-cultural entrepreneurial success. However, due to the lack of preparedness and the low local language skills of incoming immigrant entrepreneurs, they faced communication barriers, which impacted their acculturative process.

Okpara and Kabongo (2017) discovered in their empirical research that training and the immigrant's general adjustment had a positive correlation. It also positively impacted psychological adjustment, work adjustment, and interaction adjustment as it can be concluded that training is an essential part of building competencies that would ultimately lead to adjustment; therefore, the startling lack of training of the immigrant entrepreneurs indicated that they were ill equipped for adjustment in their host environment.

I-02M, I-04M and I-15F also, among others, reported a similar lack of preparedness, while a few of the interviewees had some intercultural experience but no formal training. While intercultural experience is highly beneficial in improving cultural intelligence, training is able substantially to improve cultural intelligence statistically much faster in a much more targeted and streamlined fashion, and the participants are able to retain the effects of a training intervention for months (Ramsey & Lorenz, 2016). While a few participants indicated that they

undertook training classes to pass IELTS tests for the purpose of the visa, such as I-05F, I-09M, I-10F, I-12F, I-21M and I-22F, but this was barely helpful as I-11F notes:

"Before coming to the U.K., we had to go to classes for the IELTS test, but then we found that IELTS English was actually different from the actual British English, so I found it totally out of touch, and I went to find a local teacher who specialises in teaching languages, and then learnt to speak in the British accent".

While those who did undertake some training noted that it was not directly beneficial to their enterprise as suggested by I-12F. It must be noted, however, that when the interviewees spoke about training, it often revolved around language training alone rather than cross-cultural training that would increase their cross-cultural intelligence and acculturation process or entrepreneurial training that would be supportive and beneficial to their enterprise. Therefore, it can be analysed that the training experience was largely limited to the compulsory language testing and that such theory-based knowledge was actually not beneficial to the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in their real-world experience in the U.K. as they displayed lower levels of understanding of English despite achieving the adequate scores in mandatory tests (Clark & Yu, 2021).

The Chinese immigrants needed further training and yet faced communication challenges in their host country. The results of this empirical research indicate that the respondents felt that the current availability and access to cross-cultural training and culture familiarisation were insufficient for their move to a dissimilar culture.

Just two participants indicated having received any other training than basic language I-07M reported that as part of their language training in the U.K., he was also taught some other basics about the country. As I-13F stated:

"What really interested me in the courses was indeed the cultural part, because our spoken language teacher was from Cambridge at that time, he taught a lot about contemporary British life. It was very interesting. Some aspects, such as what kind of food the British like to eat, what quirks they have, and even some drinking culture of their own, make me feel very interested. So, these things I mentioned really stimulated my interest in British life".

Both these participants undertook these training after arrival in the U.K., indicating that there was some availability of such courses; however, this seemed to be a very limited experience as this was a small part of a larger English language course and was only undertaken by a small percentage of the participants because these cross-cultural training courses are not compulsory, unlike IELTS testing which is required for visa processing.

Only one participant of this study indicated that they were unwilling to undertake any training courses and would much rather learn from life or use freely available tools like books, newspapers or T.V. I-22F categorically states:

"Yes, learning from life, and I don't want to learn purposefully, because I don't have the time, because I have to take care of a family and other things... But, I want to go to any courses on purpose".

While this could be a simple strategy for understanding the local culture for those who are unable to access or afford cross-cultural or language training, this process is likely to take a great length of time. Training can deliver the same information in a much shorter amount of time. The immigrants can then be used as a building block to gain further knowledge and understanding of the local culture with observation and practice in real life. No indication of such unwillingness was seen among the other participants, which permits the presumption that the others were more likely to be willing to undergo training and preparedness courses if such options were more freely available. Okpara and Kabongo's (2017) empirical research found positive correlations between training and the immigrant's general adjustment, work adjustment, interaction adjustment and psychological adjustment and therefore declared training to be essential for building competencies that lead to adjustment.

Only a singular participant indicated that they had some cultural and (or) language support post-arrival to the host culture offered by a joint program between the home country university and the U.K. university. I-13F notes:

"Yes, because we had a joint foundation program between Tsinghua University and my current university at the time, so I learned these things at the time".

But this minimal support seemed to be a delimited occurrence among all the 25 participants in this primary research, and no clear outline of the support was detailed by the participant. Therefore, the findings of this empirical research indicated a strong need for comprehensive

training of the newly arrived immigrant entrepreneurs (1st generation immigrants) to acculturate them with the local culture. This indicates that there is a need for more training providers as well as access to such training programs. Few programs are run by private entities (for example, Fast Track Training and Simon & Simon), which have some cross-cultural programs for immigrants (FastTrackTraining, 2022; Simon&Simon, 2021), but either there is little awareness of such programs, or they are beyond the reach of the immigrant entrepreneurs.

This raises the question of the availability and access of training programs that focus on building cultural awareness and local language skills (van Driel & Gabrenya, 2013) that extant literature indicates is essential for cross-cultural adjustment (Okpara & Kabongo, 2017) and building competencies that allow immigrants to thrive in their host culture (Brzozowski et al., 2014). These findings demonstrate that the objective of this study was met as the challenges experienced by the immigrant entrepreneurs clearly impacted the acculturative process. The findings also noted the need for immigrant entrepreneurs to spend sufficient time understanding and respecting the host culture, which would, in turn, ease their acculturation process.

4.2.2 Socio-cultural level

4.2.2.1 Solutions for Co-ethnic enclaves and networks challenges

Ethnic enclaves, until recently, had been attributed as economic power centres by extant literature, which stated that ethnic enclaves brought economic contacts in addition to employment opportunities for the immigrants and were also important for building social networks as per Hack-Polay (2019). On the contrary, the current exploratory study provides empirical evidence that the ethnic enclaves are losing their importance as most of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported that ethnic enclaves were of little benefit for them professionally.

While some of the participants pointed out the negative aspects of joining co-ethnic networks, there were others who felt that the challenges faced by immigrant entrepreneurs could be solved to some extent with the other kinds of support available. They stated that the most ethnic enclaves were places where one could socially meet co-ethnic individuals and have a meal with them, but the interviewees did not receive tangible economic or opportunity benefits from being embedded in the socio-cultural context of ethnic networks and associations. However,

this crucial finding does not diminish the importance of the other co-ethnic individuals' role in their lives, as some interviewees reported socialising exclusively or largely within ethnic communities as they were unable to connect personally with local individuals due to language and cultural barriers. Moreover, immigrant entrepreneurs often use creative solutions to ease the challenges being faced by them. Some of the solutions offered by the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs are below.

- **Join local trade unions and labour unions**

Some Chinese immigrant entrepreneur interviewees had recommended that rather than seeking support from ethnic resources, newly incoming immigrant entrepreneurs should join trade associations for networking purposes. This demonstrates that there is a strong need for professional and personal support systems that the ethnic enclaves had formerly provided. These could serve as influential resources which could assist incoming migrants in the future instead of ethnic enclaves. More than ethnic enclaves, the immigrant entrepreneurs depended upon the help and contacts which were found by local trade and labour unions.

As I-12F said:

"I think it will be networking. They have a lot of different networks here. If you are doing business here, I would suggest that you should try every group. There are various types in the U.K., so some require you to pay an annual fee, and some are Pay as You Go. I think that here you still need to know each other through such interpersonal contacts. I think it also depends on the nature of your business, to see if you need to do business via personal networking".

Similarly, I-17F stated:

"you may think whether this thing is useful or not and whether it is helpful or not, but you still have to be exposed to these things. You don't know if it's going to work until you get there. And most of these events are free. About 90% are free. Such as in London, I don't really know about another city; there are networks for SMEs in London where you can get a membership for £400-500. Then you can get unlimited entry to all events, which are full of people from small start-up companies who are going to talk or ask many questions. So, when you go in there and talk to them, you will have a lot of interaction with a lot of local people and learn a lot. This is a channel for me to contact local small businesses in the U.K.".

While I-12F continued:

"No, the events are all private. Well, many people are doing it because many people are doing business. Sometimes it is not necessary to be a big company, so some of them I went to were only limited to small companies and individuals. Each group has its own clear concept, so if you've been there, you will probably know what kind of people join and their sector and business to see if it is related to your business. I know a lot of lawyers or accountants providing services for small businesses often go to those places so that you can know some people. But it depends on the situation whether the events will help you expand the business or not".

I-01F recommends joining the local trade union:

"Yes, Like local trade union. They already have specific trade unions for different sectors. They are able to provide more information. For example, they will tell you where you should take a training course. What business insurance you should buy. Where to hire equipment. Compared with these local ethnicity-specific institutions, I only can get general information from Chinese associations".

Likewise, I-07M felt that the co-ethnic networks and associations were not as helpful:

"Not much, at least for what I do at this stage. In London, there are many chambers of commerce and specific sector associations, not just Chinese associations. If you stay in this sector for a long time, you will have to deal with them".

Similarly, I-03F felt that the right group was the one who directly dealt with the same situation as the immigrant entrepreneur and that cultural background was not essential for networking:

"Right, because they are quite strict. Actually, we have to abide by them. Joining the groups or not is another matter. Many people in the U.K. are also landlords, not just the Chinese. As long as you have an aim, such as making a real estate investment or learning how to run Airbnb, I think it is best to disregard nationality. You have to go to a more specialised event that is based on the theme that can help you".

And I-10F felt that it was important to join local institutions and associations over co-ethnic ones to build professional networks:

"I still think that if I have to give advice, I will still recommend people to communicate with some local institutions in the U.K., such as the business gateway I just mentioned, they have support, or they have that kind of events, exhibitions, or conferences which you all can join to know more people".

These findings indicate that the local events and trade unions are more effective at building networks for immigrant entrepreneurs rather than Chinese-specific networks and associations. Successfully managing their relationships with trade associations can bring the immigrant entrepreneurs opportunities and strong networks (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva, 2014).

- **Use co-ethnic community for as a starting point**

A majority of the respondents responded that Chinese associations and networks are not of much use professionally except for building contacts and are now merely functioning as socialising centres. These interviewees, however, also stated that it was still important to be surrounded by the Chinese community, which feels familiar and stops a newly arrived immigrant from feeling out of place and homesick.

I-24F also asserts:

"When you go out to meet people, you will find many different people, Chinese people, from various fields of work, and then you can chat with them, find out their backgrounds, and you feel very connected to each other so you can comfort yourself".

I-20F also agrees associations are helpful but says:

"Yes, but not for business. Well, I don't, but my husband does, because you're here, you must have Chinese friends".

While I-22F claims that associations can be a good place to meet people, and eventually, it is these friends who can help you:

"Yes, because they don't know much about British culture, I think they should go. Because I've been here a long time, I have a lot of friends, any information I want I can get from my friends, I can ask them on the phone. For the newcomers, they don't have any friends here, so if they go there, that means they will meet some Chinese friends there. I think it will be helpful for them".

Correspondingly I-01F noted that there were co-ethnic groups for personal connections but not for business-related network building:

"I just join some F.B. pages like A cup of tea in Sheffield, which is a Chinese mummy group and some Chinese student events. There is no formal Chinese association like you mentioned in Sheffield. These are just some events held by local institutions. For example, I joined one event that assisted elderly people in learning how to use mobile phones earlier. But I never heard about events related to business activities, consulting or information".

While I-25F reveals her experience:

"I don't have too many friends, and I was running a business again, so then there are some things I can't talk to my friends about, such as there are some psychological pressures, and so on. I won't talk to my friends too much. I'll talk to my pastor, talk to my church friends, or to the church leaders, talk to them about some of the stress I've been feeling lately, and they'll give me some mental and spiritual help".

The interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneur felt that co-ethnic communities and associations were not the best sources to build business relationships due to the lack of available resources and assistance available. The results of this study indicate that co-ethnic networks were becoming obsolete for business networking, but they were still good for building personal connections. This is especially important for newly arriving immigrants who are likely to feel homesick and lost in the initial period of arrival in the host country. Hack-Polay (2019) claimed that the purpose of co-ethnic networks was not simply to seek employment and economic contacts. They could and should also be used for building social contacts.

- **Establish personal networking**

Prashantham et al.'s (2015) comprehensive quantitative study found that while co-ethnic bonds within the inner circles of ethnic enclaves were useful in leveraging the relationships which allowed for greater market access, however enterprises outside of these clusters were not able to leverage the advantages for venture growth despite building co-ethnic relations. Moreover, they noted that the non-ethnic networks drove market growth in reality and were more significant for international growth for immigrant entrepreneurs.

It could be argued that new Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs are unlikely to be part of the existing clusters in co-ethnic enclaves, which could explain why the respondents of this study were unable to find any assistance from co-ethnic networks. However, this did not diminish the importance of networking with non-ethnics or locals. A significant number of the respondents highly recommended networking in business circles outside of the co-ethnic enclaves.

I-03F stated that engaging with like-minded others in associations was a great way to stimulate business opportunities.

"In fact, I mostly go to answer the questions and also expand our business, of course, it is not a place for you to advertise, but for example, for the acquaintances inside the group, if he knows you for a long time when you answer questions, then he will think you are very professional. For example, last week, one or two ladies encountered quite a lot of problems in renting, and I answered them with extra care. After that, five or six people suddenly added me on WeChat".

While I-08F stated that time should be made for engaging with others,

"For these small businesses, you need to develop connections to sell things, so we encourage them to take part in some activities".

It can be seen that the effectiveness of co-ethnic networks and associations had received mostly negative feedback from the participants of this study; however, while co-ethnic networks were not considered to be effective for business networking, it did not reduce the importance of networking. Networking with local natives is an important aspect of social capital. Networking eases adjustment, although low local language proficiency and when combined with human capital aspects (Froese et al., 2016), makes the immigrant entrepreneur's acculturation process easier.

- **Reliance on co-ethnic friends for professional advice**

The results of this study indicate that there was a reliance on the informal network of co-ethnic friends and family for professional advice. Some of these friends may have first been met in the Chinese associations; however, any current relationship they shared was personal. Because

of the inherent trust factor, immigrant entrepreneurs preferred to go to their friends rather than hire professional intermediaries.

I-02M says:

"I usually ask my friends around me because I have friends who are lawyers or accountants".

And I-02M adds that having a varied friend circle was also helpful for them professionally.

"The main thing is that it will expand your contacts network. You will know a lot of people who work in different industries. If you consult about things in the future, at least you will know whom you can ask. I know what he does; let us not talk about price, but at least I know he won't lie to me".

I-18 M agrees with this point on trust being higher among known contacts:

"On the contrary, I would feel a little better because, with friends, I always have a much higher degree of trust".

And I-18M added:

"I didn't do much marketing research in the early stages. At that time, I didn't do too much careful investigation. I had some relatives and friends who also ran a similar business in Europe. So, I only took their business, for example, and I thought that if I am doing the same business, then I could do it more quickly and reach my goal... I consulted with some of my friends and gained some help".

I-05F agreed that the personal contacts did have an impact on their thought process as entrepreneurs:

"I will. I think I still need to participate in more activities and then contact different people; sometimes, it may not be direct, but indirect, there will be some inspiration, and at the time when my business started, I was not very serious. The reason is that I went out to meet my friends, and then I was influenced by my friends, so I was inspired and started my business".

Moreover, I-06F clarifies that it is the co-ethnic individuals that are helping rather than co-ethnic societies or associations, while I-22F says that between friends and Google, her research needs could be met without needing further support:

"Because there are a lot of friends here, so I think it was quite easy; because I think with Google, you can find a lot of things, and also you can ask your friends. There was nothing special in it. Usually, it's easy. As long as you know how to ask and search, then you will find a solution".

I-04M notes that in taking help from friends rather than professional intermediaries, there is also was a significant cost consideration which especially matters for a small start-up:

"That's very expensive, so I usually ask friends".

But I-04M also cautions:

"You have to know what you ask to get answers. This problem exists with most Chinese people. You can only ask your peers because only they might know these things related to your business".

And I-04M further adds that the problem with not taking professional help was that asking peers sometimes did not bring the required solutions:

"That is the problem; if there are peers who don't want to tell, then you need to ask other people, but if the other person doesn't know, then there will be problems".

I-13F brings up another relevant point in the discussion when she blames the Chinese culture for this widespread phenomenon of depending on their friend circle for professional advice rather than taking the correct route of getting professional help:

"I find that a big trend is that Chinese people here easily get second-hand information or even third-hand information. They may have lived in the U.K. for a long time, but with regard to a lot of laws and regulations, they are still not that clear. There do very little research on their own, so I have found that many people have encountered problems because of this. In China, people think that if it is something that an acquaintance has done, such personal experience is actually better than information on the internet".

I-03F further adds that this is a bad practice as it can bring wrong information and that the entrepreneur should hire a consultant:

“This is the kind of thing in which all people are ignorant, that is, everyone knows or hears from what their neighbours/friends have done”.

I-21M furthers this point and cautions:

“If you ask someone, you will have to check if they are in a competitive relationship with you; then, of course, they will hold it back. If they are not in a competitive relationship, they will tell you, but also, if they are not in a competitive relationship, they have nothing to tell with you, so it would be pointless to ask”.

Moreover, I-03F sums up the whole matter when she states:

“The Chinese are actually people who do business on their own. They like to ask around. He asks his friends what I think. This is totally wrong. Because I am not such a person, I feel as if I need to come across a problem today. I think the best way is to find help by the hourly rate, and you pay a consultant”.

While depending on the help of friends and personal networks is a good strategy for managing small challenges and personal issues, however, for business matters, it is best to depend on professional intermediaries and consultants who can give the correct advice while making it easier for an entrepreneur to operate in a culturally different environment (Liu et al., 2014).

- **Market niches can be found from co-ethnic**

One of the more interesting strategies that a lot of the ethnic entrepreneurs employed for their enterprises was to carve out niche pockets of opportunity in the ethnic markets that the entrepreneurs could then help to fill with their businesses. They did not get into the traditionally popular businesses that had a lot of competition within their co-ethnics. A lot of these market niches could be carved out because the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs had strong transnational linkages and were able to leverage their competencies to attract clients from China for their enterprises in the U.K. Transnational connections can change the opportunity structures available to immigrant entrepreneurs by bringing opportunities linked to their social embeddedness in two countries (Pluss, 2013).

As I-07M, who operates within the tourism industry in the U.K. but his clients were almost exclusively Chinese tourists, puts it across:

"What I do now is in the tourism sector, this market is a hundred-billion-pound sector, so this is not a small sector. If you get a niche in this market, you will thrive. So, if I just purely do China's business well, it is sufficient to let me thrive".

I-09M proclaims the advantages of familiarity when he says:

"You are more familiar with it. You must start with what you are familiar with and start with the ethnic group you are familiar with".

I-13F used the knowledge she gained about the ethnic market niche and noted:

"It is true that most of the foreign students find adjusting initially very difficult, so this is why I had the idea of starting a business using my personal experience to see where I could help students and then structure it into a business model".

While I-19M states it is better to work in the Chinese ethnic market of the U.K. versus operating in the mainland Chinese market itself because:

"Yes, there is a big market in China, but there is also a lot of competition in China. But if you have something foreign that the locals don't have in there, the market is huge".

However, this information seems to be niche specific because I-21M has a very different opinion:

"No, because the market is still quite saturated at the moment, so our bed and breakfast accommodation started to have some problems. The guests of the bed and breakfast are from all over the world, so it is not just the Chinese market. So, although our travel agency focuses mainly on Chinese, we have other businesses that are mainly focusing on non-Chinese or target ethnic groups that are international. We don't bet on a single ethnic group".

A diversification trend is being noticed in immigrant-owned enterprises that use their online presence to reach out to markets outside their geographic area (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). These immigrant entrepreneurs break out of the traditional ethnic markets by exploiting their

personal home country and local networks and leveraging their personal capacities (bi-lingual competency, personal finance, time available) and motivations to create innovative market niches that their enterprises could fill (Thomas & Ong, 2015; Soydas & Aleti, 2015). Furthermore, while many of them remain connected to the ethnic markets, they are no longer dependent on ethnic enclaves and resources to conduct business, nor are they limited exclusively to co-ethnic customers who live in their areas.

Recent studies have noted that while social networks are beneficial assets for immigrant entrepreneurs, these networks could also be referring to the transnational links and business contacts that the immigrant brings with them because the local co-ethnic enclaves are not necessarily an asset for an immigrant entrepreneur as these networks do not necessarily bring added opportunities and can be limiting for the enterprise as per Kloosterman and Rath, (2018). Making and maintaining global or transnational business connections is especially easy now due to the increased ease of connectivity (Bagwell, 2017 Brzozowski et al., 2014; Pruthi & Wright, 2017).

Many of them operated services for Chinese visitors and students to the U.K., whereas others offered exclusive products from China to local and co-ethnic customers. They were able to create a demand for products that had not been available in the U.K. markets earlier (for example, Chinese traditional medicines or lightweight silk quilts). Innovative value addition and risk-taking are prized attributes of entrepreneurs (Bird & Schjoedt, 2017). While co-ethnic networks are important for these immigrant entrepreneurs, the importance of resources like the immigrant's personal property, education level, opportunity structures and personal knowledge and skill set cannot be negated for the formation of such ethnic businesses (Turkina & Thi Thanh Thai, 2013; Wilson & Martin, 2015).

Some other findings that were reported by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in this study included socio-cultural challenges such as the difficulty of adapting to the many cultures in the U.K. as well as friction with other ideologies, differences between attitudes with locals and difficulty in understanding cultural contexts. As outlined above, training and cultural intelligence can help with the adjustment of the immigrant entrepreneurs to their host culture, which can reduce some stress. Salgado and Bastida (2017) note that greater cross-cultural adjustment predicts greater achievements and effectiveness. Consequently, well-adjusted

immigrant entrepreneurs report feeling a sense of satisfaction in their general environment, and they also display reduced cognitive stress load (Wang & Warn, 2018), which can, in turn, encourage more social interaction and build deeper relationships and social ties (Cheng et al., 2014).

4.2.2.2 Solutions to Socio-cultural challenges

Maintaining a balance between two diverse cultural contexts can be very challenging for immigrant entrepreneurs, and they need increasing cross-cultural competencies to cope (Vandor & Franke, 2016b). This study's findings indicate that while several cultural barriers affect incoming immigrant entrepreneurs, the interviewed entrepreneurs displayed remarkable resilience in overcoming these barriers using creative means. Barring a few individuals, a majority of the interviewees indicated that despite the cultural barriers, they successfully carried on their business because they had a positive attitude towards the host culture and that increased interaction with the host country nationals increased their familiarity and eased the challenges experienced.

While there was a multitude of challenges faced by the immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed during the span of this study, a vast majority of them were able to come up with suitable solutions that helped them cope with these challenges. The abilities that are beneficial for an immigrant in acculturating into the host society are flexibility, tolerance, interest in the other cultures, self-confidence, respect, and empathy (Van Oudenhoven & Benet-Martínez, 2015). The same skills are also beneficial for entrepreneurs in launching new businesses.

- **Use of creative means to solve problems**

To manage the challenges experienced, the immigrant entrepreneurs often used creative and innovative methods to alleviate the challenges that enabled them to cope in the alien culture where they had little or no support. The findings underscore the role of being respectful of the differences between the two cultures. Moreover, interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs suggested maintaining a positive work attitude because conducting business matters more than the cultural differences that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs experienced in the U.K. Employment of creative means to overcome challenges and survive in the host environment eventually gives way to acculturation as per (Thanh Thai & Turkina, 2013).

Some of the interviewees relied on local T.V., magazines and popular culture to arm themselves with local cultural knowledge. I-21M said:

"To learn about the local culture in the U.K., I generally watch T.V., then talk to some business owners and my local staff so that we know what they think".

I-19M offers a direct method to counter language and culture issues; he suggests using a bilingual employee or someone from Hong Kong as a bridge because they understand both the languages and cultures. On the other end of the continuum, I-04M stated he did not find help directly and had to use stealth to find out the information he required.

"When I asked them right at the beginning, they didn't tell me; they said that they didn't know when in fact, they went every day. The reason why I know that is true is that there was a time when I drove quietly behind and followed them".

Entrepreneurs commonly employ creative means and have an inherently 'creative spirit' (Gouvea et al., 2021). The interviewees from this study creatively used the tool of observation to imbibe the behavioural and cultural patterns of the host society to be able to acculturate more easily in their host country. Reliance on co-ethnic friends and intra-ethnic solidarity for support is a pretty well-researched topic in literature (Efendic et al., 2016) and was a key theme in this research. However, I-02M states that sometimes you need help from professional intermediaries or tools like translation software or Google, indicating that while some creative ideas like research on the internet could be used to solve common cultural challenges, however, there was a need for relying on professional help when the issues are complex or technical.

Interestingly, I-08F discovered that humour could be used effectively to cover gaps in cultural know-how and avoid serious fallouts from a cultural faux-pas.

"Sometimes I am just kidding myself because when you kid yourself, it's not discrimination, others can't make fun of you, but I think because I will magnify the problem of my own Chinese stereotypes, they will think about it in reverse. They're going to turn around and say, actually, you don't seem like this, I don't think you're all serious, I don't really get around the problem, I'm actually asking, do you think we're like this? Do you really think we are such kind of people?".

- **Increased exposure to local culture increases familiarity**

A majority of the interviewees responded that they have become more familiar with the local culture as they spent a long time and have increased exposure to locals and their systems. For example, I-02M felt his confidence increase with time, and he called this a process of assimilation. Literature also notes that increased exposure to a culture enhances the ability of the individual to flourish in a diverse culture (Brzozowski et al., 2014). Likewise, I-10F explains that enhanced local interaction happens over time by saying:

"It's helpful. I think you can't take a separate look at the whole life experience in the U.K. It's a gradual process from the day you just arrived at the time you have stayed for one or two years. For me, I have stayed here for 9 years now. You slowly learn about it".

The interviewees noted that this process took place over time; literature has also noted that while the acculturative process starts when there is contact between two cultures, it is a long process (Dimitrova & Aydinli-Karakulak, 2016). I-04M recommends that the focus of the immigrant should be first to understand how to operate in the local culture and make some networks before they consider becoming entrepreneurs:

"Of course. It will be nice. For those who just arrived in the U.K., I suggest that if their financial condition and various conditions allow, they should not focus on making money completely. They must first learn British things and learn more. To participate in some meetings, attend some seminars, chat more with people, and get to know what you want to do".

Literature notes that whether or not the immigrant entrepreneur becomes familiar and psychologically comfortable in their host environment fundamentally depends on their relationship with aspects such as their own sociability, length of stay, acceptance towards variances in cultural and work-related norms, access to acceptable living conditions, traditions and expectations (Setti et al., 2020). With increased exposure, I-05F was able to get familiar with the U.K. culture and find more opportunities as adjustment positively correlates with achievements and effectiveness (Salgado & Bastida, 2017). Similarly, I-04M noted:

"I found my business because of this experience".

This view is reiterated by the study of Davies et al. (2015), which found that longer lengths of stay in the host country increased the level of familiarity and adjustment. Agreeing with this viewpoint, I-06F states:

"It's easier now. I think it was a bit awkward, and I was less confident at first".

Similarly, I-08F says that after having

"lived there for more than 10 or 20 years, you slowly start thinking about everything like locals".

I-07M said:

"The thinking of the British person is actually different from their literal meaning in the language".

but with greater exposure:

"You would also know what is acceptable to them and what is not acceptable".

While I-09M states:

"There are many different cultures in my living environment, so I understand that their thinking styles are different because of the different climates, politics, and histories they are influenced by".

This highlights the fact that culture is an amalgamation of the economic, legal, political and geographic influences on a particular area, and it is essential for the incoming immigrant entrepreneur to build up their knowledge of such influences (Huu, 2021). Knowledge of the culture and context will help form deeper bonds even despite language challenges, and feeling rooted reduces the stress levels of the immigrant entrepreneur (Urzua et al., 2019).

I-11F initially experienced culture shock and was unable to speak up and offer opinions when required; however, after some sustained interaction was able to get along with other international classmates. Her way of getting comfortable was to participate in several local commercial events. I-12F intoned that,

"it's not that you learn every day, but every time you talk to a different person, you still have a lot to learn with respect to local culture".

I-13F offers tips to increase her exposure to the local culture, live alone, get a job and develop a strong curiosity.

Overall, the interviewed participants overwhelmingly noted that there were few cultural challenges but even despite those challenges, they were able to manage to get settled and conduct their business in the U.K. Positive attitude of individuals and how they perceive the host country's culture leads to acceptance of the host culture. Ng et al. (2017) note that having a positive attitude towards both home and host culture was a critical cross-cultural competency that improved the immigration experience.

I-03F accepted that her multicultural nature helped her fit in

“I think it's easy, but maybe my personality is also unusual. Actually, I am a multicultural person”.

I-07M felt that despite not having a lot of interaction with locals, he did not experience cultural challenges because of the locals' willingness to adjust for the sake of conducting business.

“No, because I have never had any foreigner colleague. So, I don't have any experience with it. And for my suppliers, to be honest, I am their customer, Right! So, their attitude to me was nice”.

I-08F brought forward an interesting point that the U.K. was a very inclusive country. She said furthermore that its people were also actively involved in getting to know and understand people of other cultures.

“Including my daughter in nursery, each of them must fill a form at that time, of which country you are from, and then they will insert it on the map and say, look at our class students from various countries. Then what kind of culture, what their New Year is, their national holiday is and what it looks like”.

Similarly, I-17F felt there were no problems, and they had no bias issues.

“a lot of local people gave us a lot of help, whether it was financial help or other help”.

Extent literature notes that networking with local natives helps ease cultural adjustment even when there are language challenges (Ojo & Shizha, 2018). Therefore, it is highly recommended that dimensions of human capital like language be balanced with social capital like networking

as it makes cultural adjustment easier. Froese et al. (2016) note that human capital such as training, knowledge and experience were essential to the acculturative process and could be enhanced with higher levels of cultural intelligence.

I-09M offered a different perspective and stated he faced fewer issues because he came to the U.K. at a very early age and was able to learn about the local culture much more easily.

"for a deep understanding of culture, we can only learn before the age of 18. Thereafter, when we slowly become independent ourselves, we are also affected by many external factors in our thoughts... I was just fine because I came here before I was 18 years old and learned from both sides".

Earlier research by Beckers and Blumberg (2013) agrees with this point, and both indicate that immigrants who arrive at a young age or are born in the host culture are able to acculturate to a much higher degree than 1st generation or newly incoming immigrants.

Finally, I-15F offers a perspective that is worth pondering upon.

"I think it is better not to focus too much on cultural differences, which should not be a big issue when doing business nowadays because now the market is global. If you think culture is a big problem when doing business globally, then you might restrict yourself at the beginning. I don't really think culture is a big problem".

The findings indicate that host country natives were respectful and inclusive towards the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and that, in the end, the only point that mattered for all stakeholders was conducting the business (Wilson et al., 2017). Most of the immigrant entrepreneurs, their customers and suppliers were able to put aside their cultural differences to pursue mutually beneficial business opportunities.

4.2.3 Institutional level

Literature notes that *political-institutional contexts* defined by the *rules, laws and policies* have a direct and indirect impact on new entrepreneurs' business and/or immigration activities (Steenbeek & Schutjens, 2014; Ram et al., 2017). The solutions linked to the politico-institutional, financial, and organisational challenges are outlined below.

4.2.3.1 Solutions for Politico-Institutional challenges

As per the findings of this research, a few challenges faced by the immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. are related to policies, rules and regulations. Therefore, not too many solutions arose from this topic either. Overall the immigrant entrepreneurs seemed to be happy with their choice of country and the politico-institutional framework that the country operated on. Most of the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs were happy with their choice of host country and highly recommended it for incoming new immigrant entrepreneurs.

I-04M said:

"Doing business in the U.K., in fact, I think it is better than doing business in China, although there are many opportunities in China. But there are a lot of things, for example, obstacles from the government. In the U.K., there are no obstacles from the government".

I-05F noted:

"I always think that we are foreigners in another country, we will have to work harder than the locals, so I also want to enjoy this good environment in the U.K., and for a better environment, there are some things you must pay. Society is well regulated. I think you can become rich in the future. As long as you are honest and hardworking under this system, your efforts will be rewarded".

- **Hiring professional intermediaries**

One of the ways the challenges can be averted is by hiring professional intermediaries to take care of those areas where the immigrant entrepreneur might feel a void in their own personal competencies. I-10F also noted that when she needed to make an impression, she preferred to get her local staff to help.

"I think that writing emails also makes expressions clearer, but you write differently from native speakers. In fact, when I write to them in my tone, they can understand, but if there are some, for example, some larger companies, and you want to make a better first impression and just want more than native language influence, then I might get my staff to help me edit it".

This indicates the need to spend on professional intermediaries, which from the other similar findings of this research, is one of the best ways to avert challenges in all categories. Professional intermediaries are co-ethnic individuals who can bridge the communication gaps between immigrant individuals and local individuals. Cultural and language challenges have given rise to the use of such professional intermediaries who, despite being informal representatives, often have gathered disproportionate amounts of influence within co-ethnic enclaves (Halkias, 2017; Zhang et al., 2021).

In the context of this research, they can range from brokers, accountants, lawyers, financial consultants or other skilled professional advisors who are specialists in handling certain aspects of the co-ethnic business and from whom the immigrant entrepreneurs can get assistance. I-06F agrees with the need for hiring professional intermediaries. She said:

"In the process, you have to spend money. Actually, you have to spend money to do it, but in fact, our service industry is not the same as other service industries because our service industry is relatively complicated".

However, the additional cost required for hiring professional intermediaries can be difficult to access for the new entrepreneurs. Literature indicates that immigrant entrepreneurs experience more financial difficulties than comparable small business enterprises in obtaining business start-up credit (Irastorza & Peña-Legazkue, 2018). These financial difficulties can get compounded by the need for expenditure on professional intermediaries.

I-04M said:

"That's very expensive, so I usually ask friends. Well, because the cost is relatively high when you have just started your business. If my business has been going very well, then I can hire a full-time consultant to work here every day. But it was impossible at the time when you just started your business".

Hiring non-co-ethnic business partners and employees is a recommended break-out strategy that encourages diversity and equips the organisation with skills that the immigrant entrepreneurs cannot provide (Arrighetti et al., 2014).

Most of the challenges in this section are linked to the inability of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneur to understand the rules or official paperwork because of language difficulties. The

solutions to language problems have been discussed in detail in the section that deals with communication, and the same kind of solutions apply to this section as well. For example, the use of translation software to alleviate the problem and having a problem-solving attitude.

4.2.3.2 Solutions for Financial challenges

Extant literature notes that immigrant entrepreneurs often face financial challenges because of challenges that exclude them from arranging finance in the host country and that ethnic enclaves and networks often step in to fill this gap by providing financial assistance (Munkejord, 2017). The findings of this study indicate that ethnic enclaves and networks were no longer supportive of incoming immigrant entrepreneurs; therefore, the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs also did not have that option for raising finance. As the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs also faced challenges in acquiring finances from the host country, they employed some creative solutions to manage these challenges. Some of those recommendations are listed below:

- **Personal investment or loans from personal contacts**

A large number of the interviewees were aware that they could face financial challenges, and therefore they relied upon personal savings and private loans from friends and family to finance their enterprises.

As I-18M felt that the easiest way to get finance was to get it from people he knew:

“Friends and Family, the most convenient way”.

I-17F said she and her friends did not raise a loan in the U.K.:

“Not in the U.K., because in the beginning, we were a few friends who thought why not give it a try and see what happens. So, at that time, we didn't finance from the local bank”.

Immigrant entrepreneurs can use social capital to fund their enterprises; however, what support they are able to garner depends on their level of social embeddedness (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). They can gain from cheap/unpaid labour contributions by family members – and or financial support like interest-free loans or monetary contributions (Sheng & Mendes-Da-Silva,

2014). However, I-11F used another method of raising personal finance, which was to do a fundraising for starting her enterprise:

Researchers: *"So, your funding was from fundraising, not by borrowing from the local bank".*

I-11F: *"Yes, fundraising".*

I-21M noted that angel funds could be an option, but he preferred to raise his own investments without help from outside investors:

"Angel funds? Because I have not tried that one, so I do not know. When you raise money, in fact, your entrepreneurial value will be diluted, so I think I prefer to be on my own".

Similarly, I-11F noted that she was actively seeking finance from private investors:

"Investors. We are looking for local investors".

While I-03F noted:

"The other way of financing is personal investment from someone. I think I would be interested in this because I think business loans nowadays, their interest rate is quite high. It is almost the same as a personal loan. Then again, in my opinion, I don't think I can borrow much".

Nel and Abdullah (2015) found that immigrants faced issues in financing and staffing. These differences did not allow them to grasp opportunities as easily as the locals, and fewer opportunities were available. This point links well with the blocked mobility theory, which states that the immigrants are blocked from acquiring the choicest opportunities in their host culture, and this pushes them into self-employment via entrepreneurship (Akin et al., 2017).

- **Credit from suppliers**

Another creative idea for temporary funding issues could be solved by establishing a credit line with the suppliers as suggested by I-14F:

"Never because I feel like I have nothing to insure a loan. Also, as I only had a work permit and was not a citizen and I had nothing but a bit of cash for our cash flow. So,

I asked for credit from my supplier. Although later we were offered loans, we did not need it for financing because it will add to our costs".

While I-15F noted:

"We didn't need finance also because of the support from the supplier".

I-15F likewise agreed:

"You can depend on support from the supplier to pay the dues later on".

Using social embeddedness could be a way for immigrant entrepreneurs to finance their enterprises; however, it is essential for them to build those networks first.

- **Personal credit/ overdraft**

Another creative technique many of the interviewed immigrant entrepreneurs used was to use personal loans or the bank's overdraft facility; the money was then used to fund the enterprise.

As I-02M said:

"I used my personal credit to get a loan granted, but the loan was used to finance my business".

They also chose businesses that needed flexible or low amounts of initial investment, as I-04M notes:

"I only applied for some personal loans. By this, I mean I didn't need too many funds at the beginning for this business because this business can be very flexible. You can do it for thousands of pounds or even millions of pounds. Sometimes even a million pounds is not enough. The range of this business has great flexibility".

I-10F also similarly noted:

"Yes, but we have used the overdraft more often for a long time because it is simpler".

Being unable to raise initial investment was due to the fact that the immigrants are new in the host society and have a little prior credit record, which makes them an unstable risk for the financial institutions.

- **Build credit history**

A key challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs in access to finance from local banks was the lack of credit history; therefore, to circumvent this issue, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs suggest a simple solution to the new incoming immigrants they need to start building a credit history immediately on arrival in the host country:

As I-13F says:

"In the era of big data, if you don't do it, then you might need a lack data; it is actually a bad thing for you. I now know it, so I will pay attention to it. For example, when you want to buy a mobile phone, even you can pay in one payment, but it will be better to choose to pay in instalments because at least this is a credit history that you can accumulate".

I-13F also added

"I think that is because they look in a different direction. When you apply for a loan or credit card in China, you can directly prove eligibility with what kind of real estate and assets you have. But banks here have a different attitude. They think that if you can manage your own money, then there is no problem in applying for a credit card. They actually care very much about your credit history because they want to see whether you have a sense of responsibility to pay back when you use someone else's money. So, if I haven't had any credit cards before, then it becomes a negative issue from their perspective. There are some very different".

Irastorza and Peña-Legazkue (2018) note that immigrant entrepreneurs face difficulty in acquiring financial support from local banks due to a lack of personal assets and proven credit history.

- **Start small and scale up later**

Interviewees noted that it was hard to get loans in the initial stages of setting up their enterprise, but once the business was established, securing loans was easier. This indicates that it might be a good strategy to scale up the size of the business after gaining some experience and building a credit history for the organisation. I-19M says:

"Yes, let's say you were a small company, but then slowly you have become bigger, then the banks will provide different services to you because banks also need to make money".

And she also adds

"It has two aspects. If you are a fashion company, and if you are a little bit bigger, the bank will come to you and give you some of these loans. We did not have to go specifically to them for the loan".

While I-25F also stated that finding finance was easier when the company had a good track record in the host country:

"Fortunately, it was OK. It is mainly money. They check the company's credit history, reputation and strength of the company. The first thing you need to see is if you have enough deposit to buy the house, we didn't have any obstacles in this area. In addition, our credit standing at the bank at that time was good. Our business, annual turnover was also quite good. So, we took out loans at the bank. The account managers of the bank were quite supportive of us, so this area was also relatively smooth".

4.2.3.3 Solutions for organisational challenges

- **Prospective immigrant entrepreneurs should plan their move carefully**

I-01F says the first step for those planning to get into entrepreneurship is deciding if the business being planned is suited to the U.K. market:

"I think it depends. They have to consider what sector they would like to set up in the U.K. Does it suit to set up in the U.K.? I think there are lots of businesses that depend on location. So, you need to think about what sector you want to set up for business. Is it suitable in the U.K. or not?".

I-08F adds that it is easy to enter the U.K. market because the government provides incentives for foreigners to start a business in the U.K. But you must have a good business plan:

"I actually think that the entry threshold for entrepreneurship in the U.K. is lower than many people think, and like I said, in fact, many of British resources and its tax advantages are quite encouraging for foreigners to start a business in the U.K. In the U.K., if you can succeed, you can easily go to other parts of the world to do business. I would encourage anyone who has an idea to start a business to find someone to evaluate the possibility of starting in the U.K. There are even a lot of U.K.

entrepreneurial funds. The U.K. encourages young people to start businesses. So, I think most of the time, as long as your business foundation is good enough, your business plan is good enough. You have nothing to lose. You should create a new company".

I-05F says that entrepreneurship in the starting phases is difficult, especially in a culturally different country, and that the immigrant entrepreneur needs to display perseverance.

"The anticipated challenge may take a lot of time and effort, and then I may think it depends on what it is, but I think if you do business yourself, it may be 24 hours a day, 7 days' work... sometimes I had some difficulties, and then I insisted that I can persist, and have the ability to solve problems".

I-22F recommends setting goals and putting in some groundwork before arriving in the host country:

"You have to have a goal! For example, I would want to do wholesale to sell products. I must first find all the domestic channels and understand the processes clearly. Purchase channel, domestic purchase channel, I think I want to do something, then I should also do a survey here. Know about all aspects, try to know more about this country, and then you won't be in a hurry when you come here, especially for domestic purchases. If you can arrange your business activities before you come here, or having it would be easier for you".

I-14F gives good advice when she says:

"As far as being an entrepreneur is concerned, there are a lot of risks, and there must be enough preparation for coping with the risks, including the funds, the time period, and various difficulties. Like the integration into the culture, these and other issues should be thought of when you decide to come to Britain".

I-25F speaks from her own experience and says that the decision to become an entrepreneur in another country should not be taken lightly:

"I would suggest that they should think it over carefully because I came here rather arbitrarily, that is to say, it was decided very quickly. I felt very good because I didn't live abroad. It was a heaven-like feeling to live abroad. Because I didn't go abroad much at that time, so at that time, the partner said yes, then I came, after coming here,

actually, life overseas is really different from what you actually imagined. The experience is quite hard, so if someone like me still wants to go abroad to do some business, start a business, or live, I will suggest to them to do a little more research on their own and assess their situation as well as learn more about the country”.

However, I-06F philosophically states that planning is important, but as an immigrant and as an entrepreneur, you need to be prepared for unexpected risks and changes:

"I think business is like gambling, and it is a process of gambling, much like you are driving a boat, but you don't know where you are going in the next direction. Like I am now, I don't see the market next year. Like I set it up in April this year, in fact, I don't know how big my business market will be and how many customers will I receive this year? This is something you cannot expect. But you have to be a decision-maker and say whether you want to take the next step".

This point also finds relevance in recent literature as Saiyed and Ricard (2021) note that cognitive factors such as ambiguity tolerance and decision-maker's attitude towards internationalisation significantly impacted the internationalisation of immigrant entrepreneurship.

- **Assess the market and talk to the target market**

A key aspect of the business planning stage is to assess the target market. I-05F says:

"I think you first look at what to do and then find the right market. I think if you find the right one, then there is what you have to do bravely and try".

This is an important point, especially if the entrepreneur does not want to deal with a saturated market with increased competition which may lead to crowding out or price undercutting by competitors (Toussaint-Comeau, 2012). I-06F also reiterates this point and says market assessment needs to happen again while the business is scaling up:

"Now I have more customers, and then I want to test this market to get more background knowledge".

I-21M says that targeting the market successfully is only possible when you add value to what you are selling. It can be the unique selling point (USP) for an ethnic SME:

“Creating value is important for a new ethnic SME to stand out”.

I-06F notes that the entrepreneur should be able to gain the trust of the customer if they want the customers to return:

“It is about trust. The locals trust you or not. Also, do you know what they like, their popular trends, and the market's popular trends?”.

- **Gaining experience and forming your support framework of trustworthy people**

I-01F suggests gaining experience before starting a business is a good strategy for success:

“I would suggest that if they want to start a business here, don't rush to open a store from the beginning. Go to an internship for a period of time to learn the experience from others”.

Likewise, I-18M notes:

“My advice to young people is that if you have an entrepreneurial heart, then it's better to go to some company or some big company first, after two years of working for some local company in the U.K., then you can set up your own business”.

I-22F also adds to this point:

“It's good to have some work experience here, because, for example, in our company, we started with selling bags, because when I was studying, I worked in a handbag shop. At the beginning of my PSW visa, I had just started working as a manager in the bag shop here after I graduated from school, so I was quite familiar with the subject of bags. So, later when we opened our own shop, we also sold bags on the website. My husband used to do DIY work, so later, we also did business in the related field of entrepreneurship”.

- **Understand the market differences between home and host country**

I-15F says it is imperative to understand the market differences and then work with the needs of the host market. She elaborates:

“Yes, because you go to another different country to set up a business. Maybe the way you do business is fine in your hometown, but it doesn't mean that it will fit the host

country. We often take McDonald's as a good example. Such a big, multinational company still needed to change their menu when selling a similar product in different countries. They can't sell whatever they sell in the USA to all over the world. For example, they sell rich hamburgers in Asian countries, which is a good example of integrating and merging the Asian culture. Secondly, you must respect the host's culture and comply with their rules and any institutional regulations. Thirdly, try to be a company with integrity. Don't focus on short-term profits and just simply leave the country when some bad things happen. The U.K. is a very high-level country. If a Chinese immigrant entrepreneur does not do well, this will affect the whole Chinese society in the U.K. You have to know that you have great responsibility for being a Chinese immigrant entrepreneur in the U.K.”.

She also suggests:

"They might become your customers forever if you don't have any problems and maintain your quality as usual. They will only purchase from you. No pain, no gain. Just work hard, and you will have what you want to get".

Similarly, I-19M notes that suitable business in China may not be suitable in the U.K., and he added that entrepreneurs should plan according to their own advantages and available resources:

"Like opening a takeaway shop, opening a manicurist, beauty parlour or something else, maybe business will be better than in China, that is, on a small scale it is easier because as long as you work hard, you can make money. But it's hard when you're trying to scale it up in the U.K. But then, such small-scale businesses are too common in China; there is too much competition. Perhaps in the U.K., you can do better. But if you say it is, for example, high-tech, then you don't need to come to the U.K. to start a business. Because first of all, if the Chinese government thinks your technology is good, they will pay more, as it is richer than the British government, and once you get this technology working, the Chinese market is much bigger than the British market".

- **Utilise university entrepreneurship centre**

Finally, for those immigrants who first came as students and then converted their visas to student entrepreneur visas, there was substantial help available from their university entrepreneurship centres.

I-13F states:

"Yes, because I think they are actually very student-oriented, and some of their own teams actually have entrepreneurial experience, so they look at the project from a very practical perspective. Other university's entrepreneurship centres might not be able to provide such services because people who work there may be university teachers or university academics. They do not have experience in entrepreneurship, so it will cause problems in visa applications as well. Because they will ask some very standard questions, and you can't have a very flexible angle to view your project. In fact, starting a business is a difficult task, and you can't have a 100% guarantee that students will achieve what they plan within two years. I found that not every university can provide such services like mine".

This largely untapped resource could be used by immigrant entrepreneurs who first come into the host country as students who then decide to stay back and start their enterprises. There is even financial help available from universities and linked government programs as suggested by I-13F:

"On my side, and then I got support through some funds from the local government and university. In fact, we also have some financial support from other places".

However, not all universities offered such services, or the students were not aware of these support benefits. It could be argued that more successful immigrant entrepreneurs could be created if such assistance was provided to the students and other incoming immigrants.

The strategies offered by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs have been synthesised in a tabular form (See table 4.4). Most of these have been detailed above. This table provides a quick overview of the most significant strategies used by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to combat the cross-cultural challenges they faced.

Table 4.4 - Mixed strategies

MIXED STRATEGIES			
OUTCOME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Translators and software ○ Setting aside differences ○ Positive attitude ○ Knowing local language ○ Problem-solving attitude ○ Studying or living experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic enclaves and networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Join Local trade unions and labour unions ○ Use co-ethnic community for personal contacts ○ Establish personal networking ○ Reliance on co-ethnics for advice ○ Market niches can be found from co-ethnic niches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politico-institutional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hire professional intermediary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benefits of prior exposure to the host culture and other culture ○ Business integrity ○ Business prioritise over cultural differences ○ Uses interpersonal skills ○ Respect eases interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creative means ○ Exposure with host culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal investment ○ Credit from suppliers ○ Personal credit/ overdraft ○ Build credit history. ○ Scale up
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural acculturation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interaction with locals ○ Attempt to integrate ○ Learn from past mistakes ○ Observation ability ○ Motivation ○ Resilience and willingness to overcome ○ Seeking any government assistance ○ Training and support 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plan before moving to the U.K. ○ Assess market ○ Gaining experience ○ Understand the market differences ○ Utilise University entrepreneurship centre

4.3 Conclusion

The primary contribution of this research's findings was a comprehensive framework of challenges experienced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. and the subsequent generation of a framework of strategies that could help counter them. An extensive conception has not been available thus far; therefore, this study helped fill gaps in extent immigrant entrepreneurship studies. However, the most prominent finding of this study was the demonstrated lack of support from ethnic enclaves and associations. This finding is in direct contrast to current literature on the subject.

Most of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported that they received no help from their co-ethnic enclaves. These ethnic enclaves were found to be reduced to merely social meeting places. Ethnic enclaves historically had been attributed as economic power centres by extant literature, which stated that ethnic enclaves brought economic contacts in addition to employment opportunities for the immigrants and were also important for building social networks as per Hack-Polay (2019). On the contrary, the current exploratory study provides empirical evidence that the ethnic enclaves are losing their importance as most of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported that ethnic enclaves were of little benefit for them professionally.

They stated that the most ethnic enclaves were places where one could socially meet co-ethnic individuals and have a meal with them. However, the interviewees did not receive tangible economic or opportunity benefits from being embedded in the socio-cultural context of ethnic networks and associations. However, this crucial finding does not diminish the importance of the other co-ethnic individuals' role in their lives, as some interviewees reported socialising exclusively or largely within ethnic communities as they were unable to connect personally with local individuals due to language and cultural challenges.

It can be analysed that the findings of this study were suitable in answering the research objective on ethnic enclaves. Another important finding of this study that links to the previous finding is that a large number of the participants did not recommend joining any such associations and networks for the purpose of getting entrepreneurial or professional opportunities as they considered it to be a waste of resources such as time and money. Very few Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs mentioned that they got some help from co-ethnic

individuals whom they had informally met during these social interactions at the ethnic enclaves.

Newer areas of ethnic and geographical concentration, usually in the suburbs called ethnoburbs, have arisen instead (Kye, 2018), or they have given way to Chinatown Malls (Tu Huynh, 2018). But these are no longer power centres. This could be attributed to the rise in availability of information from other sources such as the internet, so the Chinese associations no longer serve the purpose of exclusively providing information and contacts for business. Moreover, it can be proposed that the quality of Chinese immigrants arriving in the past 2 decades has changed. As per the results, a substantial number of newer Chinese immigrants tend to first arrive for higher studies or work or for other reasons. These immigrant entrepreneurs are educated and capable of bringing in large investments from their home country due to the changing economic situation in China (Meunier, 2019).

As I-09M states

“Right. Power in the world is changing. This generation of ours is experiencing a power transfer between the West and the East”.

And I-18M reiterates

“The power of influence of my home country is getting very powerful”.

Such ethnoburbs are no longer business powerhouses that control ethnic markets and businesses as tightly as the earlier ethnic enclaves used to. Moreover, other research also claims that conventional enclaves have given in to the rise of multi-ethnic areas which see a congregation of multiple similar ethnic cultures, such as Vietnamese businesses in the Chinese ethnic enclave or 'Chinatown' (Chen, 2018).

In the absence of such support systems, the advice from the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs largely was to immerse themselves in the local culture as familiarity benefitted the acculturative process (Wang & Warn, 2018). However, it must be noted that acculturation was a two-way process that required cooperation from the host natives. A key finding of this research was that respect for the other culture and having an open mind for accepting differences was essential for both the locals and the immigrants otherwise, the relationships were fraught with friction and resulted in negative stereotyping. Kloosterman and Rath (2018) note that the social context

cannot be separated from the market structures and that while government regulations shape how the market environment is going to be, however, the opportunity structures of the immigrant entrepreneurs have embedded in the institutional level as well as the socio-cultural level.

As per the findings of this research, social embeddedness had to be achieved in other ways rather than depending on the local co-ethnic enclaves. Therefore, staying limited to co-ethnic people and enclaves was not recommended as per these findings, despite their benefits for immigrant entrepreneurs as documented earlier by literature (Prashantham et al., 2015). Increasingly in urban economies, a changing trend of immigrant entrepreneurs is being noted. These new immigrant entrepreneurs are motivated by pull factors and high-growth businesses and are opportunity entrepreneurs (Dheer, 2018) who gravitate towards higher-value businesses (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018). Such immigrant entrepreneurs are less likely to depend on their social embeddedness and local co-ethnic enclaves to generate opportunity structures for themselves. Their need for and dependence on the ethnic enclaves is also, therefore, lower, especially as these transnational immigrants have social embeddedness in two countries and are able to carve out opportunity structures by leveraging the advantages of both cultures.

Not holding native fluency in the host country's language creates challenges in interaction with locals, as earlier reported by (De La Garza & Ono, 2015), and this was found to be the most significant challenge for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. during the course of this study. The results show that a majority of the immigrant entrepreneurs faced several other challenges due to their limited language skills, which blocked them from getting jobs and other opportunities. This links back to the blocked mobility theory or disadvantage theory which states that the lack of communication and country-relevant career-related skills means that immigrant entrepreneurs have fewer opportunities in their host countries (Rueda-Armengot & Peris-Ortiz, 2012). English is widely accepted as the preferred language of business globally (Rao, 2019), and it is imperative for any incoming immigrants to learn the language of their host country to a high degree before arrival.

The results of this study indicate that lack of language skills is one of the key challenges that hold Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs back from accessing the larger mainstream market and from integrating into the host culture to a great degree. There are suitable language schools that

the incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs can access to learn language skills. The interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs suggested a wide variety of other methods such as T.V., movies, and books to increase their familiarity with the local language and culture. However, theoretical knowledge gained from language training has only limited usability in practical life. It was suggested that the Chinese immigrants immerse themselves in the host culture as soon as they arrive and make local friends and contacts. Acculturation and general adjustment were other key themes that arose from the discussions. While the Chinese immigrants mostly reported low levels of acculturation, especially for Chinese immigrants who arrived as adults, it was noticed that the more the Chinese immigrants acculturated into the host culture, the more likely they were to be able to access the larger mainstream markets and be happier in their personal lives in their chosen host country.

Other findings of this research noted a serious lack of training and preparedness in dealing with challenges. This lack of preparedness and availability of practical training and on-ground support could be an explanatory factor why immigrant entrepreneurs continue to experience challenges in the host country despite the fact that some of the individuals had spent several years in their host culture as outlined above. Also, other than very little language training, no other courses related to cross-cultural intelligence, competencies, cultural sensitisation or adjusting to the U.K. were mentioned by the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs.

This leads to the conjecture that such courses were neither easily available in the host country or home country, nor were they considered to be essential by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs while preparing to move to a diverse culture, despite the emphasis on the importance of training in academic literature (Nel & Abdullah, 2015). However, the immigrant entrepreneurs overwhelmingly report unfamiliarity with the host culture and language, and they also faced some challenges related to friction or discrimination (in section 4.2 above) that could have easily been averted with some training and support both pre and post-arrival (Van Driel & Gabrenya Jr, 2013).

A key reason for the lack of preparedness might be the lack of information about the local support systems because immigrant entrepreneurs mostly were unaware of what help could be accessed in the U.K., and they did not know whom to ask due to lack of local support structures. Moreover, their preparations for immigrating to a new country did not involve gearing up for working and living in a diverse culture. This could be analysed as to why the Chinese

immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed for this study were not suitably prepared. Some support from local support systems and access to language and cross-cultural training programs could save the immigrant entrepreneur both time and important resources in averting the challenges faced (Van Driel & Gabrenya Jr, 2013) and increase their socio-cultural embeddedness, which could open new opportunities structures for the newly arrived Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

The immigrant entrepreneurs experienced few institutional or organisational challenges, and most reported that regulatory information was easy to access in the U.K. However, the drawback was that there was a massive amount of information available on the government websites, and the formal administrative language was hard to understand for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who often had language challenges in the local language. Most of them also reported that they faced few challenges in setting up their business and that the policies were favourable for small and immigrant entrepreneurs, even though they had to fill out many details and documents. However, they did report that access to finance from local banking systems was extremely difficult for the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs due to their lack of credit history and communication skills.

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported a lack of preparedness for adjusting to the diverse culture and noted that other than the mandatory IELTS or other language tests, they had made little or no preparation for their move into the host country. A higher cultural distance between the home and host countries means there was an increased amount of time required for cross-cultural adjustment, as per Salgado and Bastida (2017). While all the stakeholders would benefit from smoothing the adjustment period for immigrants and shortening its length, there was little actual support available to help this process. The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed also noted that some training could be offered for cultural matters and the more practical matters of setting up the business and visa purposes. Such training could significantly reduce their challenges and speed up their adjustment to the host society.

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs felt that many of their initial issues could be solved by having a designated place where they could reach out for correct answers. They were even willing to pay for such planned services if such services were offered, which would give them support and training on arrival and could help to ease their initial difficulties in settling in the host country. Some cross-cultural and language training is available in the U.K., either offered

through private third parties or universities for their students; however, there is little access or information available to the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs. Currently, the onus of finding out, accessing and paying for such training lies solely with the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs, and it would be in their favour to plan for these ahead of their migration while they are still in the home country.

Despite the challenges they faced, most immigrants displayed resilience in overcoming challenges and respecting the other cultures that co-existed in the multicultural U.K. They often overlooked any small discriminatory actions and used their interpersonal skills to smooth over any negatives they could have faced due to their lack of communication skills or simply due to immigrants. A vast majority of the respondents noted that the U.K. has very good legal and economic policies for incoming immigrant entrepreneurs, that the environment was more comfortable here and that they would recommend the U.K. to other immigrants.

The researcher recommends that further research be carried out on the usefulness of formal ethnic enclaves and associations, as contrary to the extant literature, most the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs did not recommend that incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs join such associations or spend time building exclusive co-ethnic networks. However, it should be noted that some benefits were derived from informal co-ethnic networks and that, personally, the immigrants felt at ease the most among other co-ethnics. The role of informal co-ethnic networks can also be researched in future studies. However, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs should also understand the negatives and benefits of staying exclusively tied to the micro-sphere of ethnic markets (Beckers & Blumberg, 2013) and decide what suits their business model best.

Some of the recommendations made by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs for new incoming Chinese immigrants were to plan their move to the host country carefully and prepare for the challenges, accept their shortcomings and find creative workarounds for them, and gain experience in the host country before setting up businesses, assess the needs of the market and cater to the specific niches that best suited their own abilities and resources and finally to have respect and acceptance for the host and other dominant cultures in their host country.

The conceptual framework (see table 4.5) was drawn up based on the main findings of this research, and it shows the connections between the various elements of this thesis.

An embeddedness framework was drawn to visually explain the linkages between the key variables of the study Kloosterman and Rath (2018). The expected outcome of this study was to identify the challenges, learn which elemental orientations impact these challenges and finally discover some suitable solutions that can help to lessen the challenges according to the respondents of this study. This embeddedness framework was conceptualised (see table 4.5 - Conceptual framework) by drawing elements from existing theories such as the mixed embeddedness theory, ethnic enclave theory and the human and social capital theory.

As discussed earlier, the mixed embeddedness theory overlaps with some perspectives of ethnic enclave theory as the support from co-ethnic enclaves and networks can assist in countering the challenges the immigrant entrepreneurs face as per extant literature (Ojo & Shizha, 2018). However, as the support offered by co-ethnic enclaves is an integral part of this study in discovering the strategies, therefore this theory was additionally considered for this research. Furthermore, the literature notes that the immigrant entrepreneurs' cross-cultural competencies (which include communication and cross-cultural intelligence) are crucial factors that influence the strategies they employ to manage the challenges and issues they experience in the host society.

These competencies are part of the human and social capital theory, while these elements are included in the mixed embeddedness approach. However, as the mixed embeddedness theory is focused on the opportunity structures, while the aim of this study was to identify the challenges as well as the strategies to combat these challenges, therefore, an amalgamation of all these theories was used to draw up the contextual framework for this study.

Table 4.5 – Conceptual framework

MIXED EMBEDDEDNESS			
UNDERPIN THEORY	INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	SOCIO-CULTURAL LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural communication • Cross-cultural intelligence • Cross-cultural acculturation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic enclaves and networks • Socio-cultural
MIXED STRATEGIES			
OUTCOME	INDIVIDUAL LEVEL	SOCIO-CULTURAL LEVEL	INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Translators and software ○ Setting aside differences ○ Positive attitude ○ Knowing local language ○ Problem-solving attitude ○ Studying or living experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethnic enclaves and networks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Join Local trade unions and labour unions ○ Use co-ethnic community for personal contacts ○ Establish personal networking ○ Reliance on co-ethnics for advice ○ Market niches can be found from co-ethnic niches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politico-institutional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hire professional intermediary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Benefits of prior exposure to the host culture and other culture ○ Business integrity ○ Business prioritise over cultural differences ○ Uses interpersonal skills ○ Respect eases interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socio-cultural <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Creative means ○ Exposure with host culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Personal investment ○ Credit from suppliers ○ Personal credit/ overdraft ○ Build credit history. ○ Scale up
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-cultural acculturation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interaction with locals ○ Attempt to integrate ○ Learn from past mistakes ○ Observation ability ○ Motivation ○ Resilience and willingness to overcome ○ Seeking any government assistance ○ Training and support 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Plan before moving to the U.K. ○ Assess market ○ Gaining experience ○ Understand the market differences ○ Utilise University entrepreneurship centre

At its core, the framework outlines the individual, socio-cultural and institutional levels surrounding the immigrant entrepreneur and impact the opportunities they can access and the solutions they can reflect. These contexts are loosely based on Kloosterman's mixed embeddedness approach, which identifies three levels of embeddedness, micro, meso and macro levels. The first, micro-level (individual), is concerned with the immigrant individuals and the human capital resources that they have access to. The meso-level (socio-cultural) is the opportunity structure, which can be the resources and opportunities they have access to within their local area or city.

These opportunity structures are, in turn, dependent or embedded into the institutional and regulatory framework of the host country, which is called the macro-level (institutional) as per Kloosterman (2010). The conditions of the macro-level can enable certain markets to thrive but can also block the emergence or expansion of other markets based on the rules and regulations of the political and legal environment; therefore, Kloosterman and Rath (2018) note that it directly impacts the size and form of the opportunity structure that is available to the immigrant entrepreneurs. The embeddedness level of the immigrant entrepreneur in their host society also offers a significant support structure that can be used by the immigrant entrepreneurs to find solutions to the challenges that they are facing; therefore, it interacts positively with the strategies being used by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs as well (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

Chapter 5 Conclusion

5.0 Introduction

Extant literature notes that immigration and entrepreneurship are inextricably linked with bringing economic prosperity to the immigrant entrepreneur (Adendorff & Halkias, 2014) and their host countries (Sui et al., 2015). However, new immigrant entrepreneurs face many challenges in adapting to the host culture, especially when their home and host cultures have a considerable national cultural distance (Salgado & Bastida, 2017), as is the case with China and the U.K. Cultural distance is the difference or similarity in human values and communication norms which are entrenched in their cultural values and norms and shape the attitudes and behaviour of individuals in their personal and professional lives (Schmutzler et al., 2019). More significant dissimilarities between home and host culture denote a larger cultural distance and lead to the immigrant facing greater challenges. Per extant literature, having limited cross-cultural competencies to deal with the more considerable cultural distance makes adaptation to the host culture harder (Mathews et al., 2016). This research attempted to answer the question: *What challenges do Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs coming to the U.K. face, and how can they better resolve them?* As seen in chapter 4, this study could cover all of the objectives laid out at the beginning of the study and clearly answer the research question.

The primary theoretical contribution of this research was a comprehensive framework that addressed and uncovered the challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. This area of research had thus far only seen fragmented knowledge and advice, and this research was the first to bring these fragmented bits together in an embedded and structured manner. Another crucial theoretical contribution of this study was the finding that contested the accepted understanding in extant literature that ethnic enclaves can help resolve challenges and bring opportunities for immigrants.

Chapter 5 has presented the valuable theoretical contributions made to the body of immigrant entrepreneurship research in documenting the range of challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. The chapter also reiterated and summarised the findings of this research which were outlined previously in chapter 4. Finally, the limitations of this research were addressed in depth before embarking on making recommendations for future research to conclude the thesis.

5.1 Contributions to the immigrant entrepreneurship literature

Delineated within a Chinese-British context, this research provided a way to conceptualise the strategies and cross-cultural capabilities required by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to counter the common challenges faced by them and how these capabilities integrated with the mixed embeddedness theory, human capital theory and ethnic enclave theory to provide practical solutions and theoretical contributions to immigrant entrepreneur research which has a limited focus on this subject matter. This type of comprehensive framework was unavailable in the extant literature as the current literature is fragmented and not as significantly embedded.

Existing literature has plentiful studies which claim that co-ethnic communities and co-ethnic networks played an important role in offering support and bridging opportunity barriers (Zhang et al., 2016; Zolin et al., 2016). However, the results of this study clearly demonstrate that contemporary ethnic enclaves did not help bring social embeddedness or opportunity structures to the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

The present study is also theoretically significant because it challenges certain long-standing conceptions in the existing literature on ethnic enclaves and their contribution to immigrant entrepreneurship. The findings, additionally, empirically identified some managerial/individual implications for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. The contributions are discussed in detail below in order of their importance.

5.1.1 Insight into the common challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face in the U.K.

This study significantly contributes to the contemporary academic understanding of what challenges impact immigrant entrepreneurs and how they can effectively manage these challenges. The layers of challenges faced by the immigrant entrepreneurs were uncovered in this research to create a comprehensive framework that was not available in extant literature. These results have therefore filled gaps in theoretical knowledge with their findings.

The results of the study also had practical implications for immigrant entrepreneurs, which were collated into a strategic framework in a detailed manner. The results indicated that challenges related to communication most significantly impacted the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and were found to be the fundamental reason why Chinese immigrants faced

other challenges, such as those relating to rules and regulations and acquiring finances, as they were not able to operate normally in the host society without basic host language skills (Croucher & Kramer, 2017).

The study confirmed the findings of existing studies on the competencies that most impacted immigrant entrepreneurs and outlined that communication challenges were the leading barrier to acculturation (for example, De La Garza & Ono, 2015). The study also found that in addition to low language competency, the process of acculturation was affected negatively because of the immigrant entrepreneurs' low cross-cultural intelligence and these both were critical barriers in their acculturative process because these capabilities were crucial for their interaction with the host natives (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). The study amalgamated concepts from the mixed embeddedness framework with those of co-ethnic enclave theory and the human and social capital theory to create a new conceptual framework.

Moreover, this study was able to design a hybrid, interwoven concept of the mixed embeddedness framework merged with the co-ethnic enclave theory and the human and social capital theory. The convergence of these theories with the concepts of cross-cultural competencies and acculturation acted as a grounding used to build a conceptual framework of strategies to address the challenges uncovered. No comprehensive study covered this topic in detail earlier, and especially the perspective of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K had been ignored thus far in extant literature. The earlier findings were not as comprehensive or embedded as the findings from this study and, therefore, can be considered to be theoretically significant as it fills existing gaps in the literature. These findings add to the extant literature on the importance of communication in the cross-cultural and immigrant entrepreneurship literature.

Moreover, recent studies have indicated that the preparation should begin pre-arrival, but it is also an ongoing process as immigrant entrepreneurs learn more about the local culture (Ferraro, 2021). However, despite the demonstrated importance of cross-cultural intelligence and local language knowledge in academic literature, the findings of this study decisively noted that a significant number of interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs arrived with low language skills and had no access or information about cross-cultural and language training available. Moreover, the findings of this study noted that communication challenges were intensified when they were combined with the lack of knowledge of local culture and customs. This

finding contributed a definitive link between the lack of cultural awareness and low language skills, which impaired relationship building with the locals deepening the cultural and communication divide between locals and immigrants.

Furthermore, the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who severely lacked local language skills were forced to make additional expenditures and depend on professional intermediaries to alleviate these challenges. These professional intermediaries can use their existing local knowledge and networks to guide the newly arrived immigrant entrepreneurs. Professional intermediaries form communication and cultural bridges between locals and immigrants by filling the gaps in communication. Some examples of professional intermediaries include brokers, lawyers, accountants, and other skilled professional advisors. This point has seen some academic literature (Chan, 2015); however, there is a dearth of the substantial literature on the subject, and this research contributes to such literature.

The research made some significant contributions that add to the body of research by delving into the specific area of typical challenges Chinese immigrants face in the U.K. While the Chinese-British context might be specific, some of the challenges identified can also be juxtaposed to the context of all immigrants in the U.K. as well as Chinese immigrants in all Western countries. A collated documentation of such challenges, which this thesis provides, will form a solid basis for future researchers who can use this knowledge to further the research in this arena.

5.1.2 Role of ethnic enclaves in supporting immigrant entrepreneurship

While the current literature notes that ethnic enclaves play an essential role for immigrant entrepreneurs and are powerful business centres, this research decisively found little evidence of assistance from ethnic enclaves for the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Most of the respondents of this research indicated that they received no help from ethnic enclaves for their businesses, and there was very little personal assistance. The holistic investigation conducted by this exploratory study advanced the knowledge of existing academic research on ethnic enclaves by challenging the currently accepted theoretical knowledge and identifying that the role of ethnic enclaves is undergoing a significant change. Immigrant entrepreneurs no longer find ethnic enclaves useful in bringing opportunity structures to them (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

This finding suggests that a reconfiguration of the widely recognised academic ideals of the ethnic enclave structure and their importance is imminent and adds significantly to the currently available literature on ethnic enclaves (for example, Prashantham et al., 2015; Wang, 2015) by challenging the current assumption that ethnic enclaves can be support structures for immigrant entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial journey. A comprehensive analysis of the changing role of ethnic enclaves for immigrant entrepreneurs has not seen much academic attention before; therefore, this study identified a crucial theoretical gap in the extant literature on ethnic enclaves. The results also helped form a solid basis for further research on this subject by conclusively documenting that ethnic enclaves have stopped being power strongholds supporting and conversely trapped ethnic entrepreneurs.

As per the findings, there was little formal assistance from ethnic enclaves and networks at an organised central level in solving their cross-cultural problems, financial matters, personal challenges or bringing in business opportunities. This finding, when juxtaposed with recent studies on transnational linkages of new-age ethnic entrepreneurs who have the ease of global connectivity and business connections (Bagwell, 2017; Brzozowski, 2015; Pruthi & Wright, 2017), gives rise to the question of the social embeddedness of the immigrant entrepreneur is still limited to their immediate geographical vicinity and if the transnational linkages can form part of the individual's social embeddedness.

Furthermore, this study posits that current immigrant entrepreneurs come with a higher level of human capital and bring social and financial capital from their home countries; therefore, their needs differ from those of the earlier immigrant entrepreneurs. The latter was pushed into entrepreneurship due to blocked mobility, resulting in fewer opportunities. Therefore, the dependence of immigrant entrepreneurs on ethnic enclaves is further reduced. This knowledge can be used as a basis for further academic research to understand the changing dynamics that drive immigrant entrepreneurs towards entrepreneurship and the direction ethnic enclaves need to take in the future if they do not intend to die out.

While there is some earlier research that corroborates the theory that ethnic enclaves are physically and commercially changing (for example, Chen, 2018; Terzano, 2014), the findings of this research seem to indicate that there is a much more detailed need for research in this subject area as those findings are fragmented in literature and have focused more on the spatial

reconfiguration of ethnic enclaves rather than the importance of them as economic powerhouses. The findings of this research align to a limited degree with Kye (2018), who noted that traditional ethnic enclaves are dissolving and, in their place, ethnic neighbourhoods in the suburbs called ethno-burbs are the new emerging trend.

However, only scant research on the changing role of ethnic enclaves is available, claiming that economic and ethnic reconfiguration of the ethnic enclaves is inevitable and such change will form the 'new mode of existence' (GAO-MILES, 2017) as ethnic enclaves are not spatially limited any longer. The findings of this research are both structured and comprehensive, unlike the partial and disjointed information that was thus far available in extant literature. Therefore, the primary significant theoretical contribution of the findings of this research is to challenge the pertinence of earlier research knowledge on the importance of ethnic enclaves in contemporary times and opens up avenues for further research.

5.1.3 Insight into the cross-cultural capabilities that aid immigrant entrepreneurs in their acculturative process

Cross-cultural capabilities have no single broadly accepted definition; therefore, few recent, systematically researched immigrant entrepreneurship studies identify the skills necessary for immigrant entrepreneurs to succeed in their host environments. Consequently, based on the findings of this research, a deeper understanding of the required cross-cultural capabilities construct, especially in the context of Chinese-British immigrant entrepreneurship, has been outlined. The present study identified that the personal characteristics such as resilience, flexibility, use of innovative solutions, respect for other cultures and a strong will to set aside personal differences for the sake of business are important factors for alleviating the challenges that were faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in their acculturative journey within the U.K.

Acculturation is the eventual outcome of immigration and is an ongoing and reciprocal process that begins when individuals or groups from diverse cultures interact. While 1st generation immigrants find it harder to acculturate as per extant literature and as per the findings of this research, acculturating to a certain degree also eases the stress experienced by immigrants who are far removed from their own familiar culture. This research reiterates the importance of acculturating for immigrant entrepreneurs because it was found that immigrants who

disassociated from the local culture also had the maximum stress in their personal and professional lives.

The research findings add to the current acculturation literature by identifying that respecting other cultures, showing interest in learning about the local culture and using observation as a tool to learn were essential for easing acculturation. These factors had not seen much academic research earlier, and the current study helped fill this gap in the current immigrant entrepreneurship literature. This research adds to the body of extant literature that outlines the requirement for language skills, social acculturation, continual cultural learning, and cultural flexibility are specially identified as crucial cross-cultural capabilities for both the personal and entrepreneurial outcomes (Croucher & Kramer, 2017). Identifying the required competencies contributes meaningfully to the immigrant entrepreneurship research area.

5.2 Discussion of key findings

The findings of this study are briefly recapped in this section, along with a discussion of how the findings link to the current literature on the subject of immigrant entrepreneurship.

5.2.1 Co-ethnic networks and enclaves

A plethora of extant literature indicates that co-ethnic networks and enclaves have traditionally played a crucial role in the social adjustment of new migrants (for example, Partanen et al., 2014; Sullivan & Ford, 2014). Co-ethnic enclaves like Chinatown were considered business neighbourhoods for specific ethnicities (Terzano, 2014). The role of these enclaves was to offer a strong business network that could benefit co-ethnic immigrant entrepreneurs. They also served as social and cultural meeting places for co-ethnics (Partanen et al., 2014; Sullivan & Ford, 2014).

However, the most significant finding of this study is empirical evidence which purports that ethnic enclaves now play a significantly reduced role for the immigrant entrepreneurs. Most interviewees did not find the ethnic enclaves and associations to be much beyond social meeting places. While traditionally, ethnic enclaves had provided vital networking opportunities that could be leveraged into business opportunities and market access (for example, Partanen et al., 2014; Prashantham et al., 2015; Sullivan & Ford, 2014), the findings of this research challenge the accepted knowledge in extant literature to postulate that ethnic

enclaves are no longer of any significance in bringing in business opportunities via co-ethnic networking.

Moreover, despite the interviewees noting that ethnic enclaves were no longer helpful in bringing business opportunities and were weak resources to invest time and money into, a wide variety of them continued to partially or exclusively cater to the ethnic markets in the U.K. even without the support of ethnic enclaves. According to the findings of this study, the immigrant entrepreneurs need to find and rely on other local resources, such as local trade and labour unions, for social embeddedness because, as per the mixed embeddedness theory, the social embeddedness of the immigrant entrepreneur meaningfully impacts the opportunity structures available to the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

5.2.2 Challenges faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K.

Another significant finding of this exploratory research delineated a startling lack of preparedness of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs before arrival in the U.K. This absence of preparedness included a lack of any cross-cultural awareness about the host culture before arriving and, in many cases, involved a severe deficiency of basic local language skills. Ferraro (2021) posits that operating effectively in a different culture requires mastering the local culture with purposeful preparedness before arrival and sustained learning after coming into the host culture. Other researchers have variously outlined the need for local language skills (Chelariu & Osmonbekov, 2014), human capital such as training and experience, and basic cultural awareness (Fang et al., 2018).

Moreover, low language skills and host culture knowledge leads to challenges in gaining opportunities and resources such as finances (Moon et al., 2014). These challenges (for example, low language skills and lack of training) formed the 'push' factors which induce entrepreneurship among new immigrants because they were blocked from accessing other opportunities (Rueda-Armengot & Peris-Ortiz, 2012) as per the blocked mobility theory.

The institutional challenges that the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs regularly faced in the U.K. included significant differences between the rules and regulations of the home country and the complexity of local regulations. The need for additional expenditure on hiring professional intermediaries to navigate the local regulatory system was also apparent here.

While benefits of using professional intermediaries have been outlined above, however literature also notes that these professional intermediaries can often gain disproportionate amounts of influence within their co-ethnic networks, as per Halkias (2017) and Zhang et al.(2021).

Furthermore, institutional challenges alone did not impact the entrepreneurs who were sometimes solely responsible for managing their enterprise. Some of the organisational challenges experienced by the interviewees indicated that immigrants faced difficulties in expanding into the local market and getting finances and loans because of their lack of local credit history. Moreover, there was a difference in attitudes between locals and work culture, which impacted the work.

However, this research significantly found that while there were differences in the work environment and culture, primarily the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, as well as the host country nationals, were willing to set aside these differences, as having respect for other cultures was considered to be significantly important for the sake of conducting business (Wilson et al., 2017). Omorede et al. (2015) note in their study that immigrant entrepreneurs who display positive attitudes and respect towards the differences in other cultures were found to be more invested in their own learning process, and this combination formed a positive correlation with ease of acculturation.

Extant literature on cultural training, language skills and preparedness stresses its importance in helping an immigrant fit better in the social and business culture of their host country (for example,Salgado & Bastida, 2017; Wang et al., 2017), while Okpara and Kabongo (2017) note that the level of cross-cultural adjustment which an immigrant can achieve in the host society can be predicted by the level of training that they have received. In their study, Nel and Abdullah (2015) similarly noted that lack of training was one of the key challenges for immigrant entrepreneurs. Their findings directly correlate with the empirical study undertaken for this thesis.

Some Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs reported a lack of opportunities because, compared to local entrepreneurs, they lacked emotional and social support structures which had been available to them in their home culture. The mixed embeddedness theory entails that the host country's institutional environment, including external factors such as national policies

(immigration or state policies), influences opportunity structures available to immigrant entrepreneurs. Opportunity structures are also impacted by their human capital (competencies, cultural intelligence and communication) and the immigrant entrepreneur's social embeddedness in the wider socio-cultural context (Kloosterman & Rath, 2018).

5.2.3 Acculturative challenges

The study results on acculturative challenges indicated that many of the interviewed Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs found it difficult to intermingle with the locals, which affected their acculturative process. Acculturation is an ongoing reciprocal process involving learning new cultural behaviours and traits from the host country and blending it with retained home culture behaviour and traits. It can also be linked to the cultural fusion theory (Berry, 2015; Croucher & Kramer, 2017). However, pushback from either the host society or the incoming immigrants can disrupt the acculturative process, causing friction between the two cultural groups existing in the same physical space. How long this adjustment period lasts depends on the motivation level and ability of the individual to deal with psychological factors, as noted by Kuo (2014) and also the acceptance level of the host country individuals (Shi & Wang, 2014).

Moreover, the findings of this study indicated that Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who found it hard to integrate into the local culture attributed it to the lack of available time. Earlier researchers have noted that engagement and training can be used to enhance cultural intelligence and language competency (Fang et al., 2018) and that this familiarity with the culture and language reduces adjustment time, therefore easing acculturation into the host country (Wang & Warn, 2018) however it requires a significant time and effort investment. Furthermore, individuals who displayed earnestness in accepting the differences of their host culture found it easier to adapt to their host society.

These Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs were more likely to have had some prior exposure to other cultures either before arriving in the U.K. or during their studies when they first arrived in the U.K. This finding can be linked to the documented literature that notes that cross-cultural adaptation and time share a complex relationship (Shi & Wang, 2014), and a greater level of interaction with the local population over a sustained period of time increased the acculturation of the individual (Davies et al., 2015). Moreover, studies have indicated that media, like TV

and newspapers, is often used by newly arriving immigrants to increase their familiarity with the local culture (Croucher & Rahmani, 2015).

Moreover, the few respondents who found it easier to adjust had arrived in the U.K. at a younger age and had had some time to adjust. This finding also links to the extant literature, which documents that newly arrived immigrants (also called 1st generation immigrants) find it harder to acculturate as compared to immigrants who arrive when they are very young (1.5 generation immigrants) or children of 1st generation immigrants who are born and grow up in their host culture (2nd generation immigrants). This finding aligns with prior literature that researched the differences between the experiences of 1st and 2nd-generation immigrants (for example, Beckers & Blumberg, 2013).

5.2.4 Solutions and strategies

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs employed a wide range of simple and creative solutions to combat the challenges they faced, such as using electronic devices or translation software to understand the meaning of the conversation to combat language issues. Moreover, they reported using the services of English-speaking friends or family to translate and communicate, or they hired professional intermediaries for more complex requirements such as understanding contracts or legal documents.

Across the board, the immigrant entrepreneurs displayed resilience and used innovation in finding solutions rather than remaining mired in challenges. Innovation is an essential competency for entrepreneurship, according to Thourunroje and Racela (2013), along with taking risks and being proactive. The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs often overlooked any small discriminatory actions and used their interpersonal skills to smooth over any negatives that they could have faced due to their lack of communication skills or because they were immigrants.

The findings indicated that having a problem-solving attitude was critical, while it was important to gain advice from mentors. This finding matches literature, for example, de Vries (2012). Moreover, solutions offered by the interviewees noted the importance of adaptability, respect, resilience, solid work ethic, and a positive attitude. Wilson et al. (2017) note that being respectful and inclusive is important for both home and host culture natives because, in the end

conducting the business matters more than the differences between cultures and differences in the way of operating business.

5.3 Limitations and Future research

Most academic research has some limitations, and this research is no different; it has limitations that can potentially be addressed in future research. The main limitations of this research are discussed below in conjunction with the direction in which future research could be conducted.

5.3.1 The limitation of self-perception

This research employed a flexible exploratory research methodology because, as Bougie and Sekaran (2019) note, social sciences research with little prior theoretical research available benefits from exploratory qualitative research, which assesses 'what', 'why' and 'how' questions rather than 'how many' questions as this brings in the broader range of opinions and perspectives on a subject which has limited prior information. However, individual opinions can suffer from the limitation of self-perception or the knowledge/understanding of the individual. Therefore, a key limitation of this research is that the essence of the research findings is largely based on the respondents' self-perceptions and their self-evaluation of the seriousness of the challenges and the importance of the capabilities required to combat them.

However, there is a large room for inaccuracies in self-perception, and there is little way of control to ensure that equal weightage is given to the challenges reported by the interviewees. Self-perception can vary from person to person and has the fallacy of being under-evaluated or over-evaluated. However, this bias is inherent in all qualitative exploratory research and is not limited to this particular study. Although the researcher took some care to help alleviate the bias potential by triangulating the opinions of individual perceptions with those of others in the study to find commonalities (Reiter, 2017), the challenge of this limitation exists for such studies. Future research can employ multiple methodologies for data triangulation and reduce the error of such limitations (Willig & Rogers, 2017).

5.3.2 The specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. reduces the sample size

A limitation of this thesis is that the scope of this exploratory study focused on the specific context of 1st generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Moreover, as the primary

research was conducted in Mandarin, it further reduced the sample size because the available sample pool in the U.K. of Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs was limited. While this study provided a deeper understanding of the cross-cultural constructs of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. however, the findings may have limited generalizability in other contexts. Likewise, the study could not cross-verify if the challenges faced by Cantonese-speaking Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. were the same as those of Mandarin speakers.

Moreover, it can also be argued that Chinese immigrants in other countries or immigrants of other ethnicities in the U.K. may face different challenges and utilise different solutions to combat their specific challenges. For example, one of the most important challenges for Chinese immigrants was a lack of local language skills, which may not be a significant challenge for immigrant entrepreneurs from other countries. For example, a majority of Cantonese-speaking Chinese immigrants come from Hong Kong, which has a British colonial past and their English language skills are likely to be more advanced.

As such, any future research could focus on ensuring that this study is replicated in a larger context considering other or multi-cultures. The sample size for this research was limited to the Chinese-British context, and this could be changed for future research to represent either other host countries or immigrants from other home countries. Thus, the generalizability of such a study would be wider than that of the results of this limited study.

5.3.3 Other considerations

This research investigated 1st generation Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. however, their age at arrival in the U.K., their original purpose of arrival and motivation for engaging in entrepreneurship in the host country were not taken into consideration due to the lack of availability of a large sample size that spoke Mandarin, the language in which the original interviews were taken. However, prior research indicates that these considerations, time period of arrival, and length of stay can significantly impact the acculturative process and the challenges encountered by the immigrants (for example, Ndika's, 2013).

Likewise, some results of this study indicate that immigrants who arrived at a relatively younger age had an easier time acculturating and had fewer challenges in adapting to the local

business culture. Thus, it can be analysed that the cross-cultural challenges faced and the capabilities to counter such challenges could vary over time. Therefore, a longitudinal study would better capture the challenges of cross-cultural transition over time and how the challenges faced are different for entrepreneurs in the different stages of their immigration journey (Sirin et al., 2013).

Furthermore, this study could not make differentiations based on the reason for the arrival of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs or their reason for becoming entrepreneurs. While some immigrants arrived in the U.K. for other reasons (such as studies) and then became entrepreneurs because they faced blocked mobility, others arrived in the U.K. for entrepreneurship. Motivations and resource availability of both these kinds of entrepreneurs can drastically differ, thereby altering the challenges faced and solutions engaged. Future research can potentially pre-select and place controls that ensure that the interviewees have similar circumstances to increase the validity and reliability of the results.

Resource limitations of this study further reduced the scope to small sample size. While the results of this exploratory study may be considered indicative, a much larger study is required for conclusive proof that would make a more significant contribution to the literature.

5.4 Recommendations

This research is academically interesting because the findings of this empirical exploratory research have opened a significant area of exploration for the future on the subject of ethnic enclaves. Additionally, some recommendations that arise from the findings can provide practical advice to incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. Employing the recommendations distilled from the findings of this research could enable immigrant entrepreneurs and their families to make better choices in the future, easing their cross-cultural challenges and bringing tremendous success in their acculturative and entrepreneurial journeys. The recommendations based on this study are discussed in detail below:

5.4.1 Recommendation for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs

Based on the research finding that overall preparedness and local language skills of the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs are often low and that this causes challenges for them in understanding and adjusting to the host culture. The second finding, which is very limited and

often has no support from ethnic enclaves in the host country, forms a crucial recommendation for the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs to build their personal competencies, intelligence and local language skills before arrival. Developing language skills before arrival helps them build additional personal competencies such as adaptability, tolerance, an adventurous spirit, patience, focus on career, equality and respect for cultural diversity, which, when combined with the inherent home country cultural traits such as strong work ethic, flexibility and resilience can bring the entrepreneurs high levels of success in their host country (Malerba & Ferreira, 2020).

The findings indicated that not having cross-cultural competencies caused the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs to feel hesitant in interacting with the locals. Building cultural awareness and learning about the local culture develop respect for other cultures, increases inter-cultural interactions, and reduces stereotyping and discrimination (Wilson et al., 2017). Therefore, the incoming immigrant entrepreneurs are recommended to develop host culture awareness before arriving and keep learning ongoing after they migrate. As the U.K. is a multicultural society, Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and their families are recommended to have an open and welcoming attitude towards people of all cultures.

Because the immigrant entrepreneurs are often accompanied by their families and the general adjustment of the individual is concerned with the day-to-day living of the immigrant entrepreneur as well as their family (Adendorff & Halkias, 2014); therefore, the recommendations that pertain to developing personal competencies can be extrapolated to the families as well. The accompanying or trailing family should therefore be included in the decision-making process for migration, and they should also access language classes and cultural sensitisation training. Interviewees also creatively suggested that newly incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs use media, the internet and social media to become familiar with language and culture to ease acculturation (Croucher & Rahmani, 2015).

Immigrants are recommended to learn to work within the parameters of the work ethics of the host country and employ clear communication practices to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. Supplementary findings of this study suggest that co-ethnic individuals are willing to help newly incoming migrants informally; thus, such help can also be requested from settled co-ethnics in the host country to understand the local culture and customs.

5.4.2 Recommendations for future research.

While there are potentially unlimited avenues that future research on immigrant entrepreneurship can take, a few suggestions have been made below that can use the results of this empirical research as a launch pad to further the knowledge on this subject area.

The findings of this research are thought-provoking because they have opened some significant areas of exploration for future studies in immigrant entrepreneurship, especially in ethnic enclave studies. The chief finding of this exploratory study disagrees with the accepted knowledge about the ethnic enclaves in the extant literature on their role in networking and bringing opportunity structures for immigrant entrepreneurs; therefore, future studies are recommended to study the changing role of ethnic enclaves and co-ethnic networks.

Due to the scope of this study that only included Mandarin-speaking Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs, it could be questioned whether this finding is specific to the Chinese Mandarin-speaking community in the U.K. or if this is representative of other communities in the broader immigration entrepreneurship literature as well. The next recommendation is to carry out a comparative study with a broader sample base which could include Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who speak Mandarin and also include those who speak Cantonese, to find out if the perspectives between these two Chinese communities are different.

Alternatively, a more extensive future research can consider the context of multiple cultures to have more generalisable results for immigrants in the U.K. rather than being limited to the specific context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. A study could also take the context of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs alone but in a wider geographical area rather than be limited to the context of the U.K. This would enable the future study to offer more conclusive proof rather than be indicative like the results of this study.

While there has been prior research on the required competencies of immigrant entrepreneurs, however, more significantly, this research identified the significant lack of preparedness of the incoming Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs despite there being ample academic evidence that language and cross-cultural competencies are essential (for example, MacIntyre, 2017; Wang & Warn, 2018). Moreover, this research raises questions about the unavailability of support and training for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs. It could become a crucial finding if future

research on this area is able to get a wider perspective on the requirement and availability of training for Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. Literature positively links general adjustment, work adjustment and psychological adjustment of immigrants with training (Okpara & Kabongo, 2017) therefore this could be a significant area of further study.

Further, this exploratory, empirical research provided only a cross-sectional view of the topic, while longitudinal research would be able to provide additional perspectives on the challenges of the immigrant entrepreneurs, which could significantly differ from when they newly arrive to when they are well entrenched in the host society but face limitations of market etc.; therefore, future studies could take into consideration important factors such as the age of the immigrant at arrival, the purpose of arrival in the host country and/or current length of stay in the host country to assess if results could differ if these considerations are factored in.

A final interesting avenue for research could be developed around the motivations for entrepreneurship of the individuals. It was noted during this study that the resources available to immigrants coming to the U.K. for the sake of entrepreneurship (opportunity-based entrepreneurship) versus those available to immigrants that engaged in entrepreneurship due to blocked mobility (need-based entrepreneurship) were significantly different. Future studies could take into consideration the motivations for entrepreneurship to understand if the challenges faced by these different kinds of immigrant entrepreneurs were dissimilar.

5.5 Conclusion

This thesis identified that the ethnic enclaves no longer hold the importance they once did in the opportunity structures of the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs (Semuels, 2019; Thien, 2017). Moreover, significant challenges faced by the Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs regarding language skills and cultural awareness were identified. Some creative solutions that the interviewees employed to solve the challenges were outlined. The implications of this research are clear; Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs can employ proven personality attributes to reduce their challenges in the host society, especially as they can no longer depend on the ethnic enclaves for assistance in providing opportunity structures.

The results of this empirical study showed significant and conspicuous gaps in cross-cultural preparedness of the incoming immigrants and little or no practical support in the host country.

Facing significant challenges on arrival that encompass the professional and personal lives of the immigrants can cause sizable trauma to the immigrants and the families of these Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs (Wang & Warn, 2018). The immigration process must be carefully planned once the individual makes the decision to migrate to a diverse culture, and it should be efficiently managed to yield optimal results. The Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and their trailing families were recommended to be well prepared for the move to be able to adjust easily to the U.K.

It should be noted that the practical solutions identified during this research were offered by the interviewed individual Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs who had faced these challenges and learned from their own experiences to employ these solutions in order to alleviate their challenges. Rather than accepting them as the absolute truth, these strategies should be considered indicative of strategies that suit individuals. The role of ethnic enclaves was assessed, and it was found that the ethnic enclaves have lost their important role as economic centres for ethnic markets in the host country. Therefore, the findings of this research have made a succession of theoretical contributions that can form the basis to jumpstart future research on the subject of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Appendix 1. Ethics approval confirmation letter



Research, Innovation and Academic Engagement Ethical Approval Panel

Research Centres Support Team
G0.3 Joule House
University of Salford
M5 4WT

T +44(0)161 295 7012

www.salford.ac.uk/

5 September 2022

Dear Mei,

RE: ETHICS APPLICATION SBSR1718-11

Based on the information that you provided, I am pleased to inform you that your application SBSR1718-11 has been approved.

If there are any changes to the project or its methodology, please inform the Panel as soon as possible by contacting SBS-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David Percy'.

Professor David F. Percy

Chair of the Staff and Postgraduate Research Ethics Panel

Salford Business School

Appendix 2. Participant invitation letter

Participant invitation letter

Project title	Managing cross-cultural differences: identifying and resolving critical issues faced by Chinese entrepreneurs in the U.K.
Researchers	Name: Mei-Feng, WU Email: m.f.wu@edu.salford.ac.uk Contact number: 07538533199
RGEC Ref No	SBSR1718-11

Dear <Title>,

This is a letter of invitation to enquire if you would like to take part in a PhD research project titled ‘Managing cross-cultural differences: identifying and resolving critical issues faced by Chinese entrepreneurs in the U.K.’ by the means of a face to face interview which would take approximately 40-60 minutes to complete.

Before you decide if you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why the project is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to carefully read the participant information sheet on the following pages and discuss it with others if you wish. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information.

If you would like to take part please complete and return the Informed Consent Declaration form duly signed.

Yours faithfully,

Mei-Feng, WU

亲爱的 <Title>,

这是一封研究邀请函，询问您是否愿意参加一个名为“跨文化差异管理：识别和解决华人企业家在英国面临的问题”的博士研究项目，这个访谈需要大约 **40-60** 分钟才能完成。

在您决定是否愿意参与之前，了解本研究研究的原因以及涉及的内容非常重要。请花时间仔细阅读以下附件上的参与者信息表，如果您愿意，可以与他人讨论。如果有任何不清楚的地方，或者您想了解更多信息，请随时与我联系。

如果您愿意参加，请填写并寄回访谈同意书给我。

非常感谢, 博士生 吴美凤

Appendix 3. Participant information sheet

Participant information sheet

Project title 項目名稱	Managing cross-cultural differences: identifying and resolving critical issues faced by Chinese entrepreneurs in the U.K. 跨文化差异管理：识别和解决华人企业家在英国面临的问题
Researchers 研究員	Name: Mei-Feng, WU (吴美凤) Email: m.f.wu@edu.salford.ac.uk Tel: 07538 533 199

What is the purpose of this project? 此研究的目的

This project aims to answer these four objectives:

1. To identify the challenges Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs face when setting up and operating a business in the U.K.
2. To assess if the issues faced by Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs in the U.K. impact their ability to acculturate.
3. To identify how Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs currently operating in the U.K. manage these issues and how they use their cross-cultural management skills to overcome the challenges.
4. To identify if co-ethnic networks and co-ethnic enclaves can prove to be crucial resources for recent Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and how these associations can help in overcoming the challenges.

该项目旨在回答以下四个目标：

1. 识别华人移民企业家在英国建立和经营企业时面临的挑战。
2. 评估华人移民企业家在英国面临的问题是否会影响他们的适应能力。
3. 识别目前在英国运营的华人移民企业家如何管理这些问题以及他们如何利用跨文化管理技能来克服挑战。
4. 识别共同种族网是否可以证明是最近华人移民企业家的重要资源，以及这些共同种族网如何帮助华人移民企业家克服问题。

Why have I been invited? 為什麼我被邀請了？

You have been selected to be a participant in this research because you are a Chinese entrepreneur who have experience of setting a business in the U.K.

您被选中参与此项研究，是因为您是一位有在英国创业经验的华人

Do I have to take part? 我必須參與嗎？

Decision to participate in the study is wholly up to you. You can freely decide whether or not you would like to take part. If you decide to participate you will be asked to complete an interview. I will describe the study to you and go through the information

sheet, which I will give to you. Moreover, you will be requested to sign a consent form indicating your agreement to take part.

参与研究的决定权完全取决于您。您可以自由决定是否愿意参加。如果您决定参加，您需要参与一个访谈。我将向您介绍该研究目的，并审阅这份有关研究内容的文件。此外，您将被要求签署一份表明您同意参加的同意书。

What will happen to me if I take part? 如果我參與研究，會發生什麼？

You will be required to complete an interview in a place of your choice that will last approximately 60-80 minutes. You will be given a reminder regarding your consent and other procedures prior to the interview. If you are not willing to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason. To continue to safeguard your anonymity, your name will not be mentioned at any point in the research report.

您需要参与一个访谈且由你决定访谈地点，访谈时间将会再 60-80 分钟。在面试之前，您将收到有关您的同意和其他程序的提醒。如果您不愿意参加，您可以随时退出，无需给出理由。为了继续保护您的匿名性，研究报告的都完全不会提及您的姓名。

Expenses and payments? 費用和付款？

N/A
无

What will I have to do? 我該做甚麼？

If you are willing to take part, please sign the consent form. The researcher will contact you to arrange the time and place for the interview as per your convenience. 如果您愿意参与此研究，请在同意书上签字。研究人员将根据您的方便与您联系，安排访谈的时间和地点。

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

參與的可能缺點和風險是什麼？

Time consuming - as the interview is expected to last for over 40-60 minutes.
耗时- 因为访谈预期会在 40-60 分钟。

What are the possible benefits of taking part? 參與此研究會有什麼好處？

I cannot promise that the study will help you directly but the information we get from the study will help to increase the understanding of the kind of cross-cultural issues Chinese entrepreneurs face in the U.K., how they overcame these issues and how new Chinese entrepreneurs can avoid and be prepared to face these issues.

我们不能保证这项研究会直接帮助你，但我们从研究中获得的信息将有助于增加对华人企业家在英国面临的跨文化问题的理解，他们如何克服这些问题以及新的华人企业家如何能够避免并准备好面对这些问题。

What if there is a problem? 如果有問題怎麼辦？

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should ask to speak to the researchers who will do their best to answer your questions (Mei-Feng, WU 07538533199).

If you are concerned that regulations are being infringed, or that your interests are otherwise being ignored, neglected or denied, and wish to complain formally, you should inform [Prof David Percy](#), who will investigate your complaint

(Tel: 0161 295 2711 Email: SBS-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk)

如果您对本研究的任何方面有疑虑，欢迎随时致电或发送电邮给研究员，研究员吴美凤会尽力回答您所有相关的问题。

(电话：07538533199 邮箱:m.f.wu@edu.salford.ac.uk)。

如果您受到法规的侵犯，或者您的利益被忽视或被拒绝，并且希望正式投诉，您可以通报教授 David Percy，他将调查您的投诉。

(电话：0161 295 2711 邮箱：SBS-ResearchEthics@salford.ac.uk)

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

我參與這項研究會保密嗎？

Some general background will be asked during the interview, for example: the size of the company, when and how did the company plan its entry in the U.K. or when did it formally enter into the U.K. Any information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Data analysis and write up will be coded thus securing full anonymity of participants. Follow up interview recordings will have a code number and any electronic data will be stored on a password protected computer known only by researcher. The original data will be retained for three years and then disposed of securely.

在访谈期间将询问一些一般背景，例如：公司的规模，公司何时以及如何计划在英国进入或何时正式进入英国任何在课程期间收集的有关您的信息 研究将严格保密。数据分析和编写将被编码，从而确保参与者的完全匿名性。跟进采访记录将有一个代码编号，任何电子数据将存储在只有研究人员知道的密码保护计算机上。原始数据将保留三年，然后安全处理掉。

What will happen if I don't carry on with the study?

如果我不繼續參與此研究會如何？

If you withdraw from the study all the information and data collected from you, till date, will be destroyed from all the study files.

如果您退出研究，那么从您那里收集的所有信息和数据将被从所有研究文件中删除。

What will happen to the results of the research study? 研究結果會怎樣？

This research will attempt to gain better understanding about the issues of Chinese entrepreneurs in the U.K. The research findings will be disseminated using academic channels and will be available to the public for them to use the information productively when they are setting up their own business.

这项研究将试图更好地了解华人企业家在英国的问题。研究结果将通过学术渠道传播，并将向公众开放，以便他们在建立自己的企业时有效地使用这些信息。

Appendix 4. Research participant consent form

Research participant consent form

Project title	Managing cross-cultural differences: Identifying and resolving critical issues faced by Chinese SMEs in the U.K.
Researchers	Name: Mei-Feng, WU Email: m.f.wu@edu.salford.ac.uk Contact number: 07538533199
RGEC Ref No	SBSR1718-11

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and what my contribution will be.

Yes	No
------------	-----------

- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face)

Yes	No
------------	-----------

- I agree to take part in the interview

Yes	No
------------	-----------

- I agree to the interview being tape recorded

Yes	No
------------	-----------

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research at any time **without giving any reason**

Yes	No
------------	-----------

- **I agree to take part in the above study.**

Yes	No
------------	-----------

Name of participant _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Name of researcher taking consent Mei-Feng, WU _____

Researchers e-mail address m.f.wu@edu.salford.ac.uk _____

Appendix 5. Interview protocol (for pilot study)

1. Personal information
 - 1.1 Name
 - 1.2 Time spent in the U.K. (approx.)
 - 1.3 Migration route to the U.K.

2. Company information
 - 2.1 When was your company set up in the U.K.?
 - 2.2 Which sector do you operate in? (Retailers/distributors/manufacturers/service etc...)

3. How familiar were you with British culture before you arrived in the U.K.?
 - 3.1 Did you study or live in the U.K. before setting up your business? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.4**
 - 3.2 If yes, could you please tell me if and how this experience helped you to understand British culture and to set up your business?

4. Did you take any cross-cultural training courses before you arrived in the U.K.? (e.g., English language courses, overview of British culture and practices) **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.5**
 - 4.1 Could you please describe the courses that you took for the purpose of coming to the U.K.?
 - 4.1.1 Why did you choose to take up such courses?
 - 4.1.2 Did this/these courses help you to learn about British culture and settle into the U.K.? If so, in which ways?

5. Have you faced any problems currently when you communicate with your suppliers / distributors / retailers? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.6**
 - 5.1 Tell us about a time when you miscommunicated with someone and what did you do to fix the problem?
 - 5.2 How do you think such issues can be avoided or handled in the future?

6. Have you ever faced any issues related to institutional barriers for setting up your business in the U.K.? For example: business start-up and operating regulations or immigration laws for yourself or any employees? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.7**
 - 6.1 If yes, could you please describe what happened?
 - 6.2 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
 - 6.3 Do you still face any similar challenges now?
 - 6.3.1 If yes, please can you describe them and how you are trying to address them?
 - 6.3.2 Is there anything that you think could help you to address them more easily?

7. Have you ever financed your company from a U.K.-based bank?
 - 7.1 If yes, did you experience any difficulties? Could you please describe what happened?
 - 7.1.1 If resolved, how did you resolve the situation?
 - 7.1.2 Is there anything that you think could help you to address them more easily?

- 7.2 If no, why did you not opt for financing from a U.K.-based bank?
8. Did you experience any culture-related challenges when setting up your business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.9**
- 8.1 If yes, could you please describe what happened?
- 8.2 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
- 8.3 Do you still face any similar challenges now?
- 8.3.1 If yes, could you please describe them and how you are trying to address them?
- 8.3.2 Is there anything that you think could help you to address them more easily?
- 8.4 Do you think people from the U.K. have any misconceptions about your culture?
- 8.4.1 If yes, what is the most commonly held misconception in the U.K. about your home country and its people?
9. Did you face any other kinds of challenges when you were setting up your business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.10**
- 9.1 If yes, please could you describe what happened?
- 9.2 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
- 9.3 Do you still face any similar challenges now? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.10**
- 9.3.1 If yes, please can you describe them and how you are trying to address them?
- 9.3.2 Is there anything that you think could help you to address them more easily?
10. In your experience, were there any positive aspects to setting up a business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.11**
- 10.1 If yes, please could you describe these?
11. In your experience, were there any negative aspects to setting up a business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.12**
- 11.1 If yes, please could you describe these?
- 11.2 Is there anything that could have helped you with these negative aspects?
12. Do you find it easy to switch your thoughts and behaviour between the different cultural environments of your home country and the U.K.?
- 12.1 If yes, then please could you share your experience with me?
- 12.2 If no, then please could you share your experience with me?
13. In your experience, have you found it easy to fit into the British culture?
- 13.1 If yes, then please could you share your experience with me?
- 13.2 If no, then please could you share your experience with me? Is there anything that you think could help you to fit into British culture more easily?
14. Have you continued to be motivated to learn about the British culture after settling in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q15**
- 14.1 What is your motivation to continue learning about the British culture?
- 14.2 How are you continuing your learning about the British culture?
- 14.3 How does this motivation help you to manage your business?

15. Do you think there are any significant differences in business practices between your home country and the U.K.?
 - 15.1 If yes, then could you share your experience with me?
 - 15.1.1 Is it easy for you to change between the two styles?
 - 15.1.2 How did you gain the skills to change between the two?
 - 15.2 If no, then please could you explain your reasons?

16. Do you find it easy to interact with different nationals in a business setting in the U.K.?
 - 16.1 If yes, then please could you share your experience with me?
 - 16.2 If no, please could you explain why you do not find it easy?
 - 16.3 Is there anything that could help you to interact more easily?

17. Which types of communication modes do you prefer to use for business? (Phone, email, face-to-face, teleconference, social media e.g.: Whatsapp, Wechat)
 - 17.1 Why do you like these communication modes and in which business situations?
 - 17.2 Which mode do you least prefer and why?

18. Do you often use your native language in the U.K. for business?
 - 18.1 If yes, why?
 - 18.2 If no, why not?
 - 18.3 Do you think knowing the English language well is important to your business? If so, why? If no, why not?

19. What differences do you find when communicating with someone of your own culture and communicating with someone who is from another culture?

20. Are there any cross-cultural skills that you think have helped you set up your business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.21**

21. Are there any cross-cultural skills you have gained since starting your business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.22**

22. Have you ever joined any Chinese association?
 - 22.1 If yes, why did you join such an association?
 - 22.1.1 Has this membership help in setting up and/or managing your business?
 - 22.1.1.1 If yes, how? Could you please describe the situation?
 - 22.1.1.2 If not, why?
 - 22.1.2 Have you faced any challenges when joining such association? **IF NO, PROCEED TO Q.23**
 - 22.1.2.1 If yes, could you please describe the situation
 - 22.1.2.2 What do you think is the reason for experiencing these challenges?
 - 22.1.2.3 How did you resolve it?
 - 22.2 If no, why did you not join such an association?

23. Does your business cater mainly to the Chinese customers?

- 23.1 If yes, why?
 - 23.1.1 Do you think this limits your business?
 - 23.1.2 Do you have any plans to expand your target market into the general public in the U.K.?
 - 23.1.2.1 If yes, why do you think this will benefit your business?
 - 23.1.2.2 If no, why?
 - 23.2 If no, how do you benefit from selling to the general public in the U.K.?
 - 23.2.1 According to you what is the difference between selling exclusively to the Chinese market and selling to the general public in the U.K.?
 - 23.2.2 Do you think it is easy for an immigrant entrepreneur to target to general public in the U.K.? Why or why not?
- 24. Do you prefer hiring people of Chinese descent?
 - 24.1 If yes, what are your reasons for this?
 - 24.2 If no, why not?
- 25. Did you change your opinion about the U.K. its work culture or its people after you experienced living and working here?
- 26. Would you suggest that a new entrepreneur gets involved in the Chinese association?
 - 26.1 If yes, what are the benefits?
 - 26.2 If no, why not?
- 27. Would you recommend that a new immigrant entrepreneur chooses the U.K. to set up business? Please explain the reasons for your answer.
- 28. What issues do you think new immigrant entrepreneurs may expect before coming to the U.K. and how do you think they can overcome these issues?
- 29. What issues do you think new immigrant entrepreneurs may expect when they arrive in the U.K. and how do you think they can overcome these issues?
- 30. Is there anything else you would like others to know which we may have not have been included here about your experience of setting up your business in the U.K.?

Appendix 6. Interview protocol (for final study)

Personal and Company information sheet

Personal information

1. What is your Name? (姓名)
2. Time spent in the U.K. (approx.)? (在英国居住的时间)
3. Migration route to the U.K. for your business? (移民创业家的方式)
4. English level? (英文的程度)

4.1 How do you rate your level of English when you **arrived**? (来英国之前)

Excellent	Good	Average	Acceptable	Bad

4.2 How do you rate your level of English **now**? (现在)

Excellent	Good	Average	Acceptable	Bad

Company information

1. What is your company name? (公司名)
2. When was your company set up in the U.K.? (公司创立的时间)
3. Which sector do you operate in? (行业别)
4. How many employee do you have? (员工人数)

1~9	10~19	20~29	30~39	40~49	>50

Interview Protocol – For interviewee use only

1. Could you please introduce your company simply?
2. Did you take any cross-cultural training courses before you arrived in the U.K.? (e.g. English language courses, overview of British culture and practices)
3. Did you study or live in the U.K. before setting up your business?
4. Have you faced any problems when you communicate with your customers/suppliers / distributors / retailers of another culture?
5. Do you often use Mandarin Chinese in the U.K. for business?
6. Did you face any issues related to institutional barriers while starting your business in the U.K.? For example: business start-up and operating regulations or immigration laws for yourself or any employees?
7. In your experience, how easy was it for you to get information about setting up the business?
8. Have you ever financed your company from a U.K.-based bank/financial institution?
9. How familiar were you with the British culture before you set up your business in the U.K.?
10. Did you experience any culture-related challenges while setting up your business in the U.K.?
11. Do you think people from the U.K. have any misconceptions about your culture?
12. Do you think there are any significant differences in working styles between your home country and the U.K.? Do you think that your working styles now tends to be more English way or Chinese way?
13. Do you need to interact with people of other cultures in the U.K.? Do you find it easy or difficult?
14. In your experience, have you found it easy to fit into the British culture?
15. Did you face any other kinds of challenges when you were setting up your business in the U.K.?
16. Have you continued to be motivated to learn about the British culture after settling in the U.K.?
17. Have you ever joined any Chinese association?
18. Would you suggest that a new entrepreneur gets involved in the Chinese association?
19. Does your business cater mainly to the Chinese customers?
20. Do you prefer hiring people of Chinese descent?
21. Why you chose to set up business in the U.K.? Would you recommend people to choose the U.K. to set up their business?
22. In your experience, were there any positive aspects of setting up a business in the U.K.?
23. In your experience, were there any negative aspects to setting up a business in the U.K.?
24. What issues do you think new immigrant entrepreneurs may expect before coming to the U.K. and how do you think they can overcome these issues?
25. Is there anything else you would like others to know which we may have not have been included here about your experience of setting up your business in the U.K.?

Interview Protocol – For Research use only

1. Could you please introduce your company simply?
2. Did you take any cross-cultural training courses before you arrived in the U.K.? (e.g. English language courses, overview of British culture and practices) **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
 - 2.1 Could you please describe the courses that you took for the purpose of coming to the U.K.?
 - 2.2 Why did you choose to take up such courses?
 - 2.3 Did this/these courses help you to learn about the British culture and settle into the U.K.? If so, in which ways?
3. Did you study or live in the U.K. before setting up your business? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
 - 3.1 If yes, could you please tell me if and how this experience helped you to understand the British culture and to set up your business?
4. Have you faced any problems when you communicate with your customers/suppliers / distributors / retailers of another culture? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
 - 4.1 If yes, could you please describe what happened?
 - 4.2 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
 - 4.3 How do you think such issues can be avoided or handled in the future
 - 4.4 Which types of communication modes do you prefer to use for business? (phone, email, face-to-face, teleconference, social media e.g.: Whatsapp, Wechat)
 - 4.5 Why do you like these communication modes and in which business situations?
 - 4.6 Which mode do you least prefer and why?
5. Do you often use Mandarin Chinese in the U.K. for business?
 - 5.1 If yes, why?
 - 5.2 If no, why not?
 - 5.3 Do you think knowing the English language well is important to your business? If so, why? If no, why not?
6. Did you face any issues related to institutional barriers while starting your business in the U.K.? For example: business start-up and operating regulations or immigration laws for yourself or any employees? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
 - 6.1 If yes, could you please describe what happened?
 - 6.2 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
 - 6.3 Are there any institutional challenges that you are facing now?
 - 6.3.1 If yes, please can you describe the situation and how you are trying to address the challenges?
 - 6.3.2 Is there anything that you think which could help you to address the challenges more easily?
7. In your experience, how easy was it for you to get information about setting up the business?
 - 7.1 If easy, how did you get this information?
 - 7.2 If not, what kind of challenges have you faced?
8. Have you ever financed your company from a U.K.-based bank/financial institution?
 - 8.1 If yes, did you experience any difficulties? Could you please describe what happened?
 - 8.1.1 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
 - 8.1.2 Is there anything that you could think of that could help you to address the challenges more easily?
9. How familiar were you with the British culture before you set up your business in the U.K.?

Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Neutral	Somewhat unfamiliar	Totally Unfamiliar

10. Did you experience any culture-related challenges while setting up your business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
- 10.1 If yes, could you please describe what happened?
- 10.1.1 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
- 10.2 Do you still face any similar culture-related challenges now?
- 10.2.1 If yes, could you please describe them and how you are trying to address the challenges?
- 10.2.2 Is there anything that you could think of that could help you to address the challenges more easily?
- 10.3 Do you think people from the U.K. have any misconceptions about your culture?
- 10.3.1 If yes, what is the most commonly held misconception in the U.K. about your home country and its people?
11. Do you think people from the U.K. have any misconceptions about your culture?
12. Do you think there are any significant differences in working styles between your home country and the U.K.?
- 12.1 If yes, then could you share your experience with me?
- 12.1.1 How did you gain the skills to change your working style to the U.K. style?
- 12.2 If no, why do you think there are no differences?
- 12.3 Do you think that your behaviour and thought now tends to be English way or Chinese way?
13. Do you need to interact with people of other cultures in the U.K.? Do you find it easy or difficult?
- 13.1 If easy, then please could you share your experience with me?
- 13.2 If difficult, please could you explain why you do not find it easy?
- 13.3 Is there anything that could help you to interact more easily?
14. In your experience, have you found it easy to fit into the British culture?
- 14.1 If yes, then please could you share your experience with me?
- 14.2 If no, then please could you share your experience with me?
- 14.2.1 Is there anything that you think that could help you to fit into the British culture more easily?
15. Did you face any other kinds of challenges when you were setting up your business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
- 15.1 If yes, please could you describe what happened?
- 15.2 Did you resolve these challenges? If so, how?
- 15.3 Do you still face any similar challenges now? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
- 15.3.1 If yes, please can you describe them and how you are trying to address them?
- 15.3.2 Is there anything that you could think of that could help you to address the challenges more easily?
16. Have you continued to be motivated to learn about the British culture after settling in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
- 16.1 What is your motivation to continue learning about the British culture?
- 16.2 How are you continuing your learning about the British culture?
- 16.3 How does this motivation help you to manage your business?

17. Have you ever joined any Chinese association?
 - 17.1 If yes, why did you join such an association?
 - 17.1.1 Has this membership help in setting up and/or managing your business?
 - 17.1.1.1 If yes, how? Could you please describe the situation?
 - 17.1.1.2 If not, why?
 - 17.1.2 Have you faced any challenges when joining such association? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
 - 17.1.2.1 If yes, could you please describe the situation
 - 17.1.2.2 What do you think is the reason for experiencing these challenges?
 - 17.1.2.3 How did you resolve it?
 - 17.2 If no, why did you not join such an association?
18. Would you suggest that a new entrepreneur gets involved in the Chinese association?
 - 18.1 If yes, what are the benefits?
 - 18.2 If no, why not?
19. Does your business cater mainly to the Chinese customers?
 - 19.1 If yes, Why?
 - 19.1.1 Do you think this limits your business?
 - 19.1.2 Do you have any plans to expand your target market into the general public in the U.K.?
 - 19.1.2.1 If yes why do you think this will benefit your business?
 - 19.1.2.2 If no, why?
 - 19.2 If no, how do you benefit from selling to the general public in the U.K.?
 - 19.2.1 According to you what is the difference between selling exclusively to the Chinese market and selling to the general public in the U.K.?
 - 19.2.2 Do you think it is easy for an immigrant entrepreneur to target the general public in the U.K.? Why or why not?
20. Do you prefer hiring people of Chinese descent?
 - 20.1 If yes, what are your reasons for this?
 - 20.2 If no, why not?
21. In your experience, were there any positive aspects of setting up a business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
22. In your experience, were there any negative aspects to setting up a business in the U.K.? **IF NO, PROCEED TO NEXT QUESTION**
 - 22.1 If yes, please could you describe these?
 - 22.2 Is there anything that could have helped you with these negative aspects?
23. Why you chose to set up business in the U.K.? Would you recommend people to choose the U.K. to set up their business?
24. What issues do you think new immigrant entrepreneurs may expect before coming to the U.K. and how do you think they can overcome these issues?
25. Is there anything else you would like others to know which we may have not have been included here about your experience of setting up your business in the U.K.?

Appendix 7. Sample transcripts from the interview with interviewee [I-11F]

Interview coding: I-11F

Date: 19/01/2019

Researcher: First all of, thank you for accepting my interview. Could you please introduce your company simply?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Our company serves fashion retail brands; we help them advertise on social networks. They can use our software products and they can connect with celebrities in these online communities. Also, when influential people advertise their fashion products, we can retrieve such content to put it on their websites, or other channels, such as shopping applications and programmes. When their customers go to the websites or shopping apps mentioned above, they find a lot of people recommending those products, so customers can actually feel that these products have been used by others, and see what they say about them. This makes the customers feel that these products have celebrities' endorsement and prompts the customers to buy these products. It stimulates sales and increases the customer interaction rate. Simply speaking, we are helping brands to expand their exposure with internet celebrity promotions.

Researchers: I see. Did you take any cross-cultural training courses before you arrived in the U.K. such as English language courses, overview of British culture and practices?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, I have taken some courses such as learning the British accent. After coming here, I found that there were many deficiencies in my expression of language. I found the English language here was not the same as the English I had learned before. I didn't understand a lot of things. I found out that I was actually not familiar with how British people speak, so I think this course of English accent helped me a lot, in my listening and in what I should to say so that locals can understand it.

Researchers: So what you mean is that even though you had taken some language courses in your home country before coming to the UK, but after you came to the UK, you still needed to go to some special language courses?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Before coming to the UK, we had to go to classes for IELTS test, but then we found that IELTS English was actually different from the actual British English, so I found

it totally out of touch and I went to find a local teacher who specializes in teaching languages, and then learnt to speak in the British accent.

Researchers: I see, did this/these courses help you to learn about British culture and settle into the U.K?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Of course, it helps. For example, when you communicate with someone, you are able to understand what they say and you will respond in their way. It makes communications relatively smooth in both ways.

Researchers: I see. So you have mentioned that you took the IELTS course, does it mean that you had studied in the UK before setting up your business?

Researchers: I see, so before you started your business, you have study experience in the UK, right?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, I took a one-year diploma course from the University of the Arts in London, and then studied fashion management. In the second year, I took a master's degree in e-commerce from Warwick University.

Researchers: I see, do you think that this process of studying in the UK helped you start a business later?

Interviewee [I-11F]: I think yes, because you have gotten used to it for two years, for example how to get comfortable speaking to international people. When I arrived in the first year, I found it difficult to integrate, even in the international team, because you find that students come from India and so on and you are not able to get used to their accent. Every country is a lot different. For example, the West is more inclined to express things out instantly. Our culture is more composed. After listening to what others say, I will finally express my opinion, but the problem is that they will think that if you don't speak out, it means that you are not good enough, and if you speak only after I have spoken, it means you did not keep up, and we have already discussed it, it's too late to tell me this, so you have a lot of problems. Actually, I think this is a culture shock. So we actually experienced a lot in the first year, but it was actually better in the second year in terms of getting along with international classmates get along. So I was outgoing in Warwick University.

Researchers: I understand, so it means that in fact, you feel that having prior experience helps you a lot later.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, it was very helpful. But there is definitely a very big challenge after graduation. Most people leave the U.K when they finished studying, so after you graduate you later find out that working here is completely different. You need to re-learn to adapt to different environments all over again. We will come back to this point later.

Researchers: OK, no problem, like what you said just now, after you went out to society, you had to deal with suppliers and customers from many different cultures. Have you faced any problems when you communicate with your customers/suppliers/distributors/ retailers from another culture?

Interviewee [I-11F]: There will be problems in communication. The fact is, we are Chinese, and we are not Asian-British people who grew up here. In fact, I think there must be a stereotype. If you make a call without a local accent, the person will start to distrust you. They will think you are not a native, so where did you come from? He will think that you and they are people from different worlds. So I prefer to use email to communicate so I can let him know exactly what I am trying to express. Moreover, if you have a Chinese name showing in the email, the response rate will be lower. Even if you have adjusted your words in the local way, the response rate will still not be too high which is normal. So we always go to participate in extraordinary activities, I want to know how to interact with the locals.

Researchers: So for you, because you didn't grow up here from a young age, you feel it is more difficult for you to communicate with these suppliers by phone?

Interviewee [I-11F]: It is necessary to try out. The difficulty is that the number of rejections after you try is still very high. Since what we are doing is software, we don't have a problem with the suppliers as we are dealing with the end customer. It is more difficult for you to persuade the customers to pay.

Researchers: I see. Ok, but you are mentioning that as a Chinese it is hard to get their trust?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, in fact it is easy to make a decision if you have another purely British company to choose. If I see from their point of view, I would choose the solely British company.

Researchers: So you think that this aspect actually brings a certain degree of difficulty for you.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, but I think it's my choice, so I don't put too much emotion in it.

Researchers: You mean that it was your choice to start your own business so you prefer to just solve the problem when you encounter it?

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right. Then your next question is whether we often do business with Chinese? We don't have customers who are Chinese. No Chinese customers.

Researchers: So do you think it is difficult for you to use local language in business rather than using your mother tongue?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, there is. Frankly speaking, it will be a difficulty to speak like a local. So there will be some differences between the way you speak and the way the locals speak.

Researchers: I see. OK, did you face any issues related to institutional barriers while starting your business in the U.K.?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Well, let me talk about the process of transferring from the student to entrepreneurship visa. We think that the procedures for these regulations are just troublesome and not difficult, because if you really spend some time to study it, it is actually clear. It is about whether you really care about it. If you care about it, you will keep an eye on it. Now the immigration regulations keep changing over and over, we always look for information by ourselves. I went to find resources, and then I saw that there was a department that helped international students in Warwick University. We had a department which is called Student Career in Warwick. We contacted this unit to get graduate entrepreneur visa, so when we had any detailed question that we want to ask thereafter, we would communicate directly with this unit.

Researchers: So you didn't consult lawyers to help you?

Interviewee [I-11F]: This part I did not.

Researchers: Then the help from the university was enough?

Interviewee [I-11F]: The university? The university was very helpful. They actually have an Immigration Department. There was also someone from the Immigration Department to help us.

Researchers: So they provided help all the way?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Just did not spend any extra money, it was all done using the resources at hand. Regarding your question about setting up a company, the school tutor already had experience. He said that it was only a matter of seconds, so it might have just taken ten minutes to have a coffee with him and it was all done, that's all.

Researchers: So did the tutor from your university help you in terms of laws and regulations for registering a company?

Interviewee [I-11F]: In fact, this process is actually very simple. Compared with setting up a company in my home town, in which an accountant is needed, how much money is required, and a bank account is required. It is not like that at all. Actually in the UK it's simple.

Researchers: I see, do you feel it was a difficult procedure in switching your visa from student to Tier 1 graduate Graduate Entrepreneurs Visa?

Interviewee [I-11F]: In fact, it can be solved by yourself, but it is easy if the university has this department, then they very kindly tell you everything.

Researchers: Ok, then, did you encounter any difficulty in switching your visa from Graduate Entrepreneurs Visa to tier 1 general Entrepreneurs visa?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, our visa was refused, so why we were refused? In fact, we were confident because in terms of the regulations on the immigration bureau website about transferring from the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurs Visa to the general entrepreneurial visa, we had read all of them. I felt that we were well prepared so we applied by ourselves because we didn't want to spend extra money. We didn't have much money left as an entrepreneur, no one supported us so we got used doing anything by ourselves because we also didn't want to spend money on it. So then we applied by ourselves, but we were rejected.

The reason of rejection was because of our funding. They thought our money came from the funding so this amount should be transferred into our bank account directly. The lawyer said that it was because the funding in our bank account was not specified to be used by us for business only. So, there was a problem here, and we had to pay 2500 pounds later to the local lawyer who helped us reapply. In total the visa took us about ten thousand pounds to apply. A lot of money was wasted. Once your visa has been rejected, it is like you sending free money to someone.

Researchers: Did you feel nervous or frustrated at that time?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Frustrated? In fact, I was only a little angry but not frustrated at that moment, and I felt that I had spent a lot of energy and attention to reach this step but the Government had just curtly refused me like that. The funding we got for our entrepreneurship was not very easy and then the Government just refused me for this reason. The money I spent to apply was just wasted so I felt angry, but only for one night. Because you also felt that there

were still things to be dealt with, so I couldn't be controlled by emotion. So I feel ok, that is fine. Just hurry up to get a lawyer to resolve it.

Researchers: So before you got your visa renewed, were you afraid of being refused again?

Interviewee [I-11F]: No, because at that moment you actually feel that I have done my best on it. It doesn't matter anymore, if the U.K. doesn't want me, I can go another country.

Researchers: I see.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Those entrepreneurs without funding will have a 95% chance of failing in the first year. And another 95% will fail again in the second year. We got the funding for two years. But those with money are still likely to fail. We have reached this stage, we have followed the procedures. Why would you still refuse us? It's okay to refuse, we can go somewhere else.

Researchers: Well, you had just mentioned that your company raised funding. Could you please tell me if this funding was borrowed from a local bank?

Interviewee [I-11F]: We don't have a loan, and our funding was from our original account, just 2000 pounds after graduation. Then there may be some cases that may be added but not much. Because there is so little time, if you are distracted and do other things you will not be able to juggle your tasks, but it was this way that we survived and got funding.

Researchers: So your funding was from fund raising, not by borrowing from local banks.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, fundraising.

Researchers: Do you plan to borrow from a U.K.-based bank in the future?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Actually it will depend on the situation, because our next goal is at the end of this year, we will raise finance for the second round so our original plan does not include borrowing from a U.K.-based bank. Maybe there will be a need for a loan in the future, but we don't need it currently.

Researchers: Raising funds, are these funds mainly from your friends or investors?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Investors. We are looking for local investors.

Researchers: How was the process? I think it should be quite smooth.

Interviewee [I-11F]: In terms of smooth, you can say that it is the only difficulty you have to deal with. Many people said 'our funding went very smoothly, because we got our funding

target within two weeks in crowdcube'. But we did so much work in the previous half a year to find a lead investor. There are statistics in crowdcube that said that if your lead investor's fund does not exceed 30%, the failure rate will be 60%. In fact, there is a hidden rule about fundraising that you have to get 30% private funds before opening to public so then only they will open link for you to continue fundraising. Because they want to make sure that your success rate is high. In term of looking for investor, from statistics, if you look for 40 investors, there will only be about one that can invest so we had to spend lots of time to find the investors.

Researchers: From what you have said, it seems that this fund-raising and finding investors actually cost you considerable effort before you could find these sources. Have you not considered direct loans from U.K.-based banks?

Interviewee [I-11F]: No.

Researchers: Might I ask why?

Interviewee [I-11F]: We did not find a simple way to go. It would be the same if we looked for a loan. We would eventually spend all that we borrowed. But if we find investors, it means that the investors believe that there is a market niche for your product. They believe that your company will grow and will be valuable one day to sell. So they would like to invest in your company. Only in this way will people from the outside recognise your company's growth.

Researchers: I see. Well, how familiar were you with the British culture before you set up your business in the U.K.?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Somewhat unfamiliar.

Researchers: So did you experience any culture-related challenges when setting up your business in the U.K?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, lots. Let me think about.

Researchers: No problem, take your time.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Too many. Lots. We can talk about other questions then come back to this.

Researchers: OK, no problem.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Because I think I will think of more things when we get to other questions later.

Researchers: Okay, no problem. Do you think people from the U.K have any misconceptions about your culture?

Interviewee [I-11F]: There should be only bad ones.

Researchers: Can you give us some example?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Example, Ok. They just look at your appearance and feel that you are inferior.

Researchers: Do you feel this way?

Interviewee [I-11F]: I think the truth is that this feeling is correct. If we come to the stage of really surviving as a company funded by fundraising, everyone will think we are an outstanding one. But my competitors are mainly all local companies so they do not have much trust in us, they cannot figure out how we have succeeded. So they will look through all our details, they will examine them and our shortcomings will be magnified.

Researchers: Yes, so you feel right about that.

Interviewee [I-11F]: It is what I and my co-founder think. I don't think it is a misunderstanding. I think this is reasonable, because if you put this situation in every country, the mentality is the same. If a white foreigner is very outstanding in Taiwan, maybe our people will think it is reasonable. Because in the eyes of my people, they think white people are more superior. But if it is a black or Thai person who is outstanding, then it will be different. Because we have experience in living abroad, so we all know what it is feel like to be discriminated. The feeling is very painful. But we don't take anything personally. In fact, it is quite common everywhere, including in Taiwan.

Researchers: So you mean that you can understand, because it is quite hard to survive in a host country as an immigrant entrepreneur?

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right.

Researchers: Ok, I see. Do you think there are any significant differences in working styles between your home country and the U.K.?

Interviewee [I-11F]: In fact, it's quite different. If you work here, everyone seems to have no clear idea of hierarchy; it will not be strictly superiors and inferiors like in Taiwan. I think this is really good, if someone thinks something is good for the company, or not good for the company, they will discuss together, people will let them into their discussions. It will not be that because I am a superior to you I will not be talking to you about all the details. It is not like that. So I think this is a good thing like this.

Researchers: So you think it is a good thing from a boss' point of view?

Interviewee [I-11F]: It's good, it should be said that our current environment is rare, and everyone is very open. I think it is really difficult to find such a place. We now feel that our workspace is a good environment, because people around you are encouraging each other. If you have any new ideas, or if you want to try something, everyone will look forward to it. I know in Taiwan, or from the words of my other good friends in Taiwan, in fact everyone is constantly talking down each other.

Researchers: So you think the environment here is encouraging.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Tolerant, encouraging, and innovative. They are receptive to new things as well.

Researchers: Then it is more positive.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, like the case of my friend in Taiwan, people around you will tell you that you will fail and it will be difficult for you. I don't think the remarks are on purpose, but I think it's because of the environment that it is easy for everyone to question, and if you are outstanding in your group, you want to be different, everyone will think about you and think how you can feel so good?

Researchers: I see, people often will think and say what makes you think that you will succeed?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, something similar.

Researchers: But here, people will encourage you to try.

Interviewee [I-11F]: We will think of a solution here, Taiwanese people will say that I have tried but failed, but here people say give it a try. Everyone are willing to try, even face failure and are willing to encourage others to try.

Researchers: So it sounds like you actually communicate with people from different cultures in the UK. Do you think this is easy or not easy for you?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Not easy.

Researchers: Which aspect do you think is difficult?

Interviewee [I-11F]: It should be said that I only adjusted my mindset last year.

Researchers: What is the meaning of the so-called adjustment in your mindset?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Because you think that people around you keep examining you when you do not have any achievements to prove yourself. We were in the same office and having a discussion, people told about their achievements and I did not feel good because my progress was behind. I was not good at English and afraid of making any mistakes. It was a challenging time. When I finished the yearly goal of fundraising, people would look at me differently. But before that, people would look at me in a critical way. When you achieved something, things then change.

Researchers: In fact, means that you are saying that because of a small achievement, your own mentality has also changed, right? You become more confident, like this.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, there will also be a relative impact, because you start to feel that the fundraising is complete, our next stage is to expand the team. You have to act like a supervisor to bring everyone together as a team. The challenge was to get the team to achieve maximum output. I think the process is the same. I tried it and found out that I actually had too many ideas for myself before. There was a lot of unnecessary fear, out of something I had only imagined.

Researchers: Yes, so if you had been able to do it again, do you think that you won't set too many limits for yourself and you should directly go try it first.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, of course this is right.

Researchers: Don't want to say that I can't talk to him because I don't have any grades, I should encourage myself, in fact, that I'm taking that step.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Because looking back, in fact, like in a common office space, there are two different people. One kind of person is the kind who will always be scared, afraid to expose himself; very afraid that others think he is not competent enough, so some people will always be very defensive. In fact, we have all experienced that period, and I know how difficult that period is, so in fact, you can honestly let us know the real person you are, in fact, I will feel that in this way the person will be able to live more comfortably.

Researchers: So if you think back to the situation you were in, do you think that if you don't arm yourself, maybe it would be a different result?

Interviewee [I-11F]: I think you cannot say this, because it has always been a process of growing, if you have not been there, and you do not have the pain, you will not realise what the real issue is. You might feel that there are too many difficulties, but when you look back,

you will tell yourself that it was all natural to a person. It was a path of growth that you have to spend time to experience.

Researchers: I see. So in your experience, have you found it easy to fit into the British culture?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Not easy, like these examples I mentioned earlier.

Researchers: Previous example? Are you saying that you feel local people look down upon you because you are Chinese?

Interviewee [I-11F]: It should be said that we should not easily make such a conclusion, because in this way you will be rejected by others first, and refuse to open up to accept something new. So we won't think so. But the reason I have such a conclusion is because we really had similar experience (do not want to talk about it).

Researchers: OK, did you face any other kinds of challenges when you were setting up your business in the U.K.?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Actually, it is all difficult.

Researchers: Are there any examples?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Actually, the main point is all about the distrust issue that I have talked about earlier. I think this issue has covered all matters except operations.

Researchers: You just mentioned about operations, what difficulties that you have faced?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Operations. For example, you need to find your own customers, then you need to find from the customers what they really care about, then find the solution, and provide products that they really want. You have to make all these happen in one day to get the market. Then, you might have to raise funds and you have to expand your team. You need to think about your strategies and your relationship with investors. Then you think about how you lead the team, which are all difficulties. There are lots of details and lots of difficulties every day. Everyday is a challenging day.

Researchers: Have you continued to be motivated to learn about the British culture after settling in the U.K.?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Yes, it is necessary, because you want to work here, you want to learn their culture, do business in their way so you have to learn from them.

Researchers: I see. Then, how are you continuing your learning about the British culture?

Researchers: Are you talking about British culture? It should be said that you have to talk more with locals, at work and in life, so we have local friends around because there is not many Chinese in our working place. Our daily life is all in this working place, so we can learn lots of thing in here. Right, I also participant in lots of events.

Researchers: I see, but you have said that at beginning you took some English accent courses when you first came, but now you don't take anymore?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Because there is no time, and I think you will find out when everyone values your opinions the focus is on the content of your speech. So the most important thing is that we gather information together and keep learning.

Researchers: I see. Like what you just said, you participant in lots of events. Could I ask these events you attended are more local or Chinese?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Local commercial events.

Researchers: So have you joined any Chinese association?

Interviewee [I-11F]: No.

Researchers: Is it because you don't think it will help your business?

Interviewee [I-11F]: You can say so.

Researchers: Ok, Would you suggest that a new entrepreneur gets involved in the Chinese association?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Actually, I don't think I can say that it doesn't help, but time is our greatest asset now. We race against time. If you are not focusing on the Chinese market, then we feel that the time should be directly spent on local business activities.

Researchers: I see. Why did you directly target the local market? Did you find it difficult to enter this market?

Interviewee [I-11F]: It is hard to get into the local market, but this was the choice we had as we did want to completely operate in the local market. Now my life is completely based in the local environment for our future picture. So we worked to get what we had envisioned.

Researchers: So you never thought that it might be easier to use the Chinese market first, and then make it a stepping stone to enter the local area, but you chose to enter the local market in the first place.

Interviewee [I-11F]: I think unless you love the Chinese culture and want to develop your business in mainland China then there is no doubt targeting the Chinese market in U.K will be your advantage. But if you just simply think that it is a stepping stone and if you have a great potential, then I think you will kill any potential development if you take this as a shortcut.

Researchers: But I believe that when you directly target on local British market. This process should be quite hard.

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right.

Researchers: I see. So in fact, the proportion of Chinese employees of your company is not very high, right?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Only me and my co-founder.

Researchers: If you want to recruit employees in the future, will you prefer to hire Chinese descent?

Interviewee [I-11F]: What we want to create is a British company, and let the outside world think that we are a British company. We actually know that many Chinese people are very good, but you can't deny the perception of the outside world. Everyone will think that this is a Chinese-owned company, is that their business is for the Chinese, we don't want to be considered this way, so that at this stage and a year or two into the future, we will try to hire locals.

Researchers: I see. In your experience, were there any positive aspects to setting up a business in the U.K?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Is this your last question?

Researchers: I have changed order slightly, as it depended on your answer. To make the interview more smooth.

Interviewee [I-11F]: OK, I think, for example, I like the European culture myself, and I really like the British culture. So for me, the environment and culture here are advantages, but you have to say if in terms of entrepreneurship, I say from a third party perspective, it means which country will develop better and have more opportunities. In fact, Britain is not one of the options.

Researchers: I see, then why did you want to stay in the UK to start your business?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Because I studied in the UK, then at least I feel that there are people here I know of, although not many, although after graduation they all returned home, but at least I think compared with other countries, in this country I have been living for two years and I am familiar with it. Then because in the two years you will definitely look at the local market and then look at things in the local industry; and you will be more familiar with what is happening in this country.

Researchers: Yes, so that's why you choose to start a business in the UK, rather than go back to Taiwan to start a business.

Interviewee [I-11F]: Right.

Researchers: I see. Is there anything else you would like others to know which we may have not have been included here about your experience of setting up your business in the U.K.?

Interviewee [I-11F]: I would say, if you really want to get into the European market, in fact, you have to create your own surroundings. For example, there are no Chinese in your target clients, so do not spend too much time in the Chinese social circle, because your time is limited. You may find Chinese friends, you may think that there is a potential market and it is easy to break into. Then you try it out. But you will find that in the long term there will be differences between what you expected and what you can achieve.

Researchers: You mean that your market will be limited.

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right.

Researchers: After all, the Chinese market may account for as little as 10% of the local market, which is equivalent to saying that while you may have some advantages at the beginning, but then you may lose 90% of the opportunities.

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right.

Researchers: I see, well, we can talk back your experience about any culture-related challenges when setting up your business in the U.K? Have you thought of that?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Okay, let me say this. I'll take the simplest example, because we now hire local British people to strengthen the sales aspect, because the previous customers were all contacted by me. But I have to take care of other things by myself. There are also aspects of marketing that I don't think I have done enough, I want to strengthen this area. I hope to hire salesmen who are British. I believe the British clients will think that we are a British company that is calling or the person who writes this email is a British. This would create a better

appearance for the outside world, so what we are doing now is like this. After the salesperson came in, we use the CRM system that we wrote ourselves. We sent emails, say, we had 50 target customers and we used the same version and then sent it out but with different sender's name. Obviously, our response rate was relatively low, because the clients could see it was a Chinese name, so they didn't really want to reply your email.

Researchers: I see.

Interviewee [I-11F]: It was just for the difference in names. I think it is natural for everyone to think this way. It was very hard to contact clients as a Chinese.

Researchers: Yes, you mean that if you want to enter the local market, it is actually very hard for a Chinese person.

Researcher: Yes, do you have cultural barriers with foreign employees?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Cultural barriers? I don't think like this, because as long as there is such thinking, you will not become a good team with them. The way we think is that views of people in the outside world do not affect me. But I know that I find it is hard to find employees. People say that it is difficult for us to hire employees. At the beginning, because there were only two Chinese people in the company, the potential employee would think that this was a Chinese company and hesitate to come in. There were such difficulties at the beginning, but now it is a lot better. After the employees came in, we think that when you decide to join us it gave us the greatest respect and the greatest affirmation, so no matter how you came in, we are one team. I think about things like this, so I don't feel much about culture differences, because I think it is normal if culture barriers exist. So for me, it's not really a barrier. We just need to be frank about what happens and speak out.

Researchers: Like to respect each other's culture.

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right.

Researchers: For example, at the beginning, you said that because there were only two Chinese people in the company, and they were both the bosses, then you thought it would be difficult to take the first step to hire employees. How did you overcome this difficulty at that moment?

Interviewee [I-11F]: Should I say overcome? We were constantly looking for people; there is always someone that does not mind our differences, as long as they acknowledged us. Then it became faster when hiring employees.

Researchers: I see, so you mean you spent lots of time for finding first employee.

Interviewee [I-11F]: That's right.

Researchers: Actually, our interview will be end here, is there anything you want to talk or add on?

Interviewee [I-11F]: What I want to add, or what I want to share, I thought I was going to talk about something, and suddenly I forgot it.

Researchers: Did I disturb your thoughts?

Interviewee [I-11F]: No, it's fine, I didn't remember it myself.

Researchers: Or if you think of it later, you can also pass it to me by recording,

Interviewee [I-11F]: OK.

*** The dataset includes 25 interview transcripts and they are currently stored in Google drive under the author's management.**

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