

**Adapting to Western Norms of Academic
Argumentation and Debate: The Critical
Learning Journey of East Asian Masters
Students in the U.K**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of Bournemouth
University for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

August 2004

Bournemouth University

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Abstract

The thesis explores the learning experiences of East Asian masters students in dealing with Western academic norms of critical thinking and evaluation in classroom debate and assignment writing. This is a relatively new area of research, which is becoming increasingly important as the numbers of international postgraduate students in the U.K. continue to grow. Previous research has shown that differences in expectations have resulted in misunderstanding and some confusion for both lecturers and students. However, little research has yet been done in the U.K. on the process of adjustment during this learning experience.

A grounded theory, case study approach is followed, as one of the aims is for students to tell their own stories, and for theoretical concepts to be developed which reflect the perceptions and interpretations of the students. Sixty seven in-depth interviews were conducted with East Asian students across three case sites: two universities in the U.K. and a third university in China. Eleven British lecturers, five Chinese lecturers and six British students were also interviewed, for triangulation purposes. Although there is no claim to generalisation, the potential for transferability of the findings is increased by also including a vignette questionnaire, involving a further 268 students across the three sites.

The thesis takes a cultural approach, and a theoretical model is developed which identifies five learning stages, with various entry and exit routes. The data suggest that the majority of East Asian students reject full academic acculturation into Western norms of argumentation, which is characterised by rigorous, 'strong' critical thinking, polarised, linear logic, and 'wrestling debate'. Instead, many of them opt for a 'Middle Way', which synthesises those elements of Western academic norms that are perceived to be culturally acceptable, with the traditional cultural academic values held by many East Asian students. The Middle Way emphasises a more holistic, empathetic 'constructive reasoning', which bridges U.K. and East Asian traditions of academic argumentation and debate.

The thesis offers a significant contribution to conventional literature on the academic experiences of East Asian masters students, as it draws attention to the complexity of the adaptation process.

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Acknowledgement

I would first like to express my gratitude to the One who created all peoples on the earth, and who understands best how they think and function. I thank Father, Son and Spirit for giving me delightful inspiration and much encouragement throughout this thesis research, and the strength and ability to persevere and complete the work.

My sincere thanks go to my two supervisors. Dr. Christine Daymon has provided consistent, excellent support, and has helped me gain the confidence to be independently creative whilst I 'wrestled' in my thinking. I also am grateful to Professor Martin Cortazzi for his very helpful supervisory contribution. James Grant, who is responsible for the graphics, has done a magnificent job, which is much appreciated.

I am keenly aware that without the support of my family and close friends, I would have found this work far more taxing. My special thanks, therefore, go to Carl, Shelley, Gill and John, who have kept me relatively 'normal', even during the most intensive stages.

Author's Declaration

Preliminary findings of the thesis research have appeared in conference papers and on the British Council website, as detailed below:

Durkin, K. (2003) *Challenges Chinese Students Face in Adapting to Academic Expectations and Teaching/Learning Styles of U.K. Masters Courses*. British Council.
<http://www.britishcouncil.org.cn/english/cf-awardlist.htm>

Durkin, K. (2003/4) 'Critical Learning Journey of Chinese Masters Students in the U.K. : Adapting to Western Norms of Academic Argumentation and Debate'. *International Journal of Learning*, Vol.10 Common Ground Publishing. (*in print*).

Durkin, K. (2004) 'Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology to explore the Critical Learning Journey of East Asian Masters Students in the U.K.'. In H. Savall, M. Bonnet & M. Peron (Eds.) *Crossing Frontiers in Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods Conference Papers*, Vol. 1, 159-177. ISEOR / First International Co-sponsored Conference, Research Methods Division, Academy of Management (USA), Lyons, France, March, 2004.

Durkin, K. (2004) ' 'The Middle Way': Perceptions of Critical Thinking by East Asian Masters students in the U.K.'. *The Second International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities*, Tuscany, Italy, July 2004.

Chapter One: Research Rationale and Focus

The number of East Asian students coming to the U.K. to undertake postgraduate courses has been steadily growing over the past decade (HESA 2002, see Table 1), and has increased by 50% over the past five years. This is in line with the trend for all international postgraduates in the U.K. Figures for 2001/2002 show that fifty per cent of all East Asian postgraduates in the U.K. are Chinese whose numbers have doubled in the last five years. This reflects the importance of overseas study for international students.

Postgraduates in U.K.	1994/5	1995/6	1996/7	1997/8	1998/9	1999/0	2000/0	2001/0
Chinese students	742	675	775	960	1046	1,100	1,330	1,445
Other East Asian students	1,004	1,011	1,083	1,224	1,350	1,310	1,545	1,550
Total international	9,340	10,273	11,451	12,615	13,869	13,900	16,115	17,515

Table 1: Postgraduate East Asian students in U.K. (HESA – Higher Education Statistics Agency 2002)

Given the importance of East Asian postgraduate students to the income and culture of UK universities (Sherlock 1995), it is important to research the difficulties and challenges they encounter in adapting to Western academia. The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to explore how East Asian students (from China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, Indonesia and Thailand), studying on postgraduate courses in the U.K., perceive Western academic norms and expectations as regards critical thinking and argumentation (the use of the term East Asian is rationalised on page 14).

This is an important topic to research, not only because of the expansion of East Asian masters students, but because it represents a challenge for British lecturers and students. This thesis provides the East Asian students a voice for their experiences of academic challenges, beyond language issues. Some may be more aware than others that there are major differences in the teaching and learning approaches between their home countries and the U.K. Indeed that might be one of the main reasons why they choose to study here (Paige 1990: 167). To many these differences may come as an ‘education shock’ (Hoff 1979), although not necessarily a negative one. The speed with which they adapt to the new expectations depends, amongst other things, on their motivation, their previous educational

experience, their English language competence and the amount of learning support that they receive (Jin 1992, Jin & Cortazzi 1996). The time-scale for this adaptation is usually one year because of the length of masters courses in the U.K., with the first semester being crucial in determining the success or failure in achieving a master's award. They therefore need to adapt rapidly to the new academic norms, and cannot afford a lengthy period of adjustment. Research carried out by Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1991, 1998, 2001, 2002), Triandis (1982, 1990, 1995), and Bond (1991, 1996), amongst others, suggests that East Asian cultures contrast most strongly with Western culture, and therefore presumably face the greatest challenges in adjusting to U.K. academic norms. Also, the scripts of East Asian countries are non-Romanic, unlike European or South American languages, and this extenuates the difference between English and East Asian writing styles and conventions compared to those of other international students (see page 82 for further discussion on contrastive rhetoric).

The majority of East Asian students are used to a lecture style of education and are unfamiliar with seminars and tutorials (Ryan 2000). Research has shown that postgraduate Chinese students studying in Britain, when compared to British students, lack more confidence and knowledge in research methodology, essay writing involving critical evaluation, note taking and skim reading (Jin 1992; Jin & Cortazzi 1996; Cortazzi & Jin 1997, 2001). They also experience different expectations regarding lecturer-student relationships, referencing and plagiarism (Robinson 1992, Torkelson 1992, Block & Chi 1995), and may perceive that they receive insufficient feedback and clear guidelines from their lecturers (Prior 1991, Leki 1995, Casanave 1995). Tanaka (2002: v) identified ten academic discourse activities which can cause difficulties for East Asian students: understanding lectures; taking lecture notes; making oral presentations; asking questions during class periods; participating in class/group discussions; critically analyzing reading materials; reading with comprehension; keeping up with reading assignments; preparing for writing papers; and writing academic papers. On the other hand, many of these students have highly developed skills in disciplined study, memorisation and concentration, which are not always valued by U.K. lecturers.

Furthermore, the norms and expectations of U.K. academia, where Socratic/Aristotelian rhetoric and reasoning is promoted, may be unfamiliar to East Asian cultures (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2000, Terrell & Brown, 2000, Scollon & Scollon 1995). As a result, a re-evaluation of assumptions and expectations is required of these students if they are to

participate fully in course-work, and achieve satisfactory grades in both individual and group work. In their home countries, they may have received a transmission-based, teacher-centred education that contrasts starkly with the more interactive, student-centred education practices of a lot of British higher education (Ryan 2000, Cortazzi & Jin 2001). Some of the main differences in assignment writing lie in the traditional practices of not always needing to cite scholarship, in structuring arguments, in an emphasis on theory as opposed to application of theory, and of description versus analysis and synthesis. The notion of open classroom debate and argumentation is an alien concept for many of them. These major differences in perspectives can hinder students from meeting the academic expectations of a U.K. masters degree unless they are made aware of these differences and given adequate learning support, especially during the early stages of the course.

Socratic/Aristotelian argument, which is characterised by linear, logical reasoning, argues from the general to the specifics, considering all alternatives in search for truth. Many Westerners have seen this type of thought organisation as the best, and indeed the only, description of 'good thinking' and as the main aim of higher education in the West (Kuhn 1991). Kaplan (1966) goes so far as to argue that different cultures, because of their various cultural outlooks, think in different ways and that some cultures, due to lack of exposure to and familiarity with critical thinking, exhibit an incapacity to engage in it. This view of international students' cognitive abilities can result in seeing them as surface thinkers only, capable of reproducing information but not evaluating it.

In contrast, others have argued that higher order thinking in all cultures is different, but equal, and that the apparent absence or reticence to engage in critical debate is purely a cultural issue, not a cognitive one (Tannen 1998, Fox 1994, Street 1993,1994). Still others (Becker 1986, Angelova & Riazantseva 1999) have suggested that critical thinking can only be developed through practising the skill. In countries with a history of not encouraging open and free debate, this opportunity to practise the skill may not have existed, and indeed criticising others, especially those in authority, could be considered as a subversive act. Universities in the U.K., have traditionally regarded deductive, critical debate as the norm, and studies have shown that there is a general lack of awareness and appreciation by Western lecturers of the different cultural expectations and norms for academic writing (Samuelowicz,

1987, Jin & Cortazzi 1995, 1996). An understanding of these differences may lead Western academics to question their own tradition.

According to Todd (1997) and Samuelowicz (1987), lecturers can often misjudge the academic difficulties facing international students as one of English language competency, whereas they are more often due to the students having to adapt to different cultural expectations. The more serious problem lies with a lack of linear argumentation and the critical evaluation of different perspectives. Thus, much time can be spent on surface, or grammatical, editing by tutors which, according to Shaw (1996), has little value in improving the quality of the structure and line of argument of the essay. On the other hand, it must be acknowledged that English competence remains a key factor in academic success for these students (Cheng 2000:445). An understanding by lecturers as well as international and British students, of cross-cultural issues would lead to greater mutual appreciation of cultural diversity (Tannen 1998, Todd 1997, Fox 1994, Cortazzi & Jin 1997).

Programmes could then be devised in U.K. universities that help international students to quickly and effectively adapt to Western academic expectations. U.K. lecturers may also consider whether or how to adapt aspects of their programmes for East Asian students. Research studies have shown that critical thinking skills *can* be taught, and that students do not have to acquire them through a slow process of 'osmosis' (Kreber 1998). This applies equally to British students who can also encounter difficulties with academic writing due to a lack of study skills (Ballard 1991, Tait & Entwistle 1996).

This thesis explores how East Asian postgraduate students can be helped to make the transition by understanding and hence coping effectively with the new academic demands. The thesis also explores the notion that not only the students, but their U.K. lecturers need to have a good understanding of cross-cultural issues and the academic needs of international students, and to build this knowledge and awareness into course delivery, learning support programmes and recruitment criteria. As Chandler (1989) points out, in order to attract and maintain the international student market there needs to be a real commitment by universities to student satisfaction and success. Barker (1990) also notes that the international students he interviewed commented strongly on the apparent lack of realization that they were in fact

‘customers’ and that they were entitled to ‘service’. A reputation for good quality, he argues, takes a long time to gain and if it is lost, then it takes even longer to regain.

For the purpose of this thesis the terms ‘international’ and ‘East Asian’ need to be defined. Where the term ‘international students’ is used, it refers to students who leave their home country to study abroad for a period of time, usually for the length of their course, and who normally return home afterwards. The term ‘East Asian’ has been selected for use in this thesis for the following reasons. There are multiple strands in the rhetorical traditions of the geographical part of the globe referred to as East Asia due to various religious, philosophical, cultural, political, economic and geographical factors. Moreover, national cultures are not homogenous; they are made up of individuals, religious and other groupings which exhibit different tendencies. However, there does seem to exist a sufficiently identifiable core of rhetorical traditions which will allow for the use of the singular label ‘East Asia’ (Jensen 1992). The grouping of East Asian cultures together for this thesis is further justified as East Asian researchers do so themselves when contrasting cultural academic expectations (e.g. Tanaka 2002 (Japanese), Morita 2002 (Japanese), Park 2002 (Chinese), Coward 2002 (Taiwanese)).

In line with other cross cultural scholars (e.g. Woodward, 2002, Lim 2002, Trompenaars 1993), the term ‘West’ is used throughout the thesis to include Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, as referring to traditions of thought and practice and an historical trajectory. However, there are difficulties in monolithically describing cultures as ‘Eastern’ and ‘Western’ (Said 1995), which terms suggest commonalities and homogeneity among particular group members, whilst ignoring their differences. Similarly, the U.K. today is multicultural. Thus, although cultural boundaries in this research have cultural significance, these offer only one way of interpreting and understanding the culture of a person. The term East Asian is therefore used in this thesis as an umbrella term for the six targeted cultures. This is not to suggest that these cultures are not very different from each other in many ways – social, religious, historical, educational. However, as mentioned previously, there is recognition by other researchers from these same cultures that there are commonalities which make it practical to group them together for the purposes of contrasting them with the U.K. This thesis, therefore, whilst using the terms ‘East’ and ‘West’ for identifying trends and emphases, does so with caution, recognising the complexity of the issues. This caution also

applies to the use of national terms such as 'the U.K', China, and of cultural groupings such as Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese. The cultural boundaries between nations are becoming increasingly blurred with economic integration (Fukuyama 1995), and there may be significant cultural differences within countries. National culture, therefore, is not to be viewed as a characteristic of individuals or nation states, but 'of a large number of people conditioned by similar background, education and life experiences' (Doney, Cannon & Mullen 1998). In this thesis, therefore, all these terms are not intended to suggest stereotyping, nor to obscure differences.

As Nias (1997) points out, it is important for the background and perspective of the qualitative researcher to be transparent, and for consideration to be given to any potential influence of ethnocentrism on the research. Reflexivity on the part of the researcher is therefore an important aspect of this research, and the issue of potential bias influencing the research is discussed further on pages 53/55.

Although some research has been conducted into the attitudinal and behavioural aspects of adjusting, and the various academic discourse activities which challenge international students (e.g. Zhang 2002, Hayashi 2002, Xu 2002, Ladd & Ruby 1999, Gadzella, Mastern & Huang 1999), most of this research has been conducted in the U.S.A. and Australia. There has been very little empirical research into learning experiences of East Asian students, whereby Western-style critical thinking and argumentation skills are acquired. As Morita (2002:4) points out, it is important to capture how learners change over time, and one of the aims of this research is to address this gap in the research.

There is, however, a substantial body of research on the more general issues which are related to this thesis. For example, the need for argumentation skills and autonomous learning for native speakers in higher education in Western universities has been well documented (e.g. Hannel & Hannel 1998; Hammond and Collins 1991; Paul 1990, 1994; Walkner & Finney 1999; Watson and Glaser 1980). Other research has focused on cross cultural differences in argumentation and autonomous learning skills, but not in a higher education setting (Becker 1986, Hazen 1989, Jensen 1992, Ting-Toomey 1985, 1997).

A number of scholars have suggested differences in British and East Asian cultural characteristics and values, and have devised frameworks and cultural dimensions to describe them (e.g. Hofstede 1980, 1991,1998,2001; Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2000, Ting-Toomey 1994, 1999). Hofstede, in his seminal research, identified a number of cross cultural dimensions which describe various cultural characteristics (individualism/collectivism; power distance; uncertainty avoidance; masculinity/femininity). According to Hofstede's findings, East Asian cultures are characterised by large power distance, low individualism and high uncertainty avoidance. Although his research focused on business management in a multinational corporation, rather than academic skills in a university, his theory is relevant to education and the concepts can be extrapolated and applied to a mixed culture university context. Hofstede himself applied his findings to educational settings (2001: 100-101), discussing, for example, how cultural values affect lecturer/student relationships (Hofstede 2001: 451). The cultural dimensions he and others identified are helpful in exploring the attitudes and behaviours of East Asian masters students in the U.K., in relation to those of British students and lecturers.

Hofstede is widely quoted by cross cultural theorists - there were well over 1,000 Social Science citations and sixty one replications of his work by 1993 (Sondergaard 1994). In the eighties there was a great excitement over his work. A study of twenty-two social relationships among samples in Japan, Hong Kong and Italy found differences similar to the ones of the individualism / collectivism dimension (Argyll, Henderson, Bond and Contarello 1986). Other studies reveal similarities with Hofstede's high and lower power dimensions (e.g.Stoetzel 1983), and with masculinity /femininity dimensions (Kim, Park & Suzuki 1990). Many scholars have continued to use his research findings as a basis and framework for their own research (e.g. Triandis 1990,1995). Hofstede's dimensions are therefore useful as a reference in this thesis, although it is to be noted that his findings have been criticised for a number of reasons which will be discussed on pages 33-35. Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, building on Hofstede's and others' work, devised six different but complementary dimensions to describe cultural variation, and Ting-Toomey (1985, 1994, 1997, 1999), Jia (2001) and others have focused on identity theory and 'face' values to differentiate cultures. These various frameworks will be referred to throughout this thesis.

This research aims to contribute insights into how East Asian students perceive and respond to Western norms and practices in academic writing, and in critical argumentation in particular. The emphasis is on hearing the personal voices of individual students as they ‘tell their stories’ (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 167, Fox 1994). It should be of interest to cross-cultural researchers as well as to higher education educators wishing to know how best to support East Asian students during their postgraduate study in the U.K.

A grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967) based on three case studies was adopted. Two of these case studies are in the U.K. and were selected primarily because of the significant numbers of East Asian students recruited onto their masters programmes. The third case site was a university in China. The purpose of selecting this case site was to capture student perceptions prior to their arrival in the U.K. and to observe higher educational practice in one of the target cultures in a more holistic and contextualised manner. During the four years of the research, 94 in-depth interviews were conducted with students from East Asian cultures in an attempt to capture as wide a spectrum of student perspectives within the boundaries of three case studies. In addition, some quantitative data, in the form of mini-scenario (vignette) questionnaires supplement and triangulate the interview data. Further triangulation was achieved by interviewing some lecturers in the U.K. and in China, together with some British post-graduate students.

There are three key research questions explored in this thesis:

1. What are the key differences in academic discourse expectations between the U.K. and East Asian cultures, with particular reference to critical thinking and argumentation?

What do East Asian students understand by the term ‘critically evaluate’? This is a term frequently used by lecturers to denote critical thinking and analysis, and it contains bedrock assumptions that underpin academic writing practices in the West. The premise of this research is that East Asian students hold very different understandings (based on their own cultural values and perceptions) of what U.K. lecturers are expecting of them when they ask them to critically evaluate a topic. Critical thinking and argumentation are defined and discussed in depth in chapter three.

2. What cultural influences facilitate or hinder the understanding of, and attitude towards, Western-style critical thinking and argumentation?

The thesis explores aspects of academic study in the U.K. that East Asian students identify as causing them the most difficulties, and why this is so, as well as their lecturers' perceptions of the difficulties they face. Western styles of critical thinking and argumentation are described in depth in chapter three.

3. How can the Learning Experience of East Asian students be described in terms of an adaptation process and learning outcomes?

Are there identifiable stages to this journey, can entry and exit points be identified, and how do the students themselves perceive this process? How can U.K. lecturers best facilitate this process? What are the outcomes of this learning experience as students exit the masters programme and/or return home?

Following this introduction, there are seven chapters. The first two cover the literature review which initiated the research, chapter two focusing on cultural dimensions useful in describing and identifying cultural differences, and chapter three discussing the notions of critical thinking and argumentation. Next follows the methodology rationale, for a mixed approach, with qualitative interviews as the main method and a scenario-type questionnaire in a subsidiary role. After this, chapters five and six analyse the data findings, and are structured into five sub headings, describing the key data categories that emerged from the interviews. Direct quotes from the interviews are prolific in these chapters, as one of the key aims of the thesis is to let the participants tell their own stories in their own words. In the chapter seven, the data are interpreted, utilising the research tool of metaphors (Cameron 1999 Cortazzi 1999), and theory is developed to describe and explain the learning journey of the students. Chapter eight further develops the theory concerning the students' preferred model that combines Eastern and Western approaches. The thesis concludes with suggestions for further research, and reflections on the researcher's own journey.

Chapter 2: Cultural Variations, and Frameworks for Describing and Explaining Them

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the concept of culture, and an historical overview of some of the various frameworks that have been devised to describe and explain cultural variations. From this overview, two key conceptual frameworks are drawn out as being most relevant for this research. Although these are distinctive, they also share many commonalities. How cross cultural frameworks, such as these, are critiqued by East Asian researchers, for their Western ethno-centric perspective, is also discussed. The operation of 'Face' in a society is a further important notion by which different cultures can be distinguished, and the chapter goes on to explore the role of 'face' in cross cultural communication, particularly from the perspective of Chinese scholars.

2.1 Overview of Cultural Frameworks

For decades culture has been conceptualised in a variety of ways. Geertz, for instance, views culture as a system of meanings by which people 'communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about attitudes towards life' (1973:89). Hall (1959) equates culture with communication: 'culture is communication and communication is culture'. Keesing defines culture as not only 'what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his (or her) world', but also as:

his (or her) theory of what his (or her) fellows know, believe, and mean, his (or her) theory of the code being followed, the game played, in the society into which he (or she) was born.' (1974:89)

Hofstede defines culture as 'the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another' (1980:9). More recently, Samovar and Porter define cultures as being 'distinguished from each other by the differences in shared meanings they expect and attribute to their environment' (2001:25).

At this point it is necessary to say that the term 'culture' needs to be used with some caution. There is some reluctance to use this term as it is viewed as reductionist, and an over-generalisation of a complex issue (Kuper 1999, Said 1995, Hymes 1972). Kraut (1975) proposed that the term 'culture' be dropped altogether, as the concept is now so diverse and contradictory that he considered it better to abandon it entirely. Nevertheless, the idea of 'culture' remains useful and defensible in social science research (Smelser & Baltes 2001:

3153), and Cray and Mallory argue that “it will remain virtually impossible to conduct serious research without having culture or its equivalent to hand” (1998:16). The term is used in this thesis, but with the understanding that some caution is necessary.

In the first half of the twentieth century there was a lot of speculation by cultural anthropologists about basic human problems in society and how culture influences an individual’s behaviour. They began to develop the idea that each society should be viewed as a distinctive cultural unity characterised by its own holistic system of values and patterns, and that this system of values is common to a whole society (Mead 1935, Benedict 1934). It was believed that each system shapes a basic and determined cultural personality i.e. people’s beliefs and values are just the result of cultural conditioning. Inkeles defines this ‘national character’ as ‘relatively enduring personality characteristics and patterns that are modal among the adult members of the society’ (1954/1997:17). This model advocates a fixed notion about persons in a certain category, with no distinction made between individuals. Although these studies were very influential in their time (Moore 1997:11), they are now generally rejected as outdated and simplistic (Spiro 1987).

From the second half of the twentieth century, various cultural dimensions have been identified in an attempt to explain and describe variations across cultures. Parsons (1951) isolated a number of ‘pattern variables’ i.e. mutually exclusive choices that individuals make before engaging in action. These variables are self-collective orientation; affectivity-affective neutrality; universalism-particularism; diffuseness-specificity; ascription-achievement; and instrumental-expressive orientation. Inkeles and Levinson (1954) proposed three ‘standard analytic issues’: relation to authority; conception of self; and primary dilemmas or conflicts and ways of dealing with them. The anthropologists Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) identified five universally shared human problems, emerging from relationships with fellow beings, time, activities and nature, for which they believed all cultures must find solutions (see Appendix I). Cultures influence the selection of different preferred solutions for each set of problems and in any culture there is a set of preferred ‘value orientations’. Although distinctive, these frameworks have much in common.

U.S. anthropologist Edward Hall (1959/1965: 45-46) listed ten ‘primary message systems’: interaction, association with others, subsistence, bisexuality, territoriality, temporality,

learning, play, defence, and exploitation of resources. In 1976 he authored *Beyond Culture* in which he differentiated cultures according to their ways of communicating into high and low context. Context is defined by Hall and Hall (1990:6) as ‘the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event’. It can be context about the subject or the activity; the situation; one’s status in a social system; past experience or culture. High context cultures look for meaning and understanding in what is not said – in the nonverbal communication or body language, in the silences and pauses, in relationships and empathy. Low context cultures emphasize sending and receiving accurate messages directly, and doing so in an articulate manner:

A high context communication or message is one in which most of the information is already in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicitly transmitted part of the message. A low context communication is just the opposite; i.e. the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (Hall & Hall 1990:6)

Hall’s work is discussed further on pages 79-81.

Hofstede (1980, 1983, 1991, 2001), building on these later ideas, identified four original cultural dimensions that he claims can be used to explain cultural variability: individualism-collectivism; uncertainty avoidance, power distance; and masculinity-femininity. He suggests that these dimensions also relate to the basic problems of humanity: ‘each dimension is rooted in a basic problem with which all societies have to cope, but on which their answers vary’ (1980:29). He also claims that Inkeles and Levinson predicted his dimensions in their ‘standard analytic issues’ long before he identified them empirically (1980:31). Hofstede’s dimensions are examined in more depth in this chapter primarily because they continue to be used extensively in research conducted into cross cultural differences. The Chinese Culture Connection (1987) gave credence to Hofstede’s findings as not being influenced by cultural bias (this is discussed later on page 32). More recently, Merritt (2000) examined Hofstede’s dimensions for nineteen countries by using commercial airline pilots as his focus of research. The findings again correlated well with Hofstede’s original findings. Similarly Oudenhoven’s (2001) analysis of organizations in ten cultures supports Hofstede’s findings.

Hofstede’s dimensions have also proved useful in undergirding a number of broader communication/management theories (Gudykunst and Lee 2001). In his *Conversational*

Constraints theory, for example, Kim (1993, 1995) proposes that collectivist cultures place more emphasis on social relations and face-supporting behaviours in their conversational style. Gudykunst (1995) links all of Hofstede's four dimensions to his Anxiety/Uncertainty Management theory, and the Expectancy Violations theory (Burgoon 1992, 1995; Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988) has used cultural dimensions to explain cross-cultural variations in communication. These applications of Hofstede's dimensions indicate the usefulness and significance of his work. Hofstede's dimensions, therefore, still appear to provide reasonable descriptions of the predominate tendencies in various cultures (Gudykunst and Kim 2003:81). His theory has not been without its critics, however, and these criticisms will be discussed on pages 33-35.

As well as Hofstede's cultural dimensions, those of Trompenaars (2000) are also examined in more depth in this chapter, as these are a more recent and updated adaptation of Parson's, and Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's taxonomies. Although both Hofstede and Trompenaars identify linkages between culture and behaviour – Hofstede focusing on generalizable linkages and Trompenaars on country-specific linkages – neither researchers explain the causal links, the reasons behind these influences. Cray and Mallory believe that Hofstede's and Trompenaars' frameworks, although useful as far as they go, are too static to accommodate cultural adaptation in an increasingly global world. They argue that what is needed to expand the theoretical basis for cross-cultural studies is an interpretist approach which seeks to understand the hidden thought programming behind the behaviour. This approach would explore how individuals perceive and interpret their immediate environment, and would help to uncover the causal links (Cray & Mallory 1998:92). This thesis endeavours to do just this, by exploring individuals' views about their own cross-cultural learning adaptation process.

The rest of this chapter first examines Hofstede's research and its criticisms. This is followed by a comparison with Trompenaars' framework of cultural dimensions. One particular aspect of cross cultural communication, facework, is then explored, as this is an important aspect in the data analysis and interpretation in this thesis.

2.2 Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions

Hofstede (1980, 1991, 1998, 2001) has made a significant contribution to our understanding of how cultural groups behave differently under similar circumstances because of the

differences in their underlying values and attitudes. He provided researchers with a theoretical framework for examining cultural diversity in terms of a limited number of dimensions, and many researchers have replicated his study or extended and built on it (Sondergaard 1994, Warner 2002:2578).

Hofstede's empirical research base for the study was 116,000 attitude-survey questionnaires that he had access to, and which had already been completed by employees in a large US multinational corporation. Each questionnaire contained about one hundred and fifty questions dealing with values, perceptions and satisfactions, and the questionnaire represented fifty occupations and sixty six nationalities. Twenty different language versions were used. These data were not originally intended as a contribution to academia and cross cultural research, but as an aid to achieving the company's internal aims. However, from the questionnaire Hofstede identified four dimensions of national culture. From the data analysis, each country was assigned a rank ranging from 1 to 40 in each dimension, depending on how it compared to the other countries. The contrast between East Asian and British students according to these ranking scores can be seen in Appendix II, and are discussed further throughout this chapter. Hofstede's dimensions are next considered.

Individualism/Collectivism

Individualism refers to a society in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look primarily after her/himself and their immediate family. Collectivism describes a society in which people, from birth onwards, are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which continue to protect them throughout their lifetime in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. Members of collectivistic cultures tend to use high-context messages and communicate in an indirect fashion (Hall 1976, Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey 1988), whereas members of individualistic cultures tend to communicate in a direct, low-context fashion.

There may well be both individualistic and collectivistic ideologies throughout a society, but there will be an overall tendency towards one or the other. Consequently, some students from East Asian collectivist societies may believe that U.K. lecturers want them to follow the accepted 'party line' and they therefore seek the 'correct answer' from the lecturer, rather than express individualistic opinions that might not be in line with those of the lecturer.

Collectivist societies are defined by Triandis (1995), and Gudykunst & Kim (2003), building on Hofstede's work, as people-oriented, where relationships with in-groups are intensive and interdependence is high. In line with Hofstede's findings, Hsu's (1971, 1981, 1983) cultural studies have shown that rural China is collectivist, whereas Inkeles (1983) and Stewart & Bennett (1991) found that Western European and North American cultures tend to be individualistic. Conflict tends to be 'papered over' towards the 'outgroup' and hidden within the in-group in collectivist societies (Ting-Toomey 1985, 1997), and such in-groups provide social support, resources and security. Vertical relationships (e.g. parent /child, boss/employer) are more important than horizontal relationships (e.g. spouse/spouse). According to Banfield (1958), in politics collectivists tend towards actions that benefit the family and their in-group, rather than the broad public good. Masakazu (1994) claims that small, close-knit collective groups are important intermediaries between the individual and society as a whole, providing a stable and secure situation in which the individual 'knows his proper place'. Masakazu posits that when facing the world at large without this buffer group, the individual will naturally become self-assertive.

East Asian collectivist societies 'emphasise in-group harmony avoiding conflict with each other at all costs' (Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal 1988:326). Confrontation is highly undesirable. This is in keeping with the teaching of Confucianism that a person is not primarily an individual, but rather that s/he is a member of a family. The self is seen primarily in terms of social relations, mutual obligations and responsibilities. Children should learn to restrain themselves, to overcome their individuality so as to maintain the harmony in the family (if only on the surface); one's thoughts, however, remain free. Harmony is found in the maintenance of an individual's 'face', meaning one's dignity, self-respect, and prestige (Gao 1996). The use of the British word 'face' in this sense was actually derived from the Chinese. Losing one's dignity, in the Chinese tradition, is equivalent to losing one's eyes, nose, and mouth. Social relations should be conducted in such a way that everybody's face is maintained and paying respect to someone else is called 'giving face' (Gudykunst & Kim 2003:306). This all has implications for the extent to which those from collectivist cultures are able to develop Western style critical thinking skills that emphasise the individual mental struggle for truth, rather than a collective activity that people can engage in together. These implications for East Asian postgraduates are discussed more fully in the next chapter (see pages 65-68).

According to Hofstede's findings (Appendix II), the U.K. scores highly on individualism compared with East Asian cultures such as Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia (China, unfortunately, was not included in Hofstede's study). Triandis argues that individualism is caused by societal complexity and by affluence. Cultural complexity:

creates separation, distinction and different life styles. The individual is confronted with conflicting norms and worldviews. This conflict requires that the individual decide how to act on the basis of internal factors rather than the norms of a collective' (1990:44).

Individualists belong to more in-groups than collectivists and they become adept at meeting outsiders, forming new in-groups and getting along with new people. Characteristics of individualism include being more task oriented than people oriented, being more detached, distanced and self reliant, and bringing conflict into the open. Individualistic cultures also tend to engage in low context communication.

Many rights and few obligations belong to individualist in-groups, but in return less social support, resources and security are given and received. Some have decried individualism as selfishness (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swindler & Tipton 1985), but Spence (1985) emphasises what he sees as the positive contribution of individualism in promoting equality of rights and democracy, which he sees as rooted in protestantism. He stresses the role of individualism in framing the Declaration of Independence and the American Constitution.

Masakazu, writing from a collectivist, Japanese perspective, argues that there is a Western self righteous assumption that individualism is culturally superior to 'groupism'; a belief that 'the individual is generally closer to the essential nature of humanity than is the group' (1994:109). This assumption of superiority may underlie many U.K. lecturers' teaching methodologies. However, Masakazu believes that Western individualism is not the only form that individualism can take – it can exist, and indeed be fulfilled, by being part of and participating fully within a group:

The individual maintains its self-identity most strongly when it belongs to a powerful group of like-minded people and devotes itself most faithfully to the solidarity of that group (...) the person's individuality is generally identical with that person's sharing in the life of the group. (1994:124)

This comment raises the possible notion of collectives of individualists (or at least strong in-groups). Masakazu also thinks that Western individualists are egocentric, relying on themselves and seeing relations with others as a means, whereas contextualists

(collectivists), 'valuing interdependence and mutual trust, consider relationships between the self and others to be the essence of human existence' (1994:134). The Japanese word for 'human being', he points out, means 'between people' (*ningen*). However, he does make the critical observation that the more the people within a group adopt a contextual attitude 'the more closed the group becomes toward society as a whole' (1994:139).

Triandis, however, argues that culture is more complex than is suggested by Hofstede's dimensions, by pointing out that individualism and collectivism are setting specific i.e. their behaviour depends on which in-group is present – people can exhibit both individualistic and collectivist behaviours in different situations and with different groups. For collectivists there is a sharp difference in behaviour towards ingroups and outgroups:

Collectivists can be very nice to those who are members of their ingroups but can be very nasty, competitive and uncooperative toward those who are members of outgroups. (Triandis 1990:47)

The boundary between the in-group and out-group is thus much stronger and relatively impermeable compared to the corresponding boundary for individualists. For East Asian students the question arises as to who comprises their in-groups and their outgroups. Are all other East Asian students included in their in-group, or only those from their own countries, or indeed only those few who are also their close friends? Is Triandis right when he describes collectivists as being competitive and uncooperative to outgroups? These questions are addressed further when analysing the interview data (see pages 191-192).

Triandis also argues that there are both individualistic and collectivistic tendencies among people in all cultures, although he found in each culture 'a modal pattern' of orientation (Triandis 1995:61). He grouped people into two psychological types: allocentric and idiocentric. Idiocentric types show more concern for their own goals than the in-group's goals, less attention to the views of in-groups, self-reliance with competition, detachment from in-groups, deciding on their own rather than asking for the views of others. The idiocentric persons in individualistic cultures will find it completely natural 'to do their own thing'. Allocentric types, on the other hand, comply with group norms without challenging them and feel concerned about their communities and ingroups (Triandis et al 1988:325). Idiocentric members in collectivistic societies may still comply, but with resentment or questioning. Thus, Triandis et al (1988:331) identified certain characteristics of idiocentrism in collectivist cultures and, likewise, certain characteristics of allocentrism in

individualist cultures. It follows that care must be taken in this thesis to heed Tayeb's (2001) warning and to not confuse non-cultural factors such as personality and allocentric/idiocentric personality tendencies, with cultural factors. This is difficult to achieve, but employment of participant member validation of findings and an awareness of these issues by the researcher are valid attempts to follow Tayeb's advice.

Triandis also found that older people today tend to be more collectivist, and he suggested that in countries such as the U.K. and Japan this could in part be due to the experiences of hardships suffered and community spirit in the Second World War. Furthermore, he suggests that in all societies the upper social classes are more likely to be individualistic, arguing that one can afford to be more independent when one is rich (Triandis 1995:62). Hsu (1983) suggests that as a culture becomes affluent, it emphasises ownership and becomes more competitive. One interesting implication of this is that many international students represent the elite of their nation in that their families have the finances to support their studies abroad. They may, therefore, not be representative of their collectivistic cultures as a whole.

Triandis thus found that the simpler notions about collectivism and individualism need to be replaced with a more complex understanding of this Hofstedian dimension. For example, his research suggests that Japanese students are allowed to be individualistic for a few years in Japan whilst at university, to 'do their own thing', before returning to collectivism, joining the workforce and becoming 'slaves of the corporation' (Triandis et al 1988:334). East Asian international students may therefore prove to be inappropriate samples for studies on Hofstede's cultural dimensions for some of them may move away, either temporarily or permanently, from their collectivist 'allocentric type' as they adjust to the individualist norms of U.K. society. It may be that these students are willing to temporarily discard uncertainty avoidance with a willingness to take risks during these 'experimental years'. It may also be that a global acultural university/academic culture exists, where personality and psychological tendencies play a larger, albeit temporary, role than the influence of one's culture. After their exposure to, and involvement in, the more individualistic culture of a U.K. postgraduate course, do these students revert to their collectivist mentality on their return home? Or do they retain some individualistic behaviour, and synthesise it within their native cultural norms? These are all questions that this thesis aims to explore.

Large/Small Power Distance

This describes the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organisations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally. Power distance could be measured, for example, in how deference to superiors, such as lecturers and recognised scholars, might affect East Asian students' freedom to disagree and debate openly in the classroom and in essays.

According to Hofstede's findings, the U.K. has a lower power distance score than East Asian cultures such as Thailand, South Korea, Taiwan and Japan (see Appendix II). This dimension has particular relevance to lecturer/international student relationships. East Asian students expect a high power distance and hierarchical relationship with their tutors, often viewing them as 'gurus' and 'fonts of all knowledge' to whom they owe respect and unquestioning obedience. In return, lecturers are expected to fulfil the role of paternalistic mentors, who personally care for the students' welfare (Cortazzi & Jin 1997; Hird 1997). This East Asian large power distance has a long tradition in Confucian heritages, which emphasise deference to authority in hierarchical relations. These behavioural roles are reflected in the spoken and written discourses of both players (Scollon & Scollon 1981). Without a good understanding of these cultural expectations, misinterpretations will inevitably arise.

Scollon and Scollon (1981) compared the discourse practices of the Athabaskans and the Americans and showed that there is a significant difference in their perspective on power distance and that this was reflected in their communication. Although it is unwise to generalise, and it must be recognised that many different personalities make up any one cultural group, it is, nevertheless, possible to cautiously identify trends and general preferred behaviours in a cultural group. Scollon and Scollon identified the Americans in their research as adhering to a behaviour pattern where the dominant or superior role tends to act more like a taciturn 'spectator', and where those in subordinate roles need to display their abilities in an exhibitionist manner. An exemplar of this is the Western style job interview. The Athabaskans, they observed, had the reverse expectations. For them, those in the subordinate role were the 'spectators' while their superiors engaged in exhibiting their abilities. This resulted in each group perceiving the other as acting in a superior fashion, which obviously led to serious miscommunication:

As each speaker tries to take a position of subordination to the other, he unknowingly is communicating just the opposite in the other speaker's system. (Scollon & Scollon 1981:18)

Similarly, East Asian students' expectations of lecturer/student relationships may differ widely from those of Western students and lecturers. They may be expecting to play a spectator's role in class debates, and for lecturers to display their superior knowledge in a transmission, didactic style of teaching.

Another major cause for the interethnic communication breakdown between the Americans and the Athabaskans was their different perceptions of the importance of hierarchical dependence. In the Athabaskan community:

The person who provided for others was given the dominant position as well as the right to direct others' behaviour. Others were in a position of dependence and could expect the dominant person to take care of them. Basically all that was required was to make the need known for support to be given. (Scollon & Scollon 1981:18)

Hence, those in dependent roles would be expected to accept direction from those responsible for their care, rather than exert the individualistic, independent and self reliant approach advocated by Paul (1982, 1993, 1994). This dependent-carer relationship would also be reflected in their discourse system, both spoken and written. Such learned discourse systems are deeply embedded in one's consciousness from early childhood through socialisation, and so it is not surprising that any change would also come slowly. For the Athabaskans, Scollon & Scollon (1981:51) suggest, any change 'would require similar learning contexts of concerned, nurturing members' to guide them. Again, this has implications for the lecturer/student relationship and the possible expectations of East Asian students that they will receive mentoring, caring and directional support from their lecturers (Channell 1990), especially in the acquisition of critical writing skills.

High/Low Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension describes the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. Hofstede contends that members of high uncertainty avoidance cultures believe that "what is different is dangerous", and members of low uncertainty avoidance cultures believe that "what is different is curious" (1991:119).

Uncertainty avoidance is reflected in East Asian students' expectancy of clear, unambiguous guidelines for the structure and content of assignments.

According to Hofstede's findings, the U.K. scores low on uncertainty avoidance whilst East Asian cultures, such as Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and South Korea score much higher.

According to Hofstede and Bond, uncertainty-avoiding cultures adhere to strict laws and rules and a belief in absolute truth: 'there can be only one truth, and we have it' (1988:11).

There is, therefore, greater formalization when uncertainty avoidance is very high, as in Japan. In contrast, uncertainty-accepting cultures are more tolerant of behaviour and opinions that differ from their own, as in the U.K., Sweden and Denmark, and personal risk is more acceptable. These societies try to have as few rules as possible; they are relativist, allowing many currents to flow side by side.

This dimension shares many similarities with Triandis' (1995) 'structural tightness'. 'Tight' cultures impose many rules and constraints on behaviour, and equate with high uncertainty avoidance cultures (such as East Asian cultures). 'Loose' cultures, on the other hand, place few rules and constraints on behaviour, and equate with low uncertainty avoidance cultures (such as the U.K.).

Masculinity/Femininity

Hofstede proposes that the predominant pattern of socialization in most societies is for men to be more assertive, valuing work goals more highly than quality of life or people, whereas females are generally more nurturing than ambitious. He found that some Western societies are nearer the masculinity end of the masculine/feminine dimension i.e. they place more value on the masculine characteristics as described above, whilst East Asian cultures are nearer the femininity end.

This is closely linked to power distribution in relationships. Hofstede claims that feminine tendencies in a society emphasise people-nurture and a caring disposition towards others.

Masculine tendencies, on the other hand, emphasise assertiveness and task completion:

masculinity pertains to societies in which social gender roles are clearly distinct (i.e. men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused on material success whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender and concerned with the quality of life): *femininity* pertains to societies in which social gender roles overlap (i.e. both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and

concerned with the quality of life). (1991: 82 –83)

As with Hofstede's other cultural dimensions, both tendencies exist in all cultures but one tendency tends to predominate. So high value tends to be placed on relationships and nurturing in feminine cultures whereas performance, ambition, achievement and assertiveness are more emphasised in masculine cultures. According to Hofstede's findings, the U.K. scores half way on the masculinity/femininity dimension, with Thailand scoring highly feminine, and interestingly, Japan scoring highly masculine (see Appendix II).

On the basis of these four dimensions, Hofstede grouped national cultures into clusters with distinctive differences. For example, he identifies Anglo and Nordic cultures as being more at ease with uncertainty than Japan, Latin countries and German speaking nations. It is interesting to note that out of the thirty-nine countries in Hofstede's data, Japan has the fourth highest rating for uncertainty avoidance and Taiwan has the fifth lowest rating in individualism. In contrast to this, the U.K is characterised by low uncertainty avoidance (sixth lowest), high individualism (third highest, after the U.S.A and Australia), and low power distance.

A fifth dimension was proposed later, which Hofstede called 'time orientation' and which Michael Bond, who worked with Hofstede on this later research, argues is linked with the Confucian tradition of perseverance and long-term orientation (Hofstede & Bond 1988:145). Research carried out by the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) found that the values contained in this Confucian dynamism, i.e. having a sense of shame, perseverance, thrift, and ordering relationships by status and observing this order, would appear to be relatively unimportant to Westerners. This, again, has implications for East Asian students in the U.K. If values, which are essential to their own cultures, are not seen as important to U.K. lecturers, then misunderstandings and a gap in expectations are inevitable.

Following Hofstede's early research in 1980, other scholars, e.g. Triandis, Bontempo & Villareal (1988) and Hofstede & Bond (1984), who worked closely with Hong Kong Chinese colleagues, began questioning whether these theoretical dimensions of cultural variation may not themselves be culture bound. After all, social science is Western in origin, practitioners and instrumentation. Prior to Hofstede's research, the main instrument for measuring cultural variations was the Rokeach Value System - a well-known

questionnaire for measuring values in American society (Rokeach 1973). Both this and Hofstede's instruments evolved from work by U.K., British, Dutch, French and Scandinavian researchers – all of them from Western cultures. Thus respondents in non-Western settings were asked to answer questions that had been created by Western researchers. Some questions may have been irrelevant to Eastern cultures and other relevant questions may not have been included. This limitation was acknowledged by Hofstede himself:

If we begin to realize that our own ideas are culturally limited ...we can never be self-sufficient again. Only others with different mental programs can help us find the limitations of our own. (Hofstede 1980:374)

Triandis (1982) suggested that dimensions other than those identified by Hofstede might exist, and would probably have surfaced had a different set of questions been asked. Subsequently, the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) experimented with trying to measure culture variation using an instrument designed by the Chinese instead of by Westerners. They sought to discover whether this would result in a very different perspective of human values i.e. in those values fundamental to a Chinese worldview.

In order to create a research instrument, based on the Rokeach Value System, but not bound by Western culture, this team of Chinese scholars (co-ordinated by Michael Bond (1991), a Canadian long-term resident in Hong Kong) prepared, in Chinese, a list of forty 'fundamental and basic values for Chinese people' (Chinese Culture Connection 1987:145). These were translated into English and a survey carried out amongst university undergraduates across twenty-two nations. On a nine point scale, respondents were asked to indicate how important each of the concepts was to them personally.

In view of the previous discussion on possible biases and prejudices inherent in Western researchers' perspectives, methodologies and their interpretations of data, the results arising from this 'Eastern' instrument proved to be extremely interesting. In fact, very similar results arose for three of Hofstede's cultural dimensions: masculinity/femininity; power distance; individualism/collectivism. Hofstede & Bond (1988) found that neo-Confucian countries generally score fairly high on power distance, low on individualism and mid-range on masculinity/femininity (except Japan, which scores high on masculinity). This agrees with Hofstede's earlier findings that East Asian cultures are characterised by large power distance, low individualism and medium masculinity/femininity. This Chinese based

research therefore strengthened Hofstede's findings and made them more robust and universal.

A second discovery which emerged from the Chinese Culture Connection study (1987) concerned Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance dimension. Uncertainty Avoidance – the fourth dimension identified by Hofstede and defined as 'man's search for truth' by Bond (Hofstede & Bond 1988:11) – was not seen to be important by the Chinese and did not appear in their values list. Hofstede and Bond (1988:16) conclude that 'Chinese do not believe this to be an essential issue'. It is this dimension of uncertainty avoidance which has particular relevance for this thesis. Whilst a significant amount of research has been undertaken on Hofstede's other three original dimensions, there has been relatively little exploration of this 'essential issue' in the context of higher education, and virtually no research as it relates to East Asian masters students and academic writing in the U.K. Hofstede admitted that this was the 'weakest' dimension, and Chapman & Antoniou (1994:69) argue that it represents a complex set of issues, and probably needs more than one dimension of analysis. Other criticisms of Hofstede's work will now be considered.

Critique of Hofstede's study

Hofstede's work is useful because it has shown that values and attitudes are different, in degree, if not in absolute terms, from one society to another, and there is general agreement about the value and significant contribution of Hofstede's work to cultural studies. However, the findings and conclusions of Hofstede's study should be treated with caution on methodological grounds. Although an impressive 117,000 questionnaires were administered in 66 countries, the number of respondents per country was often small (less than two hundred respondents in fifteen of the countries). Hofstede's study was based entirely on an attitude-survey questionnaire and some have questioned whether using only attitude-surveys was a valid base from which to infer cultural values (Triandis 1982:89, Kreweras 1982:94,). Furthermore, the respondents were a narrow and specific sample of their countries' population (middle class, IBM employees). McSweeney argues that because all the respondents were employees of a single company, and because the majority of questions were work related, then at best any national cultural differences could only be specific to work places, and not generalised for any situation: 'generalisation to the national from the micro-level is unwarranted' (2002:102). Furthermore, McSweeney argues that the

dimensions that were identified were determined by the questions asked and that there can be no confidence that the resultant dimensions are the dominant ones. In addition, McSweeney points out (2002: 96) that Hofstede's perception of IBM's organisational culture as being uniform is invalid as it is well documented that multiple cultures exist within organisations (Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch 1983; Spender 1998).

McSweeney's main contention, though, is that Hofstede bases his interpretation of data on a false conception that uniform national cultures exist (2002: 95). Hofstede acknowledges that individual responses vary, sometimes radically, within cultures, but by averaging out these responses he arrives at the 'central tendency' of a culture and the characteristics which he claims are representative of the parent population. McSweeney argues that with such a narrow, specialised sample one cannot be sure that these are *the* central tendencies of any culture. Hanson, likewise, argues that individuals may differ by the degree to which they choose to adhere to a set of cultural patterns: 'Some individuals identify strongly with a particular group; others combine practices from several groups' (Hanson 1992:3). In other words, there is a wide spread of personality types, outlooks and behaviours in any one culture and to 'box' cultures into stereotypical types is misleading and unhelpful (Cray and Mallory 1998). Furthermore, Hanson points out that 'behaviour is governed by many factors – socio economic status, sex, age, length of residence in a locale, education – each of which will have an impact on cultural practices as well'(1992:3).

One of Tayeb's (2001) main criticisms is that non cultural factors can be confused with cultural factors when researching behaviours. Similarly, McSweeney points out that historical/political influences may equally determine responses and actions (2002:110). Non cultural factors, Tayeb argues, need to be eliminated in this kind of research if possible; mere acknowledgement of them is not enough.

Other critics, whilst basically accepting Hofstede's cultural dimensions, argue that confining national culture to five dimensions 'gives only a simplistic and unidimensional picture of reality' (Warner 2002: 2577). It is too simplistic, for instance, to say that China is lower on Uncertainty Avoidance than the U.K., because peoples' reactions and behaviour are highly situation based. In other words, a cultural group may prefer to avoid uncertainty in religious beliefs or politics whilst welcoming it in academic studies. For example, Greece has the highest score for Uncertainty Avoidance. In common with East Asian cultures, Greece is a

collectivist, family-oriented society and most of Greek businesses are family owned and run. Chapman and Antoniou (1994) claim, however, that Greeks need to be risk avoiders in business (the aspect that Hofstede was targeting) in order to survive both economically and socially. This does not mean, however, that they are risk avoiders in every situation – as Sondergaard (1994:451/2) points out, risk avoidance measurements will vary depending on the political and environmental stability of a society. Societies may need to avoid risks and the penalties that they incur when under tight, authoritarian rule. Masakazu (1994:14) too argues that culture is not static, inherent, rigid or permanent. Rather, cultural character is due to the history of a culture, is organic and can be transformed if the environment changes. Uncertainty avoidance is seen by Chapman and Antoniou (1994) as a fluid, fragile, multi-faceted cultural dimension, which can change and adapt more readily to the environment than the other of Hofstede's dimensions. It may be that East Asian students, operating in the more risk-accepting learning environment of the U.K, would be more willing to take risks and experiment with new approaches than they would back home. This also suggests, as with Triandis' findings, that culture is complex and transforming, and therefore is difficult to use as a tool to uncover learning differences and difficulties.

In answer to all these criticisms, Hofstede himself points out that there have been over 400 'significant and independent correlations' of his findings in various countries and organisations since his own seminal work (Hofstede 2002 :1358, Sondergaard 1994), and Cray and Mallory conclude that wide use of Hofstede's work reflects how it has helped 'researchers to make sense of culture, despite doubts about both methods and data source' (1998:55). In this thesis, therefore, the cultural dimensions and characteristics discussed in this chapter provide a benchmark from which to start an exploration. They are taken as representing cultural central tendencies only, and there is no intention of stereotyping all members of a culture, but individual differences are fully recognised.

As previously mentioned, Hofstede and Bond's research concludes that the Chinese do not believe uncertainty avoidance to be an essential issue (1988:16). Bond defines uncertainty avoidance as 'man's search for truth' and the East Asian cultures, according to Bond, see truth as relative, and hence the search for ultimate truth as less important. In other words, Confucianism deals with virtue, but 'leaves the question of truth open' (Hofstede & Bond 1988:19). One could argue, then, that when the political and social environment discourages risk taking, experimenting and individualism then this will also affect the freedom one has

to search for truth.

In contrast to this, the Judeo-Christian faiths of the West do claim to be concerned with truth. According to Hofstede and Bond, the fundamentalist/liberal split in these religions corresponds to the two poles (strong or weak) of the uncertainty-avoidance dimension:

The East, represented by Confucianism but also by Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Shintoism, does not assume that any one human being can have the Truth. Human truth is seen as partial, so that one truth does not exclude its opposite. This is why people in the East can easily adhere to more than one religion or philosophical school at the same time; Shintoism and Buddhism, for example, coexist in many Japanese households. Along this line of thinking, a practical, nonreligious ethical system like Confucianism can become a cornerstone of society – more so than in the West, where we tend to derive ethics from religion...Eastern cultures practice virtue without a concern for truth. (1988.20)

It could be argued that East Asian students, whilst not able or willing to take risks in their own cultural environment, may adapt very quickly to the new social system of the West, where certain constraints on their behaviour and thinking are removed. The implication of this is that the 'rules' of the new environment would need to be made explicit. East Asian students would, of course, need to be courageous enough to experiment with new methods of learning and this would involve risk taking and uncertainty, especially in the first few months of their masters course. Distanced from their familiar social and political frameworks, how well do they deal with the unknown and what factors influence their attitude to change? Do they adapt rapidly enough, within a one-year masters course, to develop an autonomous, critical and creative approach to learning? Does the fear of losing face, or even of losing their cultural identity, hold them back from experimenting and risk taking? These questions will be further explored when analysing the data on pages 152-155.

Although not part of this particular research, it would be interesting to discover if this phenomenon happens the other way round i.e. would U.K. masters students be able, or be willing to adapt, say, to a Chinese higher education system? It is possible that British students may equally have to learn to temporarily be more risk avoiding, so as not to fail papers. Perhaps this would affect their self-perception and identity. They may resist change or take a pragmatic approach for the sake of academic achievement. This could be the focus of another research project.

In summary, it may be concluded from the critique of Hofstede's work that attempting to identify cultural differences by empirical research is no easy, or even feasible, task. As Tayeb (2001) argues, many non-cultural forces can affect an individual's responses and actions, and researchers need to be circumspect in making claims about national cultural dimensions or characteristics. However, whilst acknowledging the weaknesses inherent in his methodology, this researcher finds herself agreeing with Hofstede that although 'nations are not the best units for studying cultures, they are usually the only kind of units available for comparison, and better than nothing' (2002:1356).

To strengthen the conceptual framework underpinning this thesis, it is necessary to seek a more complex set of dimensions than Hofstede's alone in an attempt to describe cultural values. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' cultural dimensions are therefore next considered, followed by a consideration of 'face' values. All three frameworks are then used in the thesis in describing cultural differences.

2.3 Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' Cultural Dimensions

More recently, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000:11) have identified the following five dimensions for cultural variabilities:

- Universalism – particularism
- Individualism – communitarianism
- Specificity – diffuseness
- Achieved status – ascribed status
- Inner direction – outer direction

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, like Hofstede, developed their dimensions from a large data base, but of managers, not employees, who were asked their opinions on a number of issues thought to reflect certain basic social values. Their comparative study is different from Hofstede's work in that links between values and behaviours are more country-specific, rather than holding for all cultures. This comparative study has been criticised (e.g. by Redding 1994) because it focuses on difference at the expense of possible similarities, but is nevertheless recognised as providing 'important insights into various cultures' (Cray and Mallory 1998: 26).

Hofstede's dimensions and those outlined above, although on the surface quite different, actually complement each other and together provide useful tools for observing and measuring cultural variation. The elements of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' framework are now examined.

Universalism – Particularism

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars define a universalist society as one which advocates absolute laws where individuals are free within the constraints of the legal process. They argue that in the West, universalism is based on the protestant ethic and that what prevents runaway individualism is a system of laws before which all individuals are considered equal. The expectation is that there is no favouritism; what are valued are truth, moral judgement, diversity and equality. In contrast, in societies which value particularism, particular concerns are valued above the law. In other words, friends are trusted and counted on before adherence to the law, and there is an emphasis on discretion, making exceptions and personal commitments which are based on established relationships. The inclination is therefore to 'bend the rules' to fit the particular circumstances and people involved. This can be related to Hsu's (1981) situation-specific characterisation of Chinese culture, which is context-bound, as opposed to the more universalist American culture which is context-free. It also relates to Hall's (1976) notions of low and high context cultures.

Individualism – Communitarianism

Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars' definition of individualism is similar to Hofstede's although they expand his definition of an individualistic society to one which attracts and produces pioneers. America, they point out, was born of a pioneering spirit: 'The unknown has always attracted individualists' (2000:75). In an individualistic culture people tend to be self orientated and competitive, taught not to care about what others think, but to be assertive, to stick by one's principles and to be different/distinctive in order to achieve personal goals. Decision-making is fast and incisive by the leaders and voting is accepted as a means of ending disputes. However, implementation of the decisions may be slow and difficult because of underlying dissention and the lack of full consensus. They also claim that individualism breeds a 'guilt culture', rooted in the protestant ethic i.e. we are made to feel personally responsible and hence guilty for our failures.

The prime orientation of Communitarianism, on the other hand, is towards common goals

and objectives. This can be observed, for example, in the two chief personal virtues of business people in Japan: *Amae* (indulgent affection, typically between a superior and subordinate); and *Kohai* (an elder brother/younger brother relationship among executives) (Gudykunst & Kim 2003, 54). Consensus is sought for and decision-making is consequently slower, but once a decision is made, implementation is smooth because everyone is in agreement. However, reaction time may suffer because of the delay.

According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000:89), East Asian countries like China have emulated Western businesses by employing a 'catch up' communitarianism which combines the fierce competition of individualism with the virtues of collectivism. Once-communist China has successfully combined the two dimensions in business in this way, rather than swing to individualism. However, the practice of retaining harmonious groups and 'interactive clusters' can be dangerous in business because the weak can then be held up by the strong well beyond their sell-by date, illustrated in recent years by Japan's economic crisis (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000:91). Conversely, it can be equally argued that collectivism is a strength in times of crisis as clusters of businesses can share and complement their resources, rather than being in rivalry with each other.

There may be a direct parallel of this in education. Traditionally, higher education in the U.K has focused on individual academic achievement where students are in competition and, in a sense, in rivalry with each other. This raises the question as to whether educators should attempt to follow the trends in global business by combining the competition of individualism with a more interactive, supportive learning environment where students can share and complement their resources and strengths. Perhaps East Asian students would feel more comfortable with this combination. It may be, however, that higher education institutes around the globe share an academic culture which supercedes and replaces societies' collectivist/individualistic norms.

Specificity – Diffuseness

Specific cultures split things into compartments, rather than viewing everything as a whole. Specific thinking is defined as explicit, analytical, linear, critical, truth seeking and low context and are identified with Hofstede's individualistic societies, such as the U.K. and America. The emphasis is on the verbal/numerical, polarised alternatives and task/product orientation: "Specificity seeks truth through analysis, by breaking the whole into pieces and

seeing in which specific part a fault or trouble lies” (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000:130).

Specific cultures engage in Western-style argumentation and linear logic, such as is required by U.K. universities, especially at masters degree level. This issue is explored more fully in the following chapter, where comparisons are drawn between the type of critical thinking involved in Western argument and the tendency for East Asian cultures to avoid uncertainty and conflict.

Specific communication styles tend to be forthright, blunt, confrontational and bold. They can be tactless and hurtful ‘calling a spade a spade’, ‘telling it like it is’. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars describe this style of communication as having a large public space but a small private space that very few have access to. Such communicators are thus open and friendly to strangers on a superficial level, but only in specific settings, such as in a classroom, will they reveal a lot about themselves to strangers. In such settings, open criticism and confrontation is accepted, but this does not extend outside the specific circumstances i.e. relationships are compartmentalised.

Diffuse thinking, on the other hand, tends to be associated with Hofstede’s collectivism dimension and is associated with East Asian cultures. It is complex, holistic, spontaneous, implicit, intuitive, and emphasises synthesis, rather than analysis. It is high context (Hall 1976) in that tacit knowledge is held between people in relationships, and it is people and process orientated. Diffuse thinking is more alert to remote consequences and the need for balance rather than focusing on polarised alternatives:

Diffuse ways of thinking make it possible to connect ideas that in Western cultures are polarized. Analysis is the sword of the critic and the evaluator, not of the originator or the entrepreneur ... when we make a list of “bullet points”, each one shorn of ambiguity and qualification, we lose nuances, subtlety and meaning. (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000:130/138)

Diffuse communication styles are indirect, where inferences are given and others are left to interpret the full meaning. In this way, the communicators tread gently, hoping that the implications have been grasped and assuming that the other has the sensitivity to decode the message, if and when s/he is ready to do so. Thus the diffuse communication style which is common in East Asia can appear evasive and slippery to the British, designed to let both

communicators off the hook. It is distinguished by having a small public space where only most formal, polite and surface attributes are revealed. The communicator can therefore appear reserved, private and 'closed' to the stranger. Rapport is important and criticism can only be handled if there is strong rapport. There is no/little allowance for dissent or public confrontation, because it is impossible for participants not to take things personally. Saving face is important in diffuse relationships; losing face is 'when something is made public which people perceive as being private' (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000:78).

Problems occur in the 'danger zone' (Trompenaars 1993:77) when a person from a diffuse culture, such as China, believes that because of the friendliness and openness of the specific person, for example of a British lecturer or student, they have access to that person's private space, when in fact they only have access to the large public space of the specific person, not their 'private' self. To specific people, diffuse people can appear 'soft', self effacing, and modest; whereas to diffuse people, specific people can appear 'hard', self assertive and proud or controlling. This has direct relevance to lecturer/student relationships and to student peer relationships. East Asian students may feel very reticent to disclose their inner thoughts – their 'private space' - in a classroom discussion, especially in the early months when their peers are strangers and there is more risk of losing face. U.K. students, on the other hand, may feel more comfortable about revealing their thoughts publicly, as their inner 'private space' will not thereby be exposed, although they will appear to be a lot more open and vulnerable than their Asian peers.

Achieved Status – Ascribed Status

Modern Western societies recognise achieved status above ascribed status and thus tend to be very competitive, with individuals having sole responsibility for their achievement, not their mentor or teacher. The focus is on objectives and goals and people are task driven, prepared to step on others in order to obtain their goal. As a result, only a few succeed at the expense of others. The concept of 'success', which in Western literature appears to mean individual success, is not readily transferable to East Asian cultures (Hunt 1981:58). High achievement in parts of East Asian is measured in relationships and corporate ladder climbing has much lower significance.

According to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, East Asian societies that value ascribed status above achieved status, emphasise teamwork with supervisors whose role is to elicit,

mentor and inspire. This results in shared responsibility and shared triumph and achievement. The belief is that if someone is given self-respect, high self esteem and status then their potential can be elicited. Hence time spent getting to know people and their concerns and in developing warm relationships is seen as time well spent, as this will result in higher performance in the long run. Having said this, there appears to be a mixture of competitiveness and ascribed status in the educational systems of East Asian cultures. In Japan, for instance, competitive achievement ends at entry into university:

By then your ability to achieve competitively has been certified. From then on you are guaranteed status in return for using your abilities to serve the corporation. This ensures public service rather than private aggrandizement. (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000:203)

East Asian students coming to study in the U.K. may expect their lecturers to inspire and to share responsibility for their learning and achievement in the same manner as their home culture lecturers would. The concept of sole responsibility for their grades may be alien and uncomfortable to them.

Inner – Outer Direction

Western cultures, which value Inner Direction believe that ‘deep down we know what is right’ (Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars 2000:234). Virtue is innate, within one’s private conscience, and so expressing it fearlessly and defiantly is a moral act. In such a culture, people are not swayed or influenced by others and one should stick to one’s principles and dissent when necessary. The emphasis is on self determination and self control, fairness, explicitness and the letter of the law. The inner directed communication style can be typified as argumentative and adversarial, with a tendency to view debate as a fight with an enemy, thus polarising the debate.

Outer direction, on the other hand, describes a disposition which is compromising, keen to keep the peace and to minimise and deflect violence. East Asian cultures value interpersonal harmony i.e. calmness and equanimity, and they see bluntness and frankness as uncivilised traits: “values and norms forcefully promote self-control and the avoidance of direct personal confrontation” (Schneider & Silverman 1997:48). Cooper & Cooper, for example, conclude that “the Thai learns how to avoid aggression rather than how to defend himself against it” (1994:86). Similarly, Chen states that according to Confucianism “the ultimate goal of human behaviour is to achieve ‘harmony’ which leads Chinese people to

pursue a conflict-free and group oriented system of human relationships” (Chen 1993:6).

People who adhere to outer direction, according to Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, prefer to be followers and subordinates. Thus, the duty of leaders in East Asian cultures is to listen carefully to subordinates, and give indirect, ambiguous orders which recipients are then obliged and expected to interpret creatively. In contrast to this, leaders in Western cultures give explicit directions, openly correct, and do not avoid conflict if it is deemed necessary. This distinction between inner and outer direction can be related to argumentation in academic contexts, such as seminars, where East Asian students may be reluctant to express disagreement if it is seen to flout perceptions of harmony of the group.

In summary, Hofstede’s and Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars’ frameworks, although different, are complementary and encompass various cultural variations which influence behaviour, attitude, thinking and discourse. Table 2 outlines how the dimensions of Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars overlap, and in some areas expand on Hofstede’s dimensions. Although both frameworks were developed in the context of business and organisational studies, these dimensions can be approximately applied to an international educational context. Thus this thesis draws on both taxonomies in describing and interpreting the differences in cultural norms, values and perspectives between East Asian students and British students and lecturers.

2.4 ‘Face’

A third theoretical framework for distinguishing cultural differences and which could inform this thesis, is the universal notion of ‘face’. This aspect appears to be woven into several of the dimensions already discussed e.g. power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism and diffuseness. It could therefore be a useful tool in explaining and understanding cultural differences when used alongside the cultural dimensions discussed above.

The concept of face originated in China (Gudykunst & Kim 2003:306). Ho defines face in China as:

The respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself (or herself) from others, by virtue of the relative position he (or she) occupies in his (or her) social network and the degree to which he (or she) is judged to have functioned adequately in that position and acceptably in his (or her) general conduct. (1976: 883)

Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars' dimensions	Relation to Hofstede's dimensions
<i>Universalism</i> Individual freedom restrained by democratic laws; task orientated; assertiveness	Related to Hofstede's individualism, masculinity
<i>Particularism</i> More value placed on relationships than on 'the law'	Related to Hofstede's collectivism
<i>Individualism</i> Pioneering spirit; fast and decisive decision-making; personal responsibility and guilt for failure	Related to Hofstede's individualism, masculinity
<i>Communitarianism</i> Decision-making based on group consensus; common goals and objectives; relationship/nurturing orientation	Related to Hofstede's collectivism, femininity
<i>Specificity</i> Explicit, linear, low context, critical, confrontational; emphasis on polarisation of viewpoints; challenge welcomed; typical of Western argumentation; large public space, small private space	Related to Hofstede's low uncertainty avoidance, search for truth, individualism
<i>Diffuseness</i> Complex, holistic, implicit, intuitive, indirect communication, emphasising synthesis of viewpoints; dissent and offence avoided; large private space, small public space	Related to Hofstede's high uncertainty avoidance, individualism.
<i>Ascribed status</i> Teamwork; shared responsibility for success/failure; relationships valued more than individual goals.	Related to Hofstede's high power distance, femininity, collectivism
<i>Achieved Status</i> Competition; individual responsibility for success/failure.	Related to Hofstede's low power distance, masculinity, individualism
<i>Inner Direction</i> Fearless following of personal convictions; no compromising.	Related to Hofstede's low uncertainty avoidance, individualism
<i>Outer Direction</i> Seeking harmony rather than seeking personal convictions/truth	Related to Hofstede's high uncertainty avoidance, collectivism

Table 2: Comparison of Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars' Dimensions with those of Hofstede's

Source: Author, based on Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars (2000) and Hofstede (1980)

This Chinese conceptualisation of face has been adapted by social scientists for use in Western cultures. Goffman (1955, 1967, 1986), for instance, defines face as ‘the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself (or herself). Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes’ (1955:213). Goffman argues that face can be lost, saved and/or given. He identifies two types of face: self-face (one’s own face), and other-face (the face of people with whom we interact). Self-face is the projected image of one’s self, a sense of self-respect and the demand for appropriate respect from others. Ting-Toomey and Cole (1990) argue that all cultures try, to varying degrees, to maintain face in communicative situations. Ting-Toomey (1994,1997,1999) argues that members of individualistic, low power distance cultures, such as the U.K. or the U.S.A., defend self-face when it is threatened and assert their personal rights more than members of high power distance collectivist cultures such as East Asian cultures.

Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994), however, draw a distinction between face in individualistic and collectivistic cultures. They contend that in individualistic cultures face is based on the independent self construal, whereas in collectivistic cultures face is based on the interdependent construal. Gudykunst and Kim (2003:307) illustrate this by explaining that if a student fails to gain their grades in individualistic cultures, the student loses face, but the family does not lose face. In collectivistic cultures the whole family loses face if the student fails. In East Asian cultures, then, the concept of ‘self’ is not an independent entity and it is not complete in itself. One’s sense of worth and value come from being part of a larger community, where one is always thinking of others’ expectations and the cultural/social norms. Behaviour is prescribed by one’s status and role and these, not the self, determine the behaviour in most East Asian cultures (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998:7).

Brown and Levinson (1987), basing their notion of face on Goffman’s (1967) work, referred to two types of face-saving values: positive politeness and negative politeness. Their theory of politeness has been criticised, however, as arising from the individualistic culture framework (Matsumoto 1988, Gu 1990), and as being ethnocentric, revealing ‘a British cultural bias’ (Baxter 1984:453). Tracy and Baratz (1994) suggest that their politeness theory excludes nonverbal means of politeness. Lim (1994) and Ho (1994) argue that Chinese face is a more public and positive concept, firmly embedded in relations and duty. Scollon and Scollon (1981:177) suggest that discourse patterns are linked to face-saving values of a society and renamed positive politeness ‘solidarity’ politeness (this can be

coined ‘collectivist politeness’), where the speaker actively seeks commonalities among members, and avoids offending or contradicting another so as not to cause them to lose face. Negative politeness (which can be termed ‘individualistic politeness’) stresses the differences and respect for the autonomy and individualism of its members, where people do not seek to impose a common view on each other. Face becomes particularly problematic in uncertainty situations. From their research, Ting-Toomey and Cole (1990) conclude that when facing conflict individualists are more concerned with ‘self-face’ and autonomy preserving, and so engage in dominant and controlling strategies and negative politeness. In contrast, when facing conflict collectivists are more concerned with ‘other-face’, and they use more approval-seeking, obliging and smoothing strategies together with positive politeness.

Triandis (1988:326) has suggested that the mechanism of shame, although associated more with collectivist cultures, is used in all cultures to varying degrees as a mechanism of external control, although individualistic cultures rely more on internal control such as guilt. A shame culture, according to Triandis, creates the sense that many disapproving eyes are staring at your face in reproach and accusation. One loses face because one appears in the eyes of others far less favourably than before. There is less a sense of personal responsibility and guilt and the main restraint against antisocial behaviour is shame, especially in cultures where moral laws are not enforced or feared.

Jia (2001), however, criticises Western ‘face’ researchers such as Brown and Levinson (1987) as being ethnocentric. He describes their research findings as being “products of the theoretical imagination, with either intentional or unintentional reference to the theorists’ own cultures”, which are middle-class and Western. They have, in his opinion, failed to be informed by the fundamental assumptions of East Asian culture.

Similarly, although Jia concedes that Ting-Toomey’s (1994) research is far more culture-sensitive than others, he criticises her for attempting to generalise ‘face’ for all cultures without examining the practical social consequences for specific cultures. He claims that she looks at the central role of face in defining an individual’s identity, but does not consider the implications for social order and the nature of society in some cultures such as the Chinese. Likewise, Masakazu accuses Western academics involved in researching cultural variations of exaggerating differences rather than identifying the similarities:

Cross cultural stereotypes are the product of fuzzy thinking. Reality is complex, and we become uneasy when we do not know how to interpret it, but we have neither the time nor the inclination to acquire a deep understanding of the other nations and ethnic groups sharing the globe. By singling out one aspect of a phenomenon, we clarify our thoughts and put ourselves at ease. So we latch on to any pat explanation we hear, from ethnic jokes to high-sounding theories of culture. (1994:5)

In a similar fashion, Ho (1976:882) argues that ‘the Western mentality, deeply ingrained with the values of individuality, is not one which is favourably disposed to the idea of face, for face is never a purely individual thing’. This, again, is a warning to researchers not to reduce the complexity of cultural variations in their efforts to understand and categorise them, and so artificially isolate them from the relevant context. For the remainder of this chapter, therefore, the insiders’ views of their own cultures are relied on whenever the relevant research permits.

‘Face’ is particularly important in East Asian cultures and there are many commonalities in these cultures in their notion of face (Gudykunst & Kim 2003:307/308). Face is ‘a claimed sense of favourable social self-worth that a person wants others to have of her or him’ (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi 1998:187). Research has shown, for instance, that two uses of face are common in China, Japan and Korea – personal and positional (Morisaki & Gudykunst 1994; Lim and Choi 1996). Whereas personal face is also found in Western cultures, positional face, which involves social image, exists predominantly in East Asian cultures. This type of face is attached to positions people fill in the social system (e.g. professors, doctors). Those filling these positions are expected to conduct themselves in a way that matches their position; otherwise they lose positional face.

An increasing number of cross-cultural research studies involving East Asian cultures have been conducted in the past few decades. A large body of research has focused on facework and face strategies in China (e.g. Bond & Lee 1981, Cheng 1986, Gu 1990, Zhan 1992, Chang & Holt 1994, Gao 1996, Jia 1997, Gao & Ting-Toomey 1998). In addition, Japanese and American face issues have been explored by, for example, Imahoi and Cupach (1994), Barnlund and Yoshioka 1990, Sugimoto (1997), Cocroft and Ting-Toomey 1994, Lebra 1976, and Kashima and Triandis (1986). Likewise, comparisons have been explored between Korean and American face (e.g. Holtgraves & Yang 1992), and between Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese and American face by Ting-Toomey et al (1991), Oetzel,

Ting-Toomey and Chew (1999), Oetzel et al 2000), amongst others. Kashima and Triandis (1986), in their research studies, found that Japanese have lower self esteem than Americans and they focus more on their weaknesses than on success. Individualistic cultures tend to focus more on success and base their identity on what they own and on their experiences, whilst collectivists define their identity by relationships and group memberships. Triandis (1995) argues that for East Asian students, self is defined by multiple layers of relationships with others i.e. they display different 'selves' depending on who they are with. In the quote below the term 'tightness' is defined by Triandis as greater sensitivity to deviation from the norm:

Why do Americans focus on success and Japanese focus on failure? I argue that it is related to the looseness-tightness dimension. In loose cultures, in any situation a person is allowed much freedom to pick different behaviours. If the behaviours prove unsuccessful, the person tries some other behaviours, and when the behaviours are successful, people praise the performance and note the success. It is assumed that if one tries ten behaviours, eight will be failures, but so what? The important thing is to have two successes. In tight cultures, in any situation a person must do one or two things correctly. Failure to do these things correctly results in criticism. People fear criticism and focus on failures because these failures are the cause of much distress for them. (Triandis 1995:70,71)

Many of the above studies have identified strategies that Americans use in maintaining and protecting self and other(s) face. These include using anti-social, self-presentation and self attribution face maintenance strategies (Cocroft and Ting-Toomey 1994). Americans are more likely to use humour and aggression to maintain face or to manage social predicaments where face is lost (Cupach & Imahori 1993). They have less other-face concerns than East Asian cultures (Ting-Toomey et al 1991), and they use respect and expression of feelings facework tactics (Oetzel et al 2000). Moreover, Americans use direct forms of apologising to save face, preferring to explain their actions when they apologize (Barnlund and Yoshioka 1990).

There has been little research on British face as compared with face in collectivist cultures. Jin and Cortazzi have explored face amongst Chinese students at U.K. universities, and found that Chinese face influence how the students behave in class:

Having regard to face, they will not wish to interrupt others and may consequently miss turn-taking opportunities in seminars. Similarly, they will be reluctant to be seen making mistakes, so that they may only say things in seminar groups if they are quite sure of their ground. (1996:213)

Jin and Cortazzi point out that in British academic settings British tutors are happy to answer students' questions, and indeed encourage questions. But for the Chinese, asking a question risks losing face, either for the questioner, in case they appear ignorant, or for the tutor, in case they are unable to answer it. Despite this lack of empirical research on face issues in the U.K., because the U.K. and the U.S.A. exhibit similar scores on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, it may be surmised that many of the findings on American face may also apply to British face.

As has already been stated, face can be used as another tool for understanding cultural variation, and so the next section explores the notion of face in East Asian cultures in more depth. It focuses on Chinese face, however, partly because of the substantial research done on face in this culture, and partly because of the focus of this thesis. Also because of the commonalities in the notion of face across East Asian cultures, it could be argued that Chinese face could be seen as representative of face in collectivistic cultures (Jia 1997-8:45). The following description of the various aspects of Chinese face relies on insiders' views of their own culture, so as to avoid any criticisms that this researcher is interpreting its meaning from a Western, ethnocentric perspective.

Historically, the Chinese character *mianzi* (the origin of 'face'), represented status and power, symbolised by masks worn by tribal chiefs when communicating with spirits and deities. If one lost the mask then one became ostracised from one's tribe: "you also lost your 'face' and even your life" (Jia 2001:17). At first it was associated with fear and terror and later with shame. This association was mentioned in The Book of Songs (551BC). It was also associated with the value of a person (*wei*). Confucianism developed these earlier ideas and increased their social importance until they became central in Chinese society. Lu Xun (1934/1960:129) claims that the notion of face was used by Confucianism as a tool for social order and harmony, and has become the "key to the Chinese spirit". 'A person needs face like a tree needs bark' is a common Chinese expression.

Face has many positive aspects – one can gain face and give face to others. According to Jia (2001:45) there are no less than 33 interpretations of face-related Chinese concepts and idioms that reflect the nature of social interaction. Thus the word 'face' as used by Western scholars cannot cover all the various meanings which are highly contextual and complex. The concept of *lian* embodies a moral dimension and has to do with integrity of one's moral

character; whereas *mianzi* signifies a social dimension and often is externalised. Although they are distinct concepts, they are sometimes interchangeable and together they conceptualise a) a sense of one's social self worth and/or others' assessments of our social 'worthiness', and b) a vulnerable resource in social interactions (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998:56).

Jia writes that "Chinese persons primarily rely on *lian/mian* (face) to regulate Chinese social behaviour, whereas Western society relies on law" (2001:150). Lin has argued that Chinese culture is dominated by 'face', fate and favour, the most important being 'face', and that this triad renders all rules, regulations and laws ineffective (Lin 1935:195). He also argues that 'face' is the most fundamental characteristic of Chinese psychology, outweighing any form of legal code. Other writers agree that without 'face' the whole Chinese ethical/moral system would collapse and that 'face' has "created and sustained rule by men instead of rule by law" (Zheng 1996:152). Embedded in the concept of Chinese 'face' is the idea of indebtedness. One interpretation of 'face' is to 'powder someone's face' meaning that there is an expectation to repay the favours received by another. If one has a 'big face', then one has a high social status and commands special respect and obedience from people around, with special access to resources. There is therefore great stress on meeting social expectations and obligations. Failure to do so results in guilt, fear and shame.

Lin (1935) goes so far as to say that the central role of 'face' in Chinese society has led to an undemocratic and unjust social and political system, suggesting that democracy is an alternative to the 'face' practices. Similarly Lu Xun (1934/1960:130) argues that 'face' is a political tool of oppression for the ruling class and a tool of self-deception or 'a means to the spiritual victory' for the oppressed class. These Chinese revolutionary writers argue that the consequences of 'face' are inequality, injustice and closed-mindedness, as it depends on preserving hierarchical power structures and loss of individual rights. Nevertheless, despite Mao's cultural revolution which, amongst other things, tried to displace the deep-rooted notion and virtue of 'face', it remains today a deep cultural practice and it remains to be seen, as Jia (2001) suggests, whether the emergent free-market economy in mainland China is having any effect on 'face' values.

Face also involves emotions. Confucianism teaches that natural emotions can easily get out

of control and need to be suppressed for the sake of social harmony and order. 'Face', however, is associated with a variety of emotions. Jia, when talking about 'face' issues, comments on fear – fear about talking with authority figures, fear of revealing one's shortcomings and fear of speaking and performance in general (2001:31). Shame is another emotion, although this can be seen both positively and negatively. It is seen as a sign of decency, even a virtue in Chinese culture, although it can also hide extreme anger when 'face' is lost. So a person can appear polite whilst inwardly suffering.

According to Jia (2001:34), open and direct emotions often expressed by Westerners are regarded as signs of social immaturity and a lack of emotional composedness, and are usually frowned upon by East Asian societies. 'Face', therefore, acts "as a protective mask to prevent fear and insecurity so that the other person can be easily identified by the community and have a sense of belonging" (Jia 2001:47). A Chinese proverb describes how the face allows one to act with dignity "like a human being in outward social conformity", so preserving the forms of mutual respect, peace of mind and a soothing atmosphere, whilst 'the private, hidden self is crude and uncivilised' (Jia 2001:49).

In Chinese culture, loss of face equals loss of personhood. Persons who have 'lost face' are sometimes called 'wild beasts' or 'nonhumans' (Jia 2001:51). This, Jia explains, is because humanity is almost completely defined by a person's social roles and social behaviour:

In the West, humanity is largely defined theologically. The concept of humanity is largely separable from sociality. Since humanity is endowed by God, loss of face would thus hardly equal loss of personhood or humanity. Human dignity is regarded as profound, whereas loss of face due to inappropriate enactments of social roles barely touches upon the iron-strong and invincible personhood. For a Chinese person, however, there is nothing else to sustain meaningful living except *lian*. In the West, by contrast, an individual still has a stronghold of God-endowed humanity that provides alternatives by which to sustain meaningful living in the culture after the loss of face. (Jia 2001:52)

Jia's research using discourse analysis (1997) found that 'facework' is a major conflict-preventive and harmony-building mechanism in Chinese everyday life. Without face a person cannot have trust or respect from the society. There is therefore a strong motivation to gain group approval even, Jia suggests, at the expense of 'losing reality, losing self and losing integrity itself' (2001:156).

In Chinese culture, public disagreement is a face-losing act and assertiveness does not have the positive connotations found in other cultures (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998:63). Western assertiveness and decisiveness are perceived as arrogance, presumption and inconsideration. Chang (1989) agrees with Bond and Lee (1981) that Chinese tradition is more concerned with face than with credibility, and that protecting another person's face is more important than one's belief of truth or correctness. This is reflected in the Chinese saying 'Honour the hierarchy first, your vision of truth second' (Bond 1991:83). 'To put up a front and pretend to be what they are not' characterises the Chinese *mianzi* syndrome, according to Chang (1989:14). This indirect manner can be seen as dishonest and untruthful to Westerners, but Gao and Ting-Toomey point out that to the Chinese, 'face' is more important than absolute truth where relationships are at stake: 'providing the appropriate information at the appropriate time and context with the appropriate persons is more important than honest and truthful communication' (1998:64). This is in line with Bond's conclusion that a person's search for truth, represented by Hofstede's Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, is not valued highly in Chinese culture.

One face-saving communicative strategy is the provisional response. In Chinese communication, for instance, there are no direct equivalents for the words 'yes' or 'no' (verbs are used instead to confirm or deny, accept or refuse) (Ma 1996). Caution and compromise are preferred and English words such as 'possible, perhaps, maybe' are used (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998: 64,65, 85). When speaking to an authority figure, a deferential, polite style of communication is used, where restraint and hesitancy is used, and an absence of definitive statements. Modesty, humility and self-effacing talk are characteristic of this stance.

Chinese are listener orientated, focusing their efforts on understanding rather than confrontation. How much one talks in a group, or even if one talks at all, depends on roles and status. Assertiveness and eloquence on the part of children and students are considered signs of disrespect (Gao and Ting-Toomey 1998:43). They are taught to listen with full attention, and feedback is limited if not totally absent.

Relating all this to this present thesis, one might deduce that not only Chinese students, but East Asian students in general, would be hesitant to risk making mistakes, either in a classroom debate or in an argumentative essay, as this may result in failure and criticism,

and so loss of 'face'. There is a Chinese saying that 'winners are regarded as kings with a righteous cause and failures as evildoers without a righteous cause (*cheng ze wei wang: bai ze ze*). Again, the question needs to be asked: do these strong cultural/social values continue in the environment of a U.K. university, or are they replaced by an understanding of an academic culture which allows them to override these values, if only for the duration of a masters course?

To conclude this chapter, it is appropriate to reflect on the caution that researchers, particularly qualitative researchers, need to take in engaging in cross-cultural research, and how they need to be aware of their own ethnocentric perceptions and bias. As Samovar and Porter point out, all cultures have a natural tendency to perceive other cultures through their own narrow cultural lens: "You study other cultures from the perspective of your own culture" (2001:17). If researchers cannot personally and deeply identify with the culture they are studying, they may misunderstand the cultural norms of that society. This often results in valuing one's own cultural norms and standards as being superior and more 'natural' than others (Nanda & Warms 1998:6). The negative impact of ethnocentrism on intercultural communication is clearly highlighted by Stewart and Bennett:

First, ethnocentric beliefs about one's own culture shape a social sense of identity which is narrow and defensive. Second, ethnocentrism normally involves the perception of members of other cultures in terms of stereotypes. Third, the dynamic of ethnocentrism is such that comparative judgements are made between one's own culture and other cultures under the assumption that one's own is normal and natural. As a consequence, ethnocentric judgements usually involve invidious comparisons that ennoble one's culture while degrading those of others. (1991: 161)

The history of the West's imperialistic racism has been well documented (e.g. by Shohat & Stam 1994, Said 1995). Shohat and Stam (1994) argue that we are presently living in a neo-colonial/imperialist period of history, when the West still maintains an attitude of intellectual, social and political superiority. This type of attitude is reflected in the relatively recent comments of Henry Kissinger (1974:48,49) who claims that the reason for the East's supposed tendency towards inaccuracy is that the Newtonian revolution took place in the West, but not in the East. The bigger danger now, according to Samovar & Porter, is not so much the false supposition that different races have different intellectual aptitudes, but that cultures are stereotyped: "the real problem lies in assuming that all culture-specific information applies to all individuals from the cultural group" (2001:266). Such danger of

over-generalisation should be a real concern to all cross cultural researchers. Hunt makes this point by asking: “Is the cross cultural field of research so vast that the generalisation one might make would be so banal as to be insulting?” (1981:55)

Tayeb (2001) criticises much cross cultural research for using Hofstede’s dimensions in a narrow way, when there is need for innovative fresh outlooks which avoid stereotyping. Munshi and Mc Kie (2001) go so far as to condemn the majority of intercultural communication texts as simplistic at best, and racist at worst. They argue that major texts on intercultural communication (e.g. Samovar, Porter and Stefani’s (1998) third edition of *Communication Between Cultures*, and Calloway, Thomas, Cooper and Blake’s (1999) *Intercultural Communication: Roots and Routes*) are imperialistic/colonialist in their biased perspective. It is interesting to note that, perhaps in response to these criticisms, Samovar and Porter have included a new section on racism in the fourth edition of *Communication Between Cultures* (2001), in which they argue that cross cultural researchers need to be alert to the potential for ethnocentrism in their interpretations and perceptions (2001: 265).

The majority of intercultural texts, Munshi and Mc Kie (2001: 20) argue, present a biased view of cultural differences – a ‘them and us’ or ‘East/West’ mentality which is motivated by the goal of achieving competitive advantage with non-Westerners. Such texts are ‘simplistic celebrations of differences, innocent of history and prejudice’. This, they claim, results in racist stereotyping and marginalizing or negating the realities of racism as experienced by non-Westerners. They put forward Said (1995) and Shohat and Stam (1994) as examples of authors who give a more balanced perspective. It is therefore important for any cross cultural researcher, such as this researcher, to be keenly sensitive to bias and alert to the possibility of ethnocentrism unconsciously affecting their perceptions, and the analysis and interpretation of data. However, the use of Hofstede-type dimensions is not necessarily stereotypical provided they are viewed as cultural trends and emphases in which diversity and possible individual differences are continually recognised.

As international students struggle with the cross cultural challenges to their basic values, beliefs and patterns of behaviour, so too can lecturers and researchers react to these differences. Feelings similar to culture shock can also, according to Brislin (1981, 1993), ‘be experienced by individuals who have face-to-face contact with out-group members within their own culture’ (1981:155). These feelings may range from irritability, to

frustration, hostility and even rejection of other cultures. In this research thesis, I have therefore striven to identify, be alert to, and open-mindedly reflect on any inherent bias in the data or in the analysis of it. However, I am also aware that, as Samovar and Porter suggest (2001:266), the occasional, unconscious bias may have crept unnoticed into my commentary.

This chapter has explored how both Hofstede's and Trompenaars' dimensions, together with the notions of 'face' and Hall's (1976) constructs of low and high contexts, are taken into account when considering the challenges that East Asian students face when studying in the U.K., and the types of misunderstandings that arise when East and West interact in an educational setting. The thesis particularly explores the extent to which the students avoid uncertainty and confrontation in academic debates, and how this is reflected in their written argumentation style, as writing is an important element of masters degree courses. Critical thinking at postgraduate level demands an element of risk-taking and it is of interest to see how East Asian students respond to a more open and risk-taking academic culture. The next chapter explores more fully the critical thinking culture prevalent in Western academia, and how this compares with notions of academic thinking in East Asian cultures.

Chapter 3: Argumentation and Debate

In the West, the practice of academic argumentation and debate is rooted in the Socratic/Aristotelian pursuit and discovery of ‘truth’ through the disciplined process of critical thinking. Objective truth is sought through logical evaluation of the weaknesses and strengths of a theory, statement or proposal, and comparing and contrasting it with alternative views or explanations. Modern day critical thinking theorists (e.g. Paul 1982, 1993,1994; Ennis 1962, 1984,1987, 1996; Siegel 1988) advocate Socratic dialogical thinking as the highest form of reasoning for all humans world wide. Critics argue that this is an ethnocentric view, however, and that different cultures employ and value different styles of reasoning (e.g. Gee 1993,1994; Street 1984,1993,1994; Thayer-Bacon 1992,1993; Orr 1989).

One of the key questions to be asked is to what extent U.K. university culture expects and demands the type of critical thinking expounded by traditional critical thinking theorists. Moreover, by advocating this type of thinking and academic writing do universities thereby ignore the cultural diversity of international students, and so cause a mismatch of academic expectations between U.K. lecturers and these students? Before attempting to address these questions, the rationale behind the current critical thinking movement will first be explored, to be followed by a critique of the critical thinking theories.

3.1 Critical Thinking

Paul, Ennis and Siegel argue that critical thinking should be at the heart of global education reform as, they believe, it is the highest form of thinking and most relevant to today’s technological and complex world. Ennis (1962) listed twelve aspects of critical thinking (Appendix III). This traditional interpretation of critical thinking describes thinking that is:

purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed – the kind of thinking involved in solving problems, formulating inferences, calculating likelihoods, and making decisions ... The spirit of critical thinking is that we take nothing for granted or as being beyond question. In academic debate, arguments are analysed to find inconsistencies, logical flaws or evidence to the contrary. (Walkner & Finney 1999: 532).

Paul’s main arguments are that critical thinking is a universal skill, achievable and to be pursued by all human beings regardless of culture and gender; that it is superior to all other forms of thinking, demanding fairness, discipline and creativity; and that it is the key to full

personhood and self realisation. According to Paul (1993:30) one needs to systematise one's thinking in order to make it accessible to others.

He also argues that many people do not sufficiently analyse the reasons by which they live and do not examine the assumptions, commitments and logic of daily life. As a result, they base their life choices on unsubstantiated truth claims. He wants to see 'shallow' or distorted thinking replaced with 'quality' thinking which is based on reliable procedures of enquiry (1993:46). Paul claims that the majority of people are not in the habit of deliberately and consciously examining their assumptions and beliefs:

Critical thinking is complex because it involves overcoming not only intellectual barriers to progress, but psychological barriers as well. We are comfortable, as a rule, with our ideas, our belief structures, our view of the world. Certainly, if we thought our ideas were flawed, irrational, shallow, or biased in an unfair way, we would have already changed them. When questioned about the validity of our ideas or beliefs, particularly the foundational ones, we typically interpret the question to be a challenge to our integrity, often even to our identity. (Paul 1993:ii)

Paul believes that for the vast majority of people acquisition of knowledge 'is reduced to believing what those around us believe' (1993:viii), and that a truly educated person is one who, as a result of their schooling, can think critically. Tyson (1993:53) believes that rapidly changing technologies in the twenty first century will increasingly require this type of thinking where people will be expected to make well thought-out decisions and use good judgement in the workplace to solve complex problems, rather than merely follow directions. They will need to 'think in abstractions, think in terms of alternative systems, to test ideas for their strengths and to recognise the value of collaboration' (Paul 1993:10). Our new economic resource, according to John Sculley, CEO and Chairman of Apple Computer, is the mind: 'In the new economy, strategic resources no longer just come out of the ground. The strategic resources are ideas and information that come out of our minds' (cited in Paul 1993:15).

Paul, however, thinks that no country in the world is systematically fostering genuine critical thinking, and that a paradigm shift is needed in the U.K. and America to bring this about for the masses and not just the minority elite. Nevertheless, the development of critical thinking is a major aim of undergraduate, and to a greater extent, postgraduate courses in Britain. This can be seen for the calls for 'rigorous arguments' and 'critical analysis' in the Quality Assurance Agency's generic assessment criteria for masters level (May 2003).

This thesis seeks to discover how East Asian students view Western critical thinking. Do they agree or disagree with Paul's definition that it is acultural and is the 'key to self realisation'? To explore this more fully the characteristics of critical thinking need to be considered next.

Paul, Ennis and Siegel argue that critical thinking is an innate ability, like language, that any human being will develop naturally, given an adequate environment in which to do so. This is in line with Piaget's (1969) theory of cognitive development in children, which proposes that any normal child will naturally pass through a series of developmental stages. According to Piaget, a nurturing environment which encourages this natural cognitive development will speed up the process, but the process itself is pre-programmed in every normal child's mind. Similarly, Paul argues that the essence of critical thinking is the same for all peoples and is beyond the influence of our different cultures or societies. He also argues that critical thinking 'provides a common denominator for all fields of knowledge' (Paul 1993:iii), although Mc Peck (1981) argues that critical thinking is not a generic cognitive skill, but that different disciplines demand different types of subject-specific critical thinking skills.

In summary, Critical Thinking theorists think that critical thinking should be the goal of all educational systems. They believe it is acultural and that this universal thinking, by necessity, is expressed and reflected in a universal 'language' of reason, using neutral technical skills of logic. The acquisition of these logical reasoning powers, they argue, should be as natural as physical or linguistic development, regardless of gender or culture.

Many who would argue with Paul, Ennis and Siegel on the majority of their beliefs would, however, agree on one point – that all humans are capable of higher order cognitive skills. What they disagree on is how thoughts are *expressed* in the context of a diversity of cultures and across gender:

All humans who are acculturated and socialized are already in possession of higher order cognitive skills, though their expression and the practices they are embedded in will differ across cultures. (Gee 1994:189).

Street (1993,1994) and Gee(1993, 1994) criticise Paul's viewpoint as being ethnocentric that is blinded by cultural and social assumptions and bias. They claim that the type of thinking advocated by the Critical Thinking movement is narrow in that it represents male oriented, Western logic; in Hofstede's (1980) terms, it reflects the 'masculinity' and individualism of

Western cultures. Street and Gee believe that 'nurture' i.e. the social and cultural context, rather than innate 'nature', determines how these higher order cognitive skills are expressed. In other words, cognitive expression, especially through literacy, is integrally linked to culture and social communication, and in some cultures the type of logical, explicit reasoning used in the West is not culturally acceptable. It is not that some cultures are unable to use some patterns of reasoning, but that they prefer certain patterns above others e.g. diffuse thinking above specificity (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2000). If Street and Gee are correct, then East Asian students will have very different notions of argumentation and evaluation from Western academics. They will employ different communication strategies when expressing disagreement, criticism, or when arguing a point, if these activities exist at all.

Toulmin (1958) described 'argument' as consisting of the data (the information), which are then justified by warrants (theories, principles, proven fact), which finally lead to a conclusion. The warrants provide the explicit explanations of how the data and the conclusion relate. This type of logic actively and impartially considers all possible challenges to the conclusion by using rebuttals, exceptions and qualifiers. In a similar vein, Paul (1993:18) defines critical thinking as 'effectively evaluating our own thinking and the thinking of others (....) the ability to evaluate, objectively and fairly, the quality of our beliefs'. Ennis (1987, 1996) describes critical thinking as a process of 'constantly inventing', reformulating and evaluating. He too places emphasis on 'fairness', open-mindedness, consideration of all alternatives, honesty, clarity and being well informed. To engage in such thinking a certain amount of intellectual humility is required i.e. a critical thinker will be prepared to recognise the weaknesses and limitations in his or her own position :

When one becomes aware that there are many legitimate points of view, each of which - when deeply thought through - yields some level of insight, then one becomes keenly aware that one's own thinking, however rich and insightful it may be, however carefully constructed, will not capture everything worth knowing and seeing. (Paul 1993:23)

Siegal (1988:13) describes critical thinking as 'skilled skepticism', where the thinker seriously questions his or her deepest beliefs and assumptions, challenges them and identifies contradictions and inconsistencies in his or her personal and social life. Siegal acknowledges that in order to be a critical thinker one has to have the attitude of a 'seeker of truth', passionate about intellectual honesty and justice to evidence. This will inevitably result in 'contesting points of view being brought into rational conflict' (Paul 1982:3).

Paul defines two types of critical thinking, distinguished by the level of self-reflection involved. *Weak critical thinkers* are able to employ the skills and techniques of critical evaluation but they do not critique their own thinking. They do not enter sympathetically into the point of view which is opposed to their own, and do not aim at synthesising alternative views but more at ‘warding off the enemy’ (1993: 206). Paul describes people as being egocentric when they are narrow mindedly committed to their personal point of view, or ethnocentric when they are narrow mindedly committed to a cultural or social point of view. *Strong critical thinkers*, on the other hand, are ‘fairminded’ – open minded and not blinded by their own point of view, people who have incorporated critical thinking into their way of living, with a passionate drive for ‘clarity, accuracy and fair mindedness’ (Paul 1983:23).

Ennis, in agreement with Paul, describes a strong critical thinker as someone who not only seeks reasons, truth and evidence, but who also has the desire and disposition to seek them. Siegal (1988), likewise, believes the ‘critical spirit’ is more like a deep-seated character trait, something like Scheffler’s notion of ‘a love of truth and a contempt of lying’ (1991:4). Burbules and Blerk (1999:60) describe this view of critical thinking as being closely linked to the positivist approach – a view that believes that the ‘truth’ is there, albeit hidden, waiting to be discovered, after the Socratic model. An interpretist view, they suggest would see how truth could be interpreted or even created. It would also be concerned with finding a meaning, but this may mean seeking out several alternate meanings, where one aspect of a truth is harmoniously balanced by its counterpart, and where there are no extreme, polarised views. People would need to live with ambiguity, with no single understanding of the world. This latter approach is closer to traditional thinking of East Asian cultures who, as Hofstede and Bond (1984) point out, value harmony and uncertainty avoidance above a search for absolute truth.

Does, or should, Western academia seek to develop *strong* critical thinkers, as Paul proposes? For those East Asian students with no previous exposure to this kind of argumentation, it may be that a one year masters course is insufficient time for them to develop from ‘weak’ to ‘strong’ critical thinkers. However, what none of these Western thinkers consider is the way in which other cultures may view this kind of thinking. They talk of the need for students to be self sufficient, ‘in control of their own destinies’, and free to be independent judges, taking charge of their own life (Burbules and Blerk 1999: 46). Siegel argues that if educators are to

encourage critical thinking then they must respect their students as having equal moral worth and as having the right to independent judgements, to question, to challenge and to 'demand reasons and justification for what is being taught' (1988:56). However, this type of challenging attitude to education and authority is alien for many East Asian students, who have been taught under Confucian principles since childhood to respect and believe as 'truth' what their teachers transmit to them.

Critical Theorists also see the relationship between critical thinking and democracy to be a close one and are firmly convinced that critical thinking skills, as they define them, are essential for human potential to be fulfilled. However, this is a very Western perspective although, as discussed in the previous chapter, some East Asian writers such as Lu Xun (1996) and Lin Yu-Tang (1935) would agree with this perspective. Independence, self-sufficiency and self-determination are values of an individualistic society. A passion for truth, which inevitably involves conflict and uncertainty, is not encouraged or valued in a collectivist society (Hofstede and Bond 1988); neither is challenging accepted norms and traditional beliefs.

Siegal points out that although a student can be taught the cognitive skills of critical thinking, if they do not also acquire a disposition to use such skills with conviction, then such a student cannot be defined as a critical thinker (1988:3). For East Asian students, who may not consider democracy to be the best form of government, it may not even be desirable to acquire the cognitive skills of critical thinking, let alone the attitude or 'spirit' of the critical thinker. Moreover, where explicit, logical reasoning is not evident in a culture's literacy, it may be, as Lin Yu-Tang (1935) suggests, because of the operation of prohibitive and repressive political powers which actively discourage freedom of thought and criticism. One of the issues which this thesis explores, therefore, is what East Asian students actually understand by the terms 'critically evaluate' and 'argumentation' (see pages 128-129).

To summarise thus far, critical thinking has been described by critical thinking theorists as a universal, acultural skill which is essential in today's technological age. They emphasise logic and fair-mindedness in evaluating alternative viewpoints. Before considering the critiques of this stance, there are a number of other aspects of critical thinking theory which need to be considered - namely reflexivity, dialogic thinking, surface v. deep critical thinking, and

creativity.

According to Paul (1993:22), Siegel (1988) and Ennis (1987, 1996), critical thinking is reflective. The thinker is aware of his/her thinking process, and routinely ask him/herself questions, such as the following about the thinking task at hand:

What is the *purpose* of my thinking?

What precise *question* am I trying to answer?

Within what *point of view* am I thinking?

What *information* am I using?

How am I *interpreting* that information?

What *concepts* or ideas are central to my thinking?

What *conclusions* am I coming to?

What am I taking for granted, what *assumptions* am I making?

If I accept the conclusions, what are the *implications*?

What would the *consequences* be, if I put my thought into action?

Paul argues that this kind of reflective thinking is essential for the Socratic type of dialogic thinking advocated by the Critical Thinking movement, and one of the questions raised in this thesis concerns the extent to which East Asian students are familiar with the notion and practice of reflectivity in their own learning experience.

Over 2, 400 years ago Socrates advanced a method of probing questioning to discover whether people could rationally justify their confident claims to knowledge. Galileo also used dialogic debate in his controversial 'Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems: Ptolemaic and Copernican', published in 1632. In the twentieth century the notion of internalised dialogue in cognitive and language development was revitalised by Vygotsky (1962/1994), the Russian psychologist. Bakhtin (1987) argued that meaning only emerges between people in dialogic relationships, and that consciousness can only realize itself 'in dialogue with the other' (Dentith 1995:44). One of Bakhtin's basic principles is that 'communicative acts only have meaning in particular situations or contexts', and that language is formed in a social context and carries social meaning (Dentith 1995:3). Dialogical thinking, where others' voices are heard, is therefore necessary for critical thinking. Paul describes dialogical thinking as follows:

We move up and back between categorically different roles. We must first imagine ourselves in a given frame of reference. Then we must imaginatively construct some reasons to support it. Next we must step outside it and imagine ourselves responding to those reasons from an opposing point of view. Then we must imagine ourselves back in the first point of view to respond to the opposition we just created. Next we must change roles again and create a further response and so on - so we integrate the strengths of opposing views and eliminate weak points. (1993:349)

The aim of this is not that everything becomes relative and arbitrary, or a matter of opinion, but that all beliefs and points of view are subject to rational analysis and assessment. This, Paul advocates, leads to a free society and autonomous freethinking persons. Critical thinking, the theorists argue, is integrally linked to critical reading and critical writing. Critical reading is an active, intellectually engaged process in which the reader participates in an inner dialogue with the writer:

Most people read uncritically and so miss some part of what is expressed while distorting other parts. A critical reader realizes the way in which reading, by its very nature, means entering into a point of view other than our own, the point of view of the writer. A critical reader actively looks for assumptions, key concepts and ideas, reasons and justifications, supporting examples, parallel experiences, implications and consequences, and any other structural features of the written text, to interpret and assess it accurately and fairly. (Paul 1993: 461)

Similarly, Paul believes that “Disciplined writing requires disciplined thinking; disciplined thinking is achieved through disciplined writing”(1993:462). To express ourselves in language requires that we arrange our ideas in some relationship to each other:

When accuracy and truth are at issue, then we must understand what our thesis is, how we can support it, how we can elaborate it to make it intelligible to others, what objections can be raised to it from other points of view, what the limitations are to our point of view, and so forth. (1993:462)

Scardamalia and Bereiter (1994), however, question whether this sort of internal, solitary dialogical debate described by Paul (and Widdowson 1983) can really take place when a person is writing. They argue that there is insufficient evidence for this internal dialogue taking place even with expert writers. There is plenty of evidence, however, of writers reflecting on possible audience reaction and in this way producing critical writing. This type of writing, they claim, helps develop thought in four ways: i) it highlights the weaknesses in one's thoughts as one tries to scribe them coherently; ii) it evolves thoughts through a re-drafting process; iii) it aids sustained thought; iv) it creates original thought whilst writing.

However, Scardamalia and Bereiter (1994) claim that very few native speakers write in this way; it seems to be restricted to a small elite of writers. However, they do argue that the rhetorical requirements of Western academic writing, i.e. the way one is required to structure an argument, force the writer to think dialectically.

Some argue (e.g. Thayer-Bacon 1993) that the science-based, objective mode of critical reasoning which demands evidence for all statements, although useful and necessary for certain functions of life, does not encourage creativity. Paul (1993:106), on the other hand, argues that critical thinking is creative, that 'good reasoning is creative reasoning', and that true creativity requires intellectual discipline and logic to 'figure things out'. Discipline is needed for the best choice of words in creative writing, and evaluation is an integral part of all creativity: 'The creator evaluates and the evaluator creates' (1994: 101). Systematic order, as opposed to haphazardness and subjectivity, is the hallmark of creativity, Paul argues. He does admit, though, that there is no process of systematic instruction which can generate creative genius, or which can get students to generate novel, ground breaking ideas: 'The dimension of 'creativity', in other words, contains unknowns, even mysteries' (1993:101).

East Asian education places value on acquiring knowledge from 'the experts' through memorization, which itself is based on Confucianism (Wachtel & Lum 1991). Thus only when a student has acquired a substantial foundation of knowledge from others can s/he be allowed and entrusted to creatively and independently express their personal opinions and ideas. They are thus encouraged to be 'apprentices' long before they become 'masters', in keeping with Hampden-Turner and Trompenaar's 'Outer Direction' dimension discussed on pages 42/43. Although Western academia, in a similar manner, demands extensive referencing of experts in the field, it does not require the same level of memorisation or the unquestioning acceptance of experts' views that is expected in East Asian cultures. It is, however, possible that Western reliance and insistence on acknowledging intellectual property rights may stifle creative freedom. Conversely, it may strengthen and encourage fresh creative thought by establishing a thorough analysis and evaluation of all alternative known theories first. The question therefore needs to be asked 'What do East Asian students mean by academic creativity, and how does this compare with their concept of Western style academic creativity? The thesis aims to explore if there are any differences in these expectations, and if so, how this gap can be narrowed.

Moreover, the concept of individual ownership of ideas runs contrary to the ideas of collective ownership (Scollon 1995). Some students may have trouble distinguishing between quoting, embedding sources and plagiarism. Also sophisticated techniques are required for paraphrasing and synthesising information for which a high level of language competence is needed (Ryan 2000:55). Students need training in ‘how to ‘mine’ texts for suitable quotes and how to weave sources and quotes into their own work’ (Ryan 2000: 55). Students may also have strongly held views on not tampering with the written word, and not offending lecturers by implying that they are not already aware of the material.

Before critiquing the critical thinking theories, there follows a brief diversion to consider the historical context of the West’s ‘quest after truth’, which according to Bond (Chinese Culture Connection 1987) equates to Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension.

3.2 The Western Mind’s Quest After Truth

A quest for truth, and the beginnings of Western critical thinking emerged in ancient Athens under Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in the fifth century B.C. Socrates believed that truth could be discovered via man’s reasoning, through the struggle of dialectics, by means of questions ‘aimed at exposing the contradiction and muddles of an opponent’s position’, and so separate truth from errors (Blackburn 1996:104). Hegel (1770-1831) much later built on this Socratic notion with his idea of criticism as a process, whereby the weaknesses and flaws of an argument were confronted by a counter argument. From this struggle, the logic could be continually repaired, strengthened and re-synthesised until eventually absolute truth could be attained. Aristotle, also building on Socrates’ ideas, stressed the detailed observation of natural phenomena with the collection, categorisation and testing of empirical data. Plato, on the other hand, believed that truth could only be revealed in its entirety if transcendental revelation was also involved in the search. Modern Western higher education has been greatly influenced by this heritage of Hellenistic thinking, although for over one thousand years from the time of Constantine in the fourth century A.D., it had little influence in Western education. During these centuries Christendom was allowed little, if any, freedom to challenge or critically evaluate the accepted assumptions, beliefs and traditions of the medieval church. However, with the fall of Constantinople, the ancient Greek philosophical writings, which had meanwhile been preserved by the Muslims, were rediscovered by the West.

Some researchers (e.g. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2000) have posited that protestantism has had an influence, as important as the ancient Greeks, on the Western educational approach to critical thinking. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw throughout Europe the emergence of a more aggressive and radical form of critical thinking when people started to question the established 'truths' taught by the Roman Catholic church. This rebellion culminated in Luther who dared to challenge the establishment with ruthless logic and persuasive argument. He and other protestants opened the way for personal, individual judgement in this search for truth to replace the collective mind and information control exercised by the church. Thus a critical, religious intellectuality sought to supersede naïve, religious superstition. The Reformation was a new and decisive assertion of individualism, of critical private judgement against the monolithic authority of the institutional church, and of personal autonomy:

The most fundamental element in the genesis of the Reformation was the emerging spirit of rebellious self-determining individualism, and particularly the growing impulse for intellectual and spiritual independence. (Tarnas 1991: 234)

In medieval thinking the personal identity was largely absorbed in the collective Christian body of souls. In contrast, the Reformation freedom placed a new value on individualism and personal genius. Luther firmly believed in an absolute truth and that the search for this truth was attainable by the diligent, unprejudiced seeker. He did not believe, however, that an individual's illumination could be achieved only through logic and rationalism, but that revelation was also needed. Nevertheless, the truth could only be revealed if the information, i.e. the literature, was accessible. So the invention of the printing press in Europe in the sixteenth century played a pivotal role in opening people's minds to knowledge. Personal reading and reflection helped free the individual from traditional ways of thinking, and from the collective control of thinking. Alternative perspectives and experiences were now available to all. Protestantism fostered in the emerging modern mind:

a new stress on the need to discover unbiased, objective truth, apart from the prejudices and distortions of tradition; to confront entrenched doctrines courageously, to subject all beliefs to fresh criticism and direct testing, to come face-to-face with objective reality unmediated by traditional preconception or vested authorities. Such a passion for disinterested truth informed the Protestant mind and thence the modern mind generally. (Tarnas1991:242)

In East Asia, of course, there was no parallel Reformation with its widespread challenge of the

accepted 'truth' as taught by the establishment. The *Da Xue (Hsueh)*, a Confucian classic, states that 'The beginning of wisdom is the investigation of things', but investigation in search of truth may involve questioning and challenging the accepted knowledge of the day, and this can involve great personal risk. Galileo's father, a free thinker himself, expressed the spirit of investigation in these words:

They, who in proof of any assertion rely simply on the weight of authority, without adducing any argument in support of it, act very absurdly. I, on the contrary, wish to be allowed freely to question and freely to answer you without any sort of adulation, as well becomes those who are in search of truth. (Sobel 1999:17)

The original, powerful, motivating impulse for seeking absolute truth was diverted, however, in seventeenth century Europe during the Enlightenment, towards a secular belief that rational man could indeed understand the world as we see and experience it, and to a belief in the self-evident truth of science (Descartes 1596-1650, Bacon 1501-1626). This proved to be misplaced trust, as many Western thinkers came to realise that mankind's reason and observation alone were incapable of achieving certainty through the fallible senses and interpretation of nature. For instance, Einstein's (1879-1955) disproving of Newton's theories caused a great sense of uncertainty about the truth of anything. And so the West has more recently moved towards scepticism, where everything is doubted, and truth is seen as relative and ultimately un-testable and un-provable. In Post Modernism one can take nothing for granted and can assume no absolutes where 'the critical intellect has reached its furthest point of development, doubting all, applying a systematic scepticism to every possible meaning' (Tarnas 1991: 399). Because truth and knowledge are relative, then intellectual analysis must also be recognised as being influenced by culture, language and gender (Tannen 1998). The post modern view of the Socratic pursuit of truth through dialectics is that it is meaningless, because there is no 'true' meaning to anything. A systematic scepticism must be applied to every possible meaning:

You can compare and contrast, analyse and discuss the many sets of perspectives (...) but cannot judge whether a given perspective validly represents 'the truth'. (Tarnas 1991:399)

The social sciences today are now more self aware, self critical and sceptical concerning any claim of 'truth'. Many claim that knowledge can never be certain, only probable (e.g Eisner 1993). They see realities as different sets of perspectives interpreted differently by each individual and each society. They thus embrace a pluralism of truth. It follows that all facts

presuppose an interpretive focus, which Popper (1976) proposed must be testable, stressing falsification as the key criteria.

All this has implications for this thesis. East Asian students not only have to understand and master the concepts and practice of Socratic dialectic and critical argumentation in their postgraduate studies, but they also need to appreciate post modern scepticism when drawing any firm conclusions from data and argument. This duality can be very confusing when first encountered, and it is difficult to develop expertise in both simultaneously. Although at first sight Western scepticism and relativism may appear similar to East Asian diffuse thinking, in that neither accept the need to take polarised, absolute positions, they are quite different. As discussed on pages 39/40, East Asian diffuse thinking emphasises a sensitive balancing and holistic approach to alternative viewpoints. The communicator treads carefully, avoiding offence and confrontation, and can therefore appear to be compromising for the sake of harmony. Western scepticism, though similar in that it may not take a clear stand in a debate, is not people-orientated or other-conscious, and it tends towards negativity and doubt rather than constructive accommodation of alternative views.

3.3 Critique of Critical Thinking Theories

This section explores the major criticisms of critical thinking theory as proposed by Ennis, Paul and Siegel: that it emphasises thinking as an individualistic activity; that it is male orientated; and that it fails to recognise that styles of thinking are influenced, or even determined, by culture and language.

Thayer-Bacon argues that dialogical or critical thinking is a relational and social process and not an individualistic endeavour:

We develop our thinking skills as we develop our communication skills and our social skills, by being in relation to others (...). Our thinking improves the more we are able to relate to others and discuss our thoughts with them. (1993: 337)

A relational model of thinking emphasises people working together – solving problems through conversing and debating together, valuing all opinions and suspending judgement. Like Vygotsky (1962/1994) and many educational linguists (e.g. Bruner 1973, Graves 1978, Bakhtin 1984), Thayer-Bacon believes that ‘our thinking improves the more we are able to

relate to others and discuss our thoughts with them' (Thayer-Bacon 1993:338). Similarly, Scardamalia and Bereiter argue that conversation can promote the growth of thinking, especially when 'controversial partners holding different opinions strive to reach a mutually agreeable position and in the process advance beyond the level of understanding that either partner possessed at the beginning' (1994: 297).

Vygotsky (1962) also saw social interaction as an essential component of cognitive development, and Burbules and Blerk (1999: 49) argue that certain social conditions are necessary for freedom of expression and thought. Although Paul would not agree with this, he does recognise the benefits of teams and collaboration for problem solving tasks.

The arguments made by Thayer-Bacon and others that thinking is a relational and social process would suggest that Socratic debates in the classroom, alongside cooperative learning, peer tutoring and group-work, would particularly help East Asian students who, coming from collectivist cultures, may not necessarily relate to Paul's individualistic approach. The implications for lecturers are that 'midwife' teachers are needed, much as Socrates proposed, rather than authorities who deposit knowledge in learners' heads. These would 'support the evolution of students' thinking and focus on students' knowledge, not his or her own, as teacher' (Thayer-Bacon 1993:339).

Another argument put forward by feminist opponents of the Critical Thinking movement, (such as Thayer-Bacon 1993, Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule 1986, Bailin 1995, Orr 1989, Nye 1990) and by other writers (e.g Tannen 1990, 1998), is that men's logic is different from women's logic, the latter accepting experience, emotion and feeling as valid sources of evidence. Orr claims that formal logic is dominated by masculine preference for polarised argumentation: "The West's conception of mind and rationality are overwhelmingly male" (1989:2). Bailin (1995), likewise, claims that formal logic was developed by white Western males and is biased because it excludes the practices of some groups. She argues that it reflects masculine styles of interacting and that their standards are made universal as the only legitimate mode of understanding. This mode can be characterised by aggression and confrontation, individualism, logic and a lack of emotion - the 'battlefield' mentality - as opposed to the more 'feminine', intuitive reasoning. A more collaborative, interpersonal context for discussion and debate, she argues, is more suited to many groups: 'different

groups in society have employed different methods in constructing knowledge, but those in power have privileged their own ways of knowing' (Bailin 1995:194, Tannen 1998).

Orr (1989) contends that women, on the other hand, prefer conciliatory reasoning (informal logic), where differences are accepted and not polarised, although she also points out that women, once allowed education, have proved to be as able as men to use the masculine mode of reasoning, but that empathy and subjectivity can also be useful tools in reasoning. Likewise, Noddings argues that education:

must provide far more opportunities for students of all ages to plead each other's cases, to stand between opposing parties in appreciative efforts to bring people together in common understanding. (1989:173)

Noddings is in effect calling for 'peacemakers' in debate. It may be argued that this approach inevitably results in compromise, which is not always acceptable as truth at times may, in fact, lie with one side and not the other. Her argument implies that a Western educational system is biased towards masculine reasoning and that students who prefer a more 'feminine' approach to debate are disadvantaged. East Asian students, coming from cultures that score higher in Hofstede's femininity dimension than Western cultures, may be even more disadvantaged by the educational practice in the West. They may find it more natural to engage in the type of constructive, conciliatory and sensitive dialogue that these feminist writers advocate. The question then arises as to whether it is possible, or indeed appropriate, for Western academia to consider *adapting* the Western style of critical essay into a style of essay writing which encourages and values more conciliatory reasoning.

Gilligan (1982) claims that women and men differ in their reasoning concerning the ethics of care and justice; women are more concerned that no one is hurt, in contrast to men's concern over the formal logic of fairness. Caring is an essential ingredient in critical thinking according to Thayer-Bacon: "Without caring, one cannot hope to be a good / constructive thinker. Caring is necessary to be sure ideas have been fairly considered and understood" (1993: 323). She defines *caring* as being receptive and respectful to what another has to say, being open to hearing the other's voice more completely and fairly, and deeming it to be of value, of interest and worthy of close inspection:

Caring is a necessary characteristic of critical thinkers for ideas and arguments do not have a life of their own; they are generated by people, and critical thinking is an activity performed by people. What a knower brings to

the knowing and how a knower relates to the knowing is as important as the knowing itself' (1993:323).

This caring aspect relates closely to the notion of 'face' as discussed earlier. In a debate, East Asian students would be more concerned with preserving the 'face' of the other, and direct disagreement or challenge would be seen as arrogance, presumption and inconsideration (Gao and Ting Toomey 1998). It also relates to Ting Toomey's notion of 'mindfulness' (Ting Toomey and Kurogi 1998), where participants in an interactive discourse take conscious care and are mindful of the other(s)' face.

Thayer-Bacon distinguishes between traditional critical thinking which excludes subjective feelings (as misleading), and what she terms *constructive thinking* which she defines as making every effort to fairly consider and to understand people's ideas in order to find the best solutions to problems. She argues that one cannot separate the self from the object, the knower from the known, personal knowledge from expert knowledge (1993:324). In other words, reflective problem-solving thinking, which requires judgements, decisions and choices, must involve the whole person and not just the mind.

Sensitivity, she argues, is essential if one is to be truly open-minded and 'fair' to others' arguments. True critical thinking (or *constructive thinking* as she prefers to call it) requires one to know oneself and what one contributes to the knowing, in other words to be self-reflective. Relational skills, she argues, are necessary to help open not just one's mind, but one's heart:

A constructive thinker attempts to believe the other(s) to make sure understanding has taken place, before she uses her critical thinking skills to doubt and critique. Judging and assessing are vital parts of constructive thinking, but so are caring and awareness of one's own personal voice (...) Caring is value-giving, whereas blind justice tends to be absolutistic and silencing (Thayer-Bacon 1993: 327,328)

In other words, one gives value and worth to the other person when one respects them enough to listen and try to understand their meaning before opposing, dismissing or trying to silence their viewpoint. The notion of caring as an integral aspect of education is found in the Confucian heritage. A person could not be educated in the absence of strong, caring relations, and without developing the heart ('jiao ren), as much as the mind.

Traditional Critical Thinking theory, on the other hand, states that facts are separated from subjective opinion; critical thinkers are objective and distanced from what is being examined; that it relies on skills such as doubting, questioning, comparing, contrasting and judging; and that it is a search for truth and certainty (Ennis 1987, Siegel 1988, Paul). They argue that reality can be represented accurately by being impartial, consistent and non-arbitrary. Emotions must not “present practical obstacles to the execution of critical thinking” (Siegel 1988:41).

Ennis began in 1962 to identify the dimensions and criteria of critical thinking which could help one avoid making errors, and assess statements correctly. In 1985 he revised his definition of critical thinking to include the practical goals of such thinking i.e. to help us decide ‘what to believe or do’ (Ennis 1987:10). Ennis stresses the importance of maintaining the dignity of others in the argument and the need for critical thinkers to have the ‘disposition’ or tendency to use these skills, and to be sensitive to others. However, he explicitly denies that sensitivity is ‘constitutive of critical thinking’:

The disposition to care about the dignity and worth of every person is not required of critical thinking by definition, but in order that it be humanic (.....) it is desirable for all critical thinkers to have it, and the lack of it makes the critical thinking less valuable, or perhaps of no value at all. (Ennis 1987:16)

Siegel, indeed, stresses the need to be ‘emotionally secure’ in order to engage in critical thinking. One wonders, however, how far he is defining this in purely masculine terms:

A person who is a critical thinker must be, to the greatest extent possible, emotionally secure, self-confident, and capable of distinguishing between having faulty beliefs and having a faulty character. A positive self-image, and traditionally – conceived psychological health, are important features of the psychology of the critical thinker” (Siegel 1988:41)

One implication of this for East Asian students is that in order to take risks and explore alternatives that are contrary to firmly held beliefs, they have to be emotionally secure and confident. Can East Asian students be ‘emotionally secure’ writers, however, when they may be suffering culture/academic culture shock, when they are not sure about the ‘rules of play’, when they fear that their English is not up to the job, and when they come from risk avoiding cultures? Of course one also has to define *emotionally secure*, which, it could be argued, might also include political, cultural and situational security.

Post modern philosophers, e.g. Rorty (1979) and Kuhn (1970), have challenged the critical theorists' view by claiming that all people are contextual knowers that are affected by political, social, psychological and historical forces. They posit that people are not neutral agents of knowledge, but are social creatures who filter their knowledge through their 'selves', and that this inevitably involves using a cultural filter.

Paul's views on critical thinking are closer to Thayer-Bacon's *constructive thinking* than Siegel's and Ennis' when he refers to 'intellectual humility', 'suspending judgement' and 'intellectual courage' ((1993:22). Paul's 'strong' critical thinkers do attempt to understand others' points of view more clearly and reflect upon one's own point of view more critically. He advocates trying to believe the strongest version of another's perspective before dismissing it. However, Paul still views the thinker's subjectivity in a negative way, his stress being on removing the self from the critical thinking process in order to try and understand the other's points of view fairly.

Thayer-Bacon argues that true critical thinking (constructive thinking) needs to go beyond Paul's theory, however. The traditional model is 'limited and deceptive because it does not allow for the self' (1993: 335). In her view it is impossible to 'get rid of one's voice and 'be objective'' (1993: 335). She argues that one is not to remove one's own voice and sense of identity in order to understand the other's point of view. Rather, one is to participate, self-knowingly, in the debate; to combine the personal voice with the critical thinking voice. For this a person will need 'a high tolerance for internal contradiction and ambiguity, and one needs to learn to live with conflict' (1993:335).

In comparing Western and Chinese critical thinking, Garrett (2000:61) claims that many researchers are misinformed when they conclude that Chinese culture gives little attention to rhetorical debate and argumentation. Historically, she argues, the Chinese have a long tradition of debate, albeit a different version than the dialectic debate advocated by classical Greece and which the West adheres to. The early anti-Confucian Mohists in the third and fourth centuries B.C., and Chinese Buddhist monks in the ninth century A.D. engaged in dialectical disputations (Jensen 1992: 159), but apart from these periods of history, there appears to be an 'absence of formal logic in the works of Chinese philosophers' (Oliver (1971: 180, 195). Most debate took place at court, where elegant language was emphasised and only

the educated elite had the leisure to engage in it (Garrett 1993: 108). However, there was a power imbalance between the speakers and the audience i.e. the ruler, and it was 'rhetorical common sense' for debaters not to disagree openly with the ruler (Garrett 1993: 112). Furthermore, in Chinese rhetoric, thinking and feeling are closely related, which challenges the West's emphasis on objective reasoning and subordination of emotion. Instead, there is an emphasis on harmony, face-saving and on presenting 'uncomfortable truths in a non-threatening way' and in being 'appropriately ambiguous' (Jensen 1992:154). Supposed opposites are viewed as complementary, and this delicate balance is embedded in the concept of *yin and yang*. Furthermore, Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism rely heavily on argument from authority, as they constantly refer back to the sayings of ancient masters (Jensen 1992:157). Reasoning from analogy is another major mode of Chinese argumentation (Oliver 1971: 49; Lau 1970:262, 1983).

3.4 The Influence of Culture and Language on Critical Thinking

This next section looks at various cultural and language barriers to participation in Western style argumentation. It begins by exploring the debate on whether literacy is acultural, as Paul (1982, 1990, 1994) argues, or whether the literacy practices of any culture are embedded in, and reflect, the values and norms of that society. It goes on to consider how high context cultures prefer inference to explicitness in their oral and written discourse; how they avoid conflict and direct confrontation; and how this influences their perception of, and willingness to engage in Western-style critical debate.

One long-standing Western view of literacy is that it is acultural (Goody 1977; Ong 1982; Olson 1977); that there is a clear divide between literacy and oracy and that they do not overlap in terms of cultural conventions; and that capturing one's thoughts in writing helps to clarify and form them with the ultimate aim of making them unambiguous. The traditional belief, therefore, is that literacy is an autonomous mode of communication that transcends culture and power structures:

Writing presents utterance and thought as uninvolved in all else, somehow self-contained, complete. (Ong 1982:132)

There is a transition from utterance to text both culturally and developmentally and this transition can be described as one of increasing explicitness, with language increasingly able to stand as an unambiguous and autonomous representation of meaning. (Olson 1977:258)

However, Kulick and Stroud's (1993) research into literacy acquisition in a Papua New Guinea village has shown that there are strong links between orality and cultural conventions of communication, and literacy. In the oral communication of this people group there was an avoidance of appearing to be 'pushy' and self oriented, and instead, a great sensitivity to others' interests. These cultural characteristics were also clearly evident in their writing. In other words, their speech and cultural conventions were reflected in their literacy. Similarly, Scollon and Scollon (1981) have demonstrated with their research into the Athabaskan cultural group in Alaska that discourse systems are integrally linked with self- perceptions and social/cultural identities. Street (1984, 1993, 1994) therefore argues that rather than being viewed as autonomous, literacy needs to be seen as 'ideological' i.e. interpreted in the context of culture and society.

Gee, points out that in much research (e.g by Olson 1977, Ogbu 1990) there is an assumed link between Western academic literacy and higher order mental skills such as analytic logic and abstract thought. He argues that many believe that Western essay-text literacy is 'the natural, universal, or at least, the end point of a normal developmental progression of cognitive skills (achieved only by some cultures, thanks either to their intelligence or their technology)' (1994:181). Gee, in line with arguments within New Literacy studies (e.g. Lea & Street 1998, Ivanic 1998), argues that essay text literacy is 'only one cultural way of making sense among many others' (1994:179). Barton and Ivanic argue that education is only one domain of literacy practice and that "if we are to understand writing, we need to talk in terms of 'literacies', not just one literacy" (1991:13). Gee claims that discourse analysts have focused almost exclusively on Western literacy situations and on the literate activities of the intellectual elite, and that as a consequence it 'best reflects the ideology of academics'. Indeed, Scribner and Cole (1973) working with the Vai people group observed that skills in academia may not be applied elsewhere i.e. they may be restricted to the academic environment. In this sense acquiring these skills may not be as liberating or revolutionary as some might claim. Scribner and Cole also conclude that it is not literacy acquisition that affects mental functioning but the schooling and tutoring that is involved in the acquisition which enculturates the receivers into a certain way of thinking and of expressing themselves.

Street agrees with Gee that the essay-text literacy of the West has become not only the perceived dominant literacy but the standard or 'proper literacy of the dominant culture'

(1994:142). This, he claims, is not because it is the best, but as a result of a global economic/political power struggle. As a consequence, other varieties of literacy become marginalized and remedial attention is therefore seen to be required. Those who practise alternative literacies are conceived of as culturally deprived. Goody (1977), for example, claims that some societies have 'restricted literacy' as opposed to the 'full literacy' opportunities of Western societies. Street (1994:148), in contrast, argues that no variety of literacy practice is deficient, but that each serves its own purpose. Cultural diversity in literacy practices implies we should 'be wary of assuming a single literacy where we may simply be imposing assumptions derived from our own cultural practice onto others' literacies' (Street 1993:1).

East Asian students, for instance, are accustomed to being rewarded for 'following the master', rather than for 'questioning the question' and they therefore find open-ended questions and ambiguous essay topics very difficult to handle. Also their traditional rhetorical styles are frequently rejected as having little value: "Students find themselves inexplicably penalised in their work for behaviour for which they have been previously rewarded" (Ryan 2000:16). Although some post modern Western academics challenge the essay-text literacy style of academic writing, it is still by far the most common tool of assessment in higher education in the U.K. Perhaps we need to question, however, whether these notions of academic literacy should be broadened, given the significant participation of international students who may bring alternative ideas.

3.5 Explicitness, Clarity and Transparency in English Essay Style Writing

Street (1994) claims that essay-text literacy can only test the ability to use language in a certain way i.e. explicitly. Scollon and Scollon (1981) conclude that the West prefers explicitness because it is compatible with individualism and because of its heightened emphasis on 'truth value'. This necessitates writers to be explicit about the logical implications of their reasoning. Nothing is to be taken at face value; one cannot know anything without evidence.

Graff (1994: 227) argues that literacy education in England and Europe was greatly influenced by Reformation Protestantism which strongly discouraged passive acceptance of the claims to

truth by received tradition, no doubt in reaction to the Catholic heritage it was struggling against. Olson claims that 'ordiliness' in writing was the result of Protestant reform and Martin Luther in particular. This movement stressed clarity and transparency, and encouraged the active weighing of the truth-value of each possibility, through reasoning and analysis:

It was in this intellectual atmosphere that the English essayist prose style, which certainly had older roots, became enshrined as the natural means for the expression of truth and knowledge. (Olson 1977:44)

Viswanathan contends that, similar to ancient Greece, this emphasis on truth fostered the discipline of the mind to think and reason from the force of evidence:

The element of doubt attending upon the senses sets the mind in a state of intellectual ferment, forcing it to do battle with error until a full knowledge of the truth is reached. (1994:227)

It is this Christian notion of 'struggling with truth', Viswanathan argues, which is the root cause of explicitness in the literacy and argumentation practices of the West. The rationale for such explicitness in the academic essayist literacy is that thereby a text can be unambiguous in its meaning, closed to alternative interpretation, and de-contextualised. The language and discourse pattern can carry the weight of the meaning, which is signalled by the syntax and sequential relations, and there is no need for inference or 'reading between the lines'. The logic of syntactic cohesion dominates essayist text. The relationship between the writer and the reader is not important, indeed both author and reader are fictionalised – the author is in a state of self-effacement and the reader is idealised. The idea is that of clear, unambiguous communication from one rational mind to another:

The ultimate knowability of the real world is matched by the assumption of its complete expressibility in text. One has only to observe clearly and think clearly, and clear expression will follow automatically. (Foucault 1973:49)

This is in contrast to common thinking and literacy styles in East Asian cultures where the writing is highly contextualised, inference is expected and the meaning of the text is negotiated between the author and the reader. As discussed earlier, East Asian cultures have traditionally avoided confrontation in debate, placing high value on face-saving strategies i.e. not embarrassing their opponents by proving or insinuating that they are wrong. Rather than being explicit in their arguments, a more subtle approach of inference and ambiguity is preferred, where reader responsibility is favoured (Hinds 1987). Readers are expected to infer meaning by 'reading between the lines', in contrast to the Western approach of writer

responsibility where the writer is expected to clearly set out his thoughts and opinions in direct, unambiguous terms.

Traditionally, in East Asian cultures, the ultimate goal of communication is to preserve harmony, and talk is not relied on as the main means of communication. Words are used with caution because of the implications, and the effect of one's words on others. Implicit communication is thus preferred where 'one does not spell out everything but leaves the 'unspoken' to the listeners' (Gao and Ting Toomey 1998:37). This leaves room for negotiating meaning, so maintaining harmony and compensating for what they see as the inadequacy of words. In this way the speaker and the listener negotiate meaning, so that when a person vaguely expresses an idea, an opinion or a suggestion, they expect their conversational partner to actively decipher and interpret the message, as well as to mutually create the meanings. In this way 'meaning lies beyond words', as a traditional Chinese expression states.

Throughout the history of imperial China poetry and painting were used by the educated elite, usually court officials, as a means of criticising and expressing dissent against poor leadership and government policies (Murck 2000). To avoid punishment of execution or exile, the message of dissent was subtly concealed and could only be decoded by those educated in these art forms. Often titles of paintings were taken from earlier 'poetry of complaint', as these art forms were later coined. The artist would ingeniously play on the meanings of the lines so as to communicate their dissent: 'Comparisons to poetry indicate that the landscape titles adroitly address issues of banishment, incompetence at court, and personal lament' (Murck 2000:3). The non-initiated, however, would read the works apolitically as beautiful pictures. Thus a tradition of critique against superiors, which was non-open and non-transparent, became embedded in the culture. This may, in part, explain why a direct, explicit style of communication, such as is expected by U.K. lecturers is the least desirable approach to the Chinese, and other East Asian cultures. It would also suggest that Western style critical thinking, which aims to be direct and transparent, may be inappropriate in the East Asian cultural context. Thus, participants in high-context systems (see page 21 for definitions of high and low contexts cultures) expect others to know what they mean without having to be specific (Hall 1976:113). Buckley, for instance, writing about the high context nature of Japanese communication says:

Much communication occurs through implicit and indirect means (...). The Japanese avoid giving an assertive impression and use many qualifiers including ‘maybe, perhaps, and somewhat’, rather than categorical terms such as ‘absolutely, certainly, positively’. As the result of their high context communication system, the Japanese often give indirect, ambiguous responses’. (2000:3)

According to Hayashi (2002:13), Japanese literacy education tends to emphasize the author’s purpose in writing in order to train students to look for meaning beyond the words. In doing so, Japanese students may be trained to ‘read the unwritten words’, and to guess at the writer’s feelings.

Explicitness in language use can be placed on a continuum between two poles - the syntactic mode of high explicitness and low inference common in Western literacy, and the pragmatic mode of low explicitness and high inference (Givon 1979). This relates well to Hall’s concepts of low and high context cultures and how these determine communication styles and practices. The distinctions outlined in the table below are, however, broad trends rather than absolutely distinct categories, and they are open to modification by individuals in particular contexts.

Syntactic Mode (Low Context / High Explicitness)	Pragmatic mode (High Context / Low Explicitness)
Explicit syntactic structures	Prosodic devices to signal meaning
Precise and varied lexical items	Loose linkage
Little left to inference	Relies on hearer/reader to draw inferences on the basis of mutual knowledge
Grammar takes on most of the burden for communication	Negotiated meaning

Table 3: Communication in Low and High Context Cultures
Source: author, based on Givon (1979) & Hall (1976)

Gee suggests, however, that in some high context cultures ‘explicitness may be seen as crude because it is either distancing, blunt or condescending to the hearer’s intelligence or relation to the speaker’ (1994:180). The Chinese written language, for example, tends to be high context. To be literate in Chinese one has to be conversant with Chinese history, as well as with

pronunciation and the tonal system. Chinese orthography is an art form and, as Hall points out, good art is high context – art that releases its meaning over time (Hall 1976:92).

Similarly, Gudykunst and Kim (1984: 140) write:

The Asian attitude toward speech and rhetoric is characteristically a holistic one, that is the words are only part of, and are inseparable from, the total communication context, which includes the personal characters of the parties involved and the nature of the interpersonal relationships between them.

East Asian cultures, though they value knowledge, discourage verbalising knowledge: “If what one said is truthful, the verbalization constitutes a violation of the modesty principle; if not, a manifestation of ignorance” (Lim 2002:77). Lao Tze and Confucius preached the futility of verbalization roughly at the same time that Socrates, Plato and Aristotle taught the importance of reasoning and logical persuasion in the West.

Bernstein (1964) also comments on how inference and explicitness relate to high and low contexts in the West. He identified two levels of language used in everyday life – a ‘restricted’ code and an ‘elaborated’ code. In the restricted code of intimacy in the home, words and sentences collapse and are shortened. In other words, the listeners are expected to ‘read between the lines’ and infer meaning from the minimal responses. The elaborate code is used in more formal, less intimate settings, and involves explicit and detailed language. In high context cultures, on the other hand, both written and oral communication leaves substantial ‘space’ for the receiver to interpret the messages themselves. If the speaker or writer were to be more explicit or detailed then it would be perceived as insulting to the other’s intelligence. It may, therefore, confuse students when they are required to explicitly articulate information which they know their lecturers already know. They may also view academic critical argument as conflict, which is the subject of the next section.

3.6 Culture and Conflict in Argumentation

In individualistic cultures, conflict may sometimes be viewed as constructive because it can energize change: “ a certain degree of conflict is probably viewed as productive and functional” (Ting-Toomey 1985: 74). Overt confrontation of ideas and reasoned argumentation are viewed positively by open democratic systems. Collectivist societies, on the other hand, often view conflict as causing dysfunction and threatening the equilibrium of a system. To openly disagree with someone is an extreme insult, with the result that both sides

'lose face'. The Japanese, for example, try to iron out differences gradually and subtlety in private using '*nemawashi*', which means 'root binding' - a process of carefully binding the roots of a plant before pulling it out. The Japanese also employ a system of 'go-betweens', or neutral third parties, in their face-saving negotiation processes. In this manner, East Asian cultures prefer to use preventative measures to avoid conflicts and public tensions are scorned and suppressed

High context cultures (Hall 1976) therefore tend to exert cultural constraints on the public expression of conflict. These may be cognitive restraints, based on beliefs; emotional constraints, based on the degree to which emotions, like anger or frustration, can be expressed publicly; and behavioural constraints, based on the rules and codes governing acceptable behaviour (Ting-Toomey 1985). Low context cultures, in contrast, contain low cultural constraints and therefore conflict is more likely because 'the players play by idiosyncratic rules and only improvise co-ordination on the spot' (Ting Toomey 1985:79). In other words, in low context cultures there are no specific cultural normative rules to guide interaction, and thus there is inevitably a great deal of risk and uncertainty in interpersonal interactions. However, in such cultures individuals are better able to separate the issue from the person involved in the conflict, whereas in high context cultures the conflict issue is inseparable from the people themselves (Ting-Toomey 1985:77). An individual's ideas are seen as entangled with his or her identity or sense of personal worth; a conflict of ideas is an attack on one's self or, more specifically, on one's face (Young 1994:125).

In a conflict situation, members of low context cultures use a direct, explicit language code and tend towards revealment and engaging from the mind, their primary aim being to openly discuss the issues objectively. In contrast, high context cultures use vagueness, circumlocution, indirect speech and tact ('diffuse' thinking), with a tendency towards concealment. The primary aim is to prevent interpersonal tension and avoid face-threatening situations.

In addition to cultural differences, lack of language competence may impede active participation of the East Asian students in argumentation. Felix and Lawson (1994) and Ryan (2000) explain that East Asian students may not engage in debate and discussion because they do not feel adequately equipped to participate with dignity and without loss of face:

With a poor understanding of English usage it is difficult, although not impossible, to develop a highly intellectual and sophisticated argument. While the thought processes might be clear in the mind of the writer when thinking in the mother tongue, the transfer of these processes to vastly less sophisticated English often leads to a distortion of what was originally meant. Supervisors do not have the time to look for well-hidden lines of argument and their assessment of the work will be influenced by the presence of poor surface structures. Poor English and poor argument or analysis can become inextricably linked. (Ryan 2000:46)

A loss of self-esteem, confidence, status and identity can all be effects of language incompetence in a host country. Students cannot express themselves properly so “they begin to feel like a non-person, stripped of all their usual resources for coping and expressing themselves. They can feel like they are becoming a different person “ (Ryan 2000:79). There appears then to be a relationship between the language competency of East Asian students and the level of their adjustment in thinking and the expression of thoughts.

Some second language users transfer culturally-based discourse patterns from their first to their second language. Thus East Asian students may be influenced in their academic writing in English by the discourse patterns expected in their mother tongue (Kaplan 1987, Connor & Takala 1986, Soter 1988: 178). The study of contrastive rhetoric has shown, for example, that Western rhetorical practice is less insistent on consensus, politeness and restraint than elsewhere and that second language writers bring to the task the knowledge of what is socially and culturally appropriate in terms of writer/reader roles and relationships, and rhetorical conventions (Bickner :& Peyasantiwong 1988). Soter argues that “the degree to which a writer observes rhetorical conventions in a particular cultural context may reveal the extent to which the writer is ‘acculturated’ (i.e. socialized into a target community)” (1988: 178).

This next section briefly considers how language and thinking affect identity, and vice versa. For the purpose of this research ‘identity’ is defined as how a person views him/herself – who or what the core of a person is: their innate abilities, beliefs and values, and how they see themselves, both in their relationships with the people they closely live and work with, and in their role in the larger society. A significant aspect of identity is how a person believes or anticipates that others may view that person.

Gee (1994:168) argues that discourse practices of a cultural group are “integrally connected

with the identity or sense of self of the people who practice them; a change of discourse practices is a change of identity". Gee (1994) and Street (1994), amongst many others, believe that language and literacy acquisition are forms of socialisation, and discourse practices are always embedded in the particular world view of a particular social group, tied to a set of values and norms. One's language, whether orality or literacy, is a reflection of one's consciousness.

All language is organised into discourse systems which, in turn, reflect our thinking (Vygotsky 1962/1994). These can be described as 'the way ideas are put together into an argument, the way some ideas are selected for special emphasis, or the way emotional information about the ideas is presented' (Scollon & Scollon 1981: 12). So it would seem that the discourse systems of any language are the result of socialisation from birth and are closely tied to an individual's concept of identity. An example of this is provided by Scollon & Scollon (1981) whose research findings were discussed on page 28, in the context of power distance and face values. They investigated the interethnic communication between the Athabaskan Native Americans in Alaska and the white English speaking Americans who were working there. They discovered that the self-perceptions of both groups were reflected in their discourse practices. For example, for the Americans in the study, volubility was related to social distance and taciturnity to intimacy. For the Athabaskans it was the reverse. Hence the Athabaskans thought 'the English speakers were too talkative' when they first met as strangers, whilst the Americans thought the Athabaskans were withdrawn and unfriendly. As this type of miscommunication increases 'racial and ethnic stereotyping begin to develop and impede further communication' (Scollon & Scollon 1981: 11). They claim it was not the grammar of English, the common language of communication, that caused the breakdown in communication but the very different discourse patterns of the two cultures. Scollon & Scollon (1981:12) claim that 'any change in the discourse system is likely to be felt as a change in personality and culture (...). If someone says that an English speaker should be less talkative, less self-assertive, (...) he is saying at the same time that he should become a different person'. Of course not all English speakers are voluble and self-assertive. But the point being made is that any imposed change of discourse practice may be seen as a requirement to change one's personality or group identity.

So it would appear, as Mead (1977) points out, that society's expectations create the 'self' and

that the core of a person is the product of society. This may be the case, Habermas (1987) agrees, for those who do not engage in self-reflection but, he argues, freedom from society's expectations is possible through critical thinking. He proposes that every human being should be given the freedom by way of analysis, criticism and self-reflection to develop into a self-determining and rationally acting person. In this his ideas support those of Paul as to the universality of critical thinking. Habermas claims that in order to achieve rationality, individuals need to distance themselves from the roles and self-awareness imposed by society and culture, and that language competency plays a significant role in this. In this way people can be set free from ideologies and prejudices. This, however, assumes a struggle against traditional norms of the society in which one lives which, in turn, suggests that the person who pursues this route must be prepared to take risks, go against the grain of their own societal and cultural norms and perhaps, as a result, feel displaced, misunderstood or even isolated from their own cultural group. Is Habermas correct, then, when he asserts that critical thinking and self-reflection not only aid, but are essential, to the students' adaptation experience? These questions will be addressed further in the following chapters, when the results are analysed.

Relating this to international students, some may feel that a change in discourse practice is a threat to 'self', especially if the change is perceived as imposed or required, rather than by choice. Others may welcome the opportunity to change. Their response will be determined by their personality, their willingness to take risks, their level of uncertainty avoidance, and their second language competence. As was argued on page 27, postgraduate international students, however, may not be representative of their cultures in terms of risk taking.

Street believes that when we engage in different types of literacy we are taking on, or resisting, the identities associated with those practices: "The acquisition of a particular set of literacy practices, whilst clearly associated with particular cultural identities, may actually be a focus for transformation and challenge"(1994:142). Transformation and challenge, therefore, may entail a struggle between identities and are not merely the product of literacy acquisition. To what extent, then, does society and culture mould self-identities? For East Asian students, is it a case of actually changing their identity as a result of exposure to a completely different set of cultural and social norms abroad – or is it more a case of 'fitness', of adapting to different expectations - a case of 'when in Rome, live as the Romans'? This adaptation could be merely superficial - a means of survival in a foreign setting - or it could go deeper, so that

the core of the person's identity and thinking is permanently changed. Alternatively, it may be that some people cope with the contradictions by adopting a flexible approach whereby they express multiple identities in accordance to the demands of particular social contexts. These questions are addressed further on pages 227-229.

Miedema, & Wardekker (1999) believe that identity becomes understandable only in connection with social relations, and that the decisions and choices one makes depend on the current social situation. In other words an individual does not/need not project the same identity wherever s/he is, but s/he learns to adapt to different demands and norms. They suggest that identity is not the result of:

balancing between the expectation of others and those of the individual itself. Rather, the balancing act is between different expectations, each of which has been partly internalised. Within every person there are different voices, which can be, and usually are, contradictory (...) in different situations, before different audiences, the individual may be guided by different perspectives that may be partially incompatible. (1999:79)

In other words, East Asian students may hold multiple expectations so that different facets of their 'personhood' or identity can be expressed through different cultural literacy practices. Individuals may view these apparent contradictions and changes in a negative way or they may see them positively, as opportunities for development. It is now recognised that multilingualism and code mixing/switching, i.e. switching from one language to another in one utterance or discourse, can enrich and expand one's ability to express one's consciousness (Maybin 1994). Could it not also be true that our multifaceted personalities can find more freedom and variety of expression through different cultural literacy practices, without actually having to 'take on or resist' the cultural identities themselves? Kulick and Stroud (1990) for example, working with villagers in Papua New Guinea found that a 'new literacy' did not automatically transform the receiver – rather that the receiver 'takes hold of' and assimilates the new into their existing cultural concepts. Thus their existing communication forms may expand and alter, without necessarily changing their identity or sense of self.

This implies that East Asian students, in facing these contradictions, will need eventually to make some conscious decisions whether to adapt to the new cultural/social expectations at a superficial or at a deep level. It also implies that the level of adaptation will be determined by the level of self-reflection that the individual engages in. It may be that the ultimate decision

will only be forced on them on return home, or it may be a conscious decision during their study abroad. Miedema, & Wardekker (1999) suggest that education can play a crucial part by stimulating certain ways of handling these contradictions, which has implications for potential exit training programmes for East Asian students.

All this has implications for U.K. lecturers teaching East Asian masters students. For instance, lecturers may see international students as lacking intellectual independence (Ryan 2000:8). They may be unaware that students are not sufficiently prepared to deal with the Western autonomous learning style, and reduced contact time and guidance. They may not have received specific staff development to enhance their support of international students, and they may resent the burden on their time, for which they receive no reward or career advantage. Ryan (2000:11) proposes that empathy and willingness to learn from one another is vital: “Simply asking overseas students to assimilate to British ways is unlikely to be successful since these aspects of culture are deep-rooted and change may be seen as a threat to identity”.

Furthermore, Paul (1993: 88) argues that educators need to be first trained in critical thinking if they are to encourage it in their students. Lecturers need to demonstrate intellectual honesty and to submit their reasons to scrutiny and to the independent evaluation of their students (Gee 1993: 207). In other words, they need to teach in a critical manner. This concept may be threatening to some educators. Paul also suggests that educators need to make the process of critical thinking explicit to their students, if they are not to be disadvantaged (Gee 1993: 293). East Asian students, in particular, need to understand the need for providing warrants (reasons) for any claims in critical writing; that claims need to be assessed and judgements made on the basis of logical reasoning; and that supporting evidence can include literature, empirical data and exemplars.

The cultural frameworks outlined in chapter two can be used to explain thinking and argumentation styles in different cultures. For instance, East Asian cultures, being more femininity oriented (Hofstede 1980), tend to prefer more conciliatory, harmonising debates. The more masculinity oriented, individualistic and low context cultures of the West place more value on linear, objective and explicit debate, which emphasises specificity and emotion-free logic. Risk avoidance, the search for truth, and face maintenance can also be related to cultural styles in critical thinking. As has already been pointed out, East Asian diffuse

thinking emphasises a sensitive balancing and holistic approach to alternative viewpoints. The communicator treads carefully, avoiding offence and confrontation, and can therefore appear to be compromising for the sake of harmony. Western scepticism, though similar in that it may not take a clear stand in a debate, is not people-orientated or other-conscious, and it tends towards negativity and doubt rather than constructive accommodation of alternative views.

Any exploration of the relationship between culture and thinking is complicated, however, because cultural labels, such as East and West, cannot be used simplistically (see page 14). Individual traits also play an important role. The extent to which individual students are prepared to 'step outside the box', take risks and reflect, perhaps painfully, on their own learning experience, will determine how easily and quickly they adapt to the new academic environment and demands. Moreover, as mentioned on page 27, it may be that postgraduate international students represent the educated elite, rather than the majority, of their culture, and therefore Hofstede's and others' cultural dimensions may not apply per se. Or it may be that universities worldwide provide a unique learning culture that allows and encourages students to take on another identity temporarily (see page 27). Notwithstanding all these complexities, the cultural frameworks outlined in chapter two can nevertheless be usefully employed for the purpose of this thesis, whilst continually bearing in mind these complexities.

The issues raised in this chapter concerning adaptation to Western norms and whether this is deep or surface, are further discussed in chapters five and six, where the data findings are examined, and in chapters seven and eight where they are interpreted. Having explored the literature on cultural dimensions and critical thinking theory, the next chapter outlines the research methodology employed for this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter rationalises how the research question underpinning this thesis justifies an inductive, interpretist approach, supported by some quantitative data. Before embarking on the methodology rationale, however, it may be helpful to reiterate the main aims of the thesis:

- **What are the key differences in academic discourse expectations between the U.K. and East Asian cultures, with particular reference to critical thinking and argumentation?**
- **What cultural influences facilitate or hinder the understanding of, and attitude towards, Western-style critical thinking and argumentation?**
- **How can the learning experience of East Asian students be described in terms of an adaptation process and learning outcomes?**

The main data collection strategy was in-depth interviews conducted across three case sites, two in the U.K. and one in China. In addition, some quantitative data in the form of vignette questionnaire responses are used to triangulate the qualitative findings, the aim being to enhance the validity and transferability of the findings. A criticism of qualitative data is that the presentation can be too anecdotal, so “that readers are given too little sense of the *extent* to which certain beliefs are held, or a certain form of behaviour occurs” (Bryman 2001:440). A limited amount of quantification allows greater precision of estimates of frequency, and the aim of this study is not to employ a full mixed method study that would synthesise the two approaches at all stages of the research (Punch 1998: 246). The methods and data are linked, however, in that the questionnaire was entirely based on the themes and concepts emerging from the interview data. The two types of data are also brought together during the analysis.

This chapter begins with the rationale for the primary choice of an interpretist, grounded theory approach and case study research. It discusses the qualitative data collection procedure, the sampling methods for the interviews, and the procedure for data analysis. There then follows a discussion as to whether the criteria for qualitative ‘trustworthiness’

are met. In addition, the role of the researcher is evaluated, as this is a key concern for qualitative research, and some ethical issues arising from the interviews are explored. The rationale for including some quantitative data to support the qualitative research findings is then presented. This is followed by an explanation of how the questionnaire evolved from the interview data, a brief description of the quantitative data collection, the samples used and a brief summary of the procedure for analysis of the data. Finally, the reliability and validity of the vignette questionnaire are considered. A more in-depth analysis of the data, both qualitative and quantitative, is the subject of chapters five and six.

4.1 An Interpretist Approach

There are many factors which may influence how international students perceive and cope with academic expectations in the U.K. – amongst them, their previous educational experiences, their English language competence and their prior exposure to, and understanding of, U.K. academic expectations. This thesis is therefore dealing with a complex issue. A positivist research approach would assume that key variables could be isolated and statistically tested for association and correlation. However, any one behaviour of international students e.g. their willingness/hesitancy to participate in class discussions, may potentially be caused by a combination of various factors (Tayeb 2001, see page 27). The difficulty with using quantitative methods to research these complex, social phenomena is that the deeper meanings of participants' experiences cannot be explored through the surface questioning of a survey questionnaire. Even if a correlation between two factors were to be made evident through quantitative analysis, the underlying motives and causes for this correlation may only be discovered through in-depth qualitative analysis. As Brannen expresses it: "Qualitative work does not survey the terrain, it mines it" (1992:17).

The interpretist worldview, usually associated with qualitative research methods, explores the way that people 'make sense of their social worlds and how they express these understandings through language ...' (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock 1999:6). It explores people's intentions, motivations and subjective experiences from the point of view of the participants, and it 'allows the researcher to get up close to the people they are studying and get involved with them' (Daymon & Holloway 2002:5).

In qualitative research, therefore, the emphasis is on meaning and the perspective of those studied, whilst in quantitative research, the emphasis is on product and on the perspective of the researcher. For this thesis it was considered essential that there should be a significant element of interpersonal interaction between the researcher and the participants for two reasons. Firstly, so that any confusion or misinterpretation of the interview questions due to language could be countered, and secondly so that the underlying reasons for their perceptions could be explored in depth through sensitive probing and prompting.

A characteristic of the positivist view, generally associated with quantitative research methods, is that it emphasises objectivity and views reality as an objective, observable entity which is independent of those involved in it (Bryman 2001:20). It therefore tries to distance the researcher from the data, and the variables being investigated are often divorced from their natural context. It assumes there are universal laws and patterns of cause and effect, already identified by existing theory and waiting to be discovered (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2000:88). Thus, it is argued, representative samples of the parent population can produce findings, which can then be generalised to the whole population category, across times and contexts.

It is argued by some, e.g. Kerlinger (1973), that the quantitative numerical data derived from questionnaires offer more objectivity than subjective qualitative approaches. One of the main objections to the qualitative approach is the difficulty in generalising its findings because of its subjectivity and its tendency to use smaller unrepresentative samples. However, Eisner (1992) and Smith (1983), amongst others, argue that human behaviour is so complex and diverse that generalisation is not appropriate or even possible for much qualitative research; there are 'as many realities as there are persons' (Smith 1983: 386). The focus of educational enquiry, Eisner proposes, should not be ontological objectivity, but procedural objectivity where the emphasis is on detecting and eliminating error.

Replicability is seen by quantitative researchers, for instance Krathwohl (1985), as being vital for external validity, where the study and findings can be reproduced independently of the researcher. Shaughnessy and Zechmeister (1985) see the difficulty in validity and generalisation as a major weakness of the interpretist approach, whilst others see this as an advantage (Bryman 2001:51, 283).

Qualitative social research, then, does not make unrealistic and often irrelevant claims regarding objectivity and generalisation. Human behaviour cannot be described by universal laws because what can be observed and measured is determined by a diversity of human motivations, causes and intentions. An interpretist approach challenges the notion that social reality is an objective something ‘out there’ that shapes people’s actions. Rather, social reality ‘is built up over time through communication, our interactions with those around us and our shared history’ (Daymon & Holloway 2002:5).

Social meaning, for this qualitative research study, is constructed out of who the international students are as individuals and how they interact with their surroundings and the people around them. Their specific experiences cannot be generalised, and thus representative samples are not actively sought. Nevertheless, theoretical principles are developed from the data, and insights from interpretations of the results may apply to a wider range of cases (see pages 108-110). The focus of this research, therefore, is on quality not quantity, investigating relatively small numbers of individuals across three case sites in depth, so as to uncover patterns or trends in their perceptions. However, as explained later, some quantitative data has been used to substantiate the qualitative findings. The rationale for doing so is explained in more depth on pages 119-121, but suffice it to say, at this point, that the researcher has rejected the notion that quantitative and qualitative research are two separate and incompatible paradigms, in each of which the epistemological assumptions, values and methods are inextricably intertwined (Smith 1983:12,13). Instead, I agree with Bryman that both methods are ‘capable of being put to a wide variety of tasks’ and that ‘there are areas of overlap and commonality between them’ (2001:445).

4.2 Case Study Research

The research question for this thesis is exploratory and the primary aim is theory generation. Instrumental case study research is therefore deemed to be appropriate for this thesis, with the researcher acting as interpreter (Stake 1995:97). The cases are instrumental rather than intrinsic studies (Stake 1995:4) because the interest is not on the particular cases themselves, but rather on their insight into the research problem i.e. understanding the learning experiences of East Asian masters students. The aim is to understand how those being studied see things.

Whilst the uniqueness and complexity of each case site is appreciated, it was found during data analysis that across the three sites certain responses came up repeatedly, so that commonalities were identified. Three case studies is too small a number to claim representation. However, this thesis does seek to develop probabilistic theory (Goetz & LeCompte 1984), which may be transferable to other contexts i.e. to other U.K. universities. By choosing a three-site study an attempt is being made, as Schofield (1993) advocates, to discover commonalities across the sites which might then be used as working hypotheses for new situations. Therefore, although internal trustworthiness carries more importance in this thesis, it is hoped that the findings are transferable to other situations. Guba and Lincoln (1982:238) suggest that this type of ‘fittingness’, or matching one situation with another is appropriate for case study research. Similarly, Goetz and LeCompte (1984:228) suggest qualitative research should seek to ask whether findings are *translatable* and *comparable* across different situations and settings. In order to do this, a rich or ‘thick’ description (Geertz 1973) of the participants’ contexts and perceptions is provided, so that the reader can make informed judgements about the transferability of the research findings to a similar context. These aspects are dealt with in more depth on pages 108/9

A strong criticism of qualitative case study is the potential for mis-interpretation by the researchers who ‘do not have widely agreed-upon protocols that put subjective misunderstandings to a stiff enough test’ (Stake 1995:45). To ensure greater validity, therefore, various methods of triangulation (data source, investigator, and method), as well as member validation are employed in this thesis. These are all discussed further on page 106.

4.3 Grounded Theory Approach

Grounded theory research is an open, reflexive approach to research, where data collection, analysis, the development of theoretical concepts and the literature review proceed in a cyclical process. The researcher ‘operates as an interpreter of the data, not just a reporter or describer of a situation’ (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 119). It involves both induction – analysing the data to produce provisional working hypotheses – and deduction, where these working hypotheses are checked against literature and further incoming data. Bryman describes it as a repetitive interplay between the collection and analysis of data: ‘Analysis starts after some of the data have been collected and the implications of that

analysis then shape the next steps in the data collection process' (2001: 389). This thesis aims to extend existing theories and it reflects the characteristics and cyclical stages of grounded theory (Daymon & Holloway 2002: 118-120). Appendix IV illustrates the cyclical nature of this research.

According to Glaser and Strauss' seminal concept, grounded theory is not speculative, logically deduced theory with examples to support it, but the ideas are derived from the data itself. This was an important consideration for this thesis, as one of the main purposes was to give the students a voice so that they could 'tell their own stories' (Daymon & Holloway 2002:167), with the ultimate aim of developing theory directly from the primary data. Grounded theory provides 'freedom in research from the rigorous rules of verification (so stifling to the creative energies required for discovery theory)' (Glaser and Strauss 1967:7).

The grounded theory approach was considered the most appropriate for this area of cross-cultural study. Having established fairly quickly, from a preliminary literature search, that this particular area of investigation was relatively undeveloped, I immediately began collecting data, in accordance with grounded theory research practice (Glaser & Strauss 1967, Glaser 1992). The benefit of this approach is that the researcher is minimally influenced by related theory, and can therefore respond in a fresh way to the empirical data and emerging issues.

However, a criticism of the grounded theory approach is that researchers are required to suspend their awareness of relevant theories until quite a late stage in the process of analysis. This concerned me in the beginning, as I was aware of how Hofstede's research had been the catalyst for my initial interest in this subject and I could not easily 'suspend' my awareness of his theories. My familiarity with Hofstede's theories influenced my thinking and expectations at the beginning, but Bryman (2001:394) claims it is positive if a researcher is sensitive to existing conceptualisations, because the investigation will be focused and can build upon the work of others. The cyclical process of reading interspersed with data collection, analysis and interpretation proved to be conducive to new thinking and theory generation, and I found myself gradually moving away from some of the pre-conceptions that I had held about culture differences. My thinking became more influenced by the raw data than by my awareness of Hofstede's theories, and it was not

long before I had moved beyond these theories. Without this initial framework and catalyst, however, I doubt if I would have progressed at a sufficient pace.

The disadvantage of this approach, however, is that some important readings are only covered well into the research process. As a consequence, some relevant and recent doctorate theses, for instance, were only accessed towards the end of the data analysis and interpretation. Had these been available earlier, then I might have been more focused in the questions I asked in the last phase of my interviews. However, the discovery of new texts when in the final stages of writing up is a common problem for all researchers, especially for those engaged in longitudinal research such as this. The process of analysis of the interview transcripts and how the grounded theory approach was operationalised is discussed later on pages 103-105.

4.4 Qualitative Data Collection

This next section provides the rationale for the selection of case studies and the sampling of participants, followed by an overview of the data collection methods employed.

4.4.1 Selection of Case Studies

Two universities in the U.K. were selected as case sites and a third case site was a university in China. Given limited time, no more than three case sites were selected as the more cases studied, the greater the lack of depth in any single case, and the more the overall analysis would be diluted (Creswell 1998). The choice of university, school and subject discipline for the case sites depended on three criteria:

- Large numbers of East Asian students recruited onto their masters programmes
- Course assignments that demand a high level of critical thinking and evaluative writing.
- Ease of access

Southern England University (pseudonym)

The first case was selected as the main case because it was convenient and accessible to me as I was already teaching there, and it therefore lent itself to a longitudinal study (from Sept 2000 – July 2003). It was also selected purposively in that it also met the first two criteria outlined above (see Table 4 on page 95).

	Southern England University	China University	Mid England University
Period of data collection	Three years (2000-2003); some longitudinal tracking of students over their masters course	Three week period in China (2002: May/June)	Two one-week blocks for interviews (Nov 2002/June 2003). Questionnaires distributed Aug/Sept 2003
Type of University	'New' university ¹	Prestigious Foreign Language university in north west China	'Old' university ²
Courses targeted as meeting selection criteria (high level of critical writing)	Communication / Business Management	English / Cultural Studies	Education / Cultural Studies
Students	Masters	Final year undergraduates, intending to study abroad for a masters	Masters
IELTS³ on recruitment	6.0 +	Majority 7 (English major)	6.5 +
Pre-masters courses/familiarisation with Western academic expectations	Pre-masters study skills/language courses (1-4 weeks, depending on IELTS entry score)	Foreign teachers of English on staff.	Pre-masters study skills/language courses (6-12 weeks, depending on IELTS score).
Total full-time international taught masters students	83% (830)	n/a	54% (1124)
East Asian full-time taught masters students	28% (280)	n/a	27% (570)
Chinese full-time taught masters students	9% (90)	n/a	15% (310)

Table 4: Characteristics of Three Case Studies

¹ 'New' universities are ex-polytechnics which transformed into universities in the 1990s

² 'Old' universities have always held university status, and have not converted from being polytechnics

³ International English Language Test Score

China University (pseudonym)

The second case study was a prestigious Foreign Language university in China, and was primarily a convenience sample, as I had teaching contacts there who acted as 'gatekeepers' and gained access for me. This sample was also purposive, however, in that I knew all the students were studying English as their major and would therefore presumably have the English language competence to converse with me (as I cannot speak Chinese). Furthermore, the majority of the students were hoping to study abroad for a masters and would therefore be ideal participants in the study, as the intention was to explore their expectations of academic critical thinking in the West, prior to departure. Data were collected over a three-week period in May 2002. This case study focused on Chinese students for a number of other reasons:

1. As certain key concepts began to emerge from the data analysis of Southern England University, it seemed necessary to take one step back and observe how international students, prior to travelling abroad, might perceive masters courses in Western universities, as well as examine first hand the experiences that led to these perceptions. For practical and financial reasons it was not possible to visit all the target East Asian countries, so China was selected, primarily because of the open access provided by gatekeeper contacts, but also for the reasons outlined below.
2. As discussed in the introduction, the recruitment levels of Chinese students to masters courses in the U.K. is predicted to increase (Chan & Drover 1997), and so it seemed pragmatic to address this trend and to choose China for a case site.
3. Based on the above rationale, I applied for and was awarded a British Council Research grant to focus on Chinese students adapting to masters expectations in the U.K. This grant helped resource the visit to China.

I also wanted to gain a more holistic perspective of Chinese students' expectations and the gap between U.K. and Chinese university expectations. Participant observation of lectures, the student campus, study facilities and student dormitories all helped to build up the picture, together with interviews of Chinese lecturers in situ, and scrutiny of the text books in use and some final year theses. The difficulty here is knowing how typical this particular university is in China. Within the resources of this study it was not possible to explore

other institutions in China, but through member validation of Chinese students in the U.K., it was observed that the graduate educational experiences of participants in China university appeared to be similar to those of Chinese students in the two British case sites.

Mid England University (pseudonym)

As the analysis of data progressed inductively and the phenomena began to be identified more explicitly, then theoretical sampling could be employed. Thus the analysis of the first two case studies produced concepts and categories according to grounded theory principles, and the third case study served to saturate and broaden the scope of the emerging theory, and to search for deviant incidences which might challenge the emerging theory.

As mentioned above, one of the criteria for selecting the U.K. case sites was the high recruitment levels of international students, especially East Asian students, onto their masters courses (see Table 4). Mid England University was identified from the published list of the top ten universities recruiting the highest number of international students on their masters courses (The Guardian: Sept 24th 2002). This university also fulfilled the other criteria of written assignments that require a high level of critical thinking and analysis. Moreover, both U.K. case sites provide pre-sessional language and study skills courses for masters international students, although these differ in length, content and style. Access to Mid England University was again made available through gatekeeper contacts, who showed an interest in this area of research. The data collection in this third case site was undertaken during one week in November 2002, and one week in June 2003.

The choice of three case studies was not an attempt to follow a comparative case study approach, as this would require the involvement of a large number of case studies (Hammersley, Gomm & Foster (2000:53). However, the data analysis does aim to detect similarities and contrasts in the themes that emerged across the three case studies, to saturate categories, and to strengthen the emerging theory by explaining or integrating deviant incidences.

4.4.2 Sampling Choices: East Asian Student Groups (China, Taiwan, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Korea).

The rationale for grouping these students together in this research has already been

explained on page 15. In addition to this rationale, my reading (e.g. Hofstede 1991, Trompenaars 1993, Hall 1976, Ting Toomey 1999, Cortazzi & Jin 1997) and my teaching experience also suggested that similar academic challenges are experienced by students from these countries, such as plagiarism and contributing to class discussions. Throughout the research process I have regularly re-assessed the practicality of including East Asian cultures, instead of focusing on one particular culture, the Chinese. Although significant differences exist in the educational systems and cultural values of these East Asian cultures, nevertheless, it would appear that students coming from these countries experience common challenges in adapting to Western academic expectations (Tanaka 2002, Cortazzi & Jin 1997). Many East Asian researchers are also grouping these cultures together in their empirical investigations (e.g. Hayashi 2002, Morita 2002, Park 2002, see page 14). I decided, therefore, that it would be more useful to investigate these commonalities, rather than focus on only one of the cultures.

I found, however, that as the research progressed, so the focus shifted towards Chinese students. This was partly because of the high concentration of Chinese students in the two U.K. case studies and partly due to the access into the Chinese case study made available to me. Although it would have been simpler, and no doubt more straight forward, to have focused only on Chinese students from the start, I believe that by widening the study to include a number of East Asian cultures, the findings and theory generated have greater application and more potential for transferability to other U.K. post graduate courses.

Schofield (1993) suggests that cases could be selected on the basis of future relevance i.e. those which are at the leading edge of change. Future trends in recruiting post graduate international students at U.K. universities are not of course entirely predictable. However, it would seem reasonable to predict from the increasing demand over recent years that recruitment from East Asian countries, especially from China, will continue to increase in the future (Chan & Drover 1997). That being so, it would seem pragmatic to focus on students from the above cultures, particularly as Hofstede (1980) also identified these as contrasting most strongly with British culture.

The sample of East Asian students was a non probability sample, and the range of East Asian nationalities included in the research was determined by the students recruited onto the courses in the two British case sites. For Southern England University and China

University the sampling was based mainly on volunteers, although there was also some purposive sampling in the former in order to achieve a broad spread of nationalities. However, for the repeat interviews in both British universities, there was more theoretical sampling in that I specifically chose certain individuals to interview a second time. I did this because I was nearing saturation of the theoretical categories which were emerging from the data, and I wanted to actively seek for 'things that might challenge the limitations of the existing theory, forcing the researcher to change it in order to incorporate the new phenomena' (Seale 1999:92).

4.4.3 Procedure for Interviewing

Students and lecturers were interviewed at each of the case sites. In total, 42 East Asian students were interviewed in the U.K., with 12 of these being interviewed twice, at the start and again towards the end of their masters course. The sample for double interviews was purposive and theoretical (Punch 1998:193,194), and all but one were selected in the final phase of data collection. The second interview was used to ensure that theoretical saturation was achieved i.e. that 'new data are not showing any new theoretical elements, but rather confirming what has already been found' (Punch 1998:167). A limitation of this thesis, however, is that repeat interviews were conducted in the two U.K. universities, whereas students in China University were not tracked in a similar manner. It would have been interesting had follow-up interviews been conducted with those students who moved onto masters courses in the U.K. This was not practical for this thesis, due to time and cost restrictions, although it would make for an interesting research study in the future. Nevertheless, restricting the focus to an exploration of their expectations prior to arriving in the U.K. was sufficient for the purpose of this thesis. Also, it might have strengthened the longitudinal element of the thesis had all 42 students been interviewed at the beginning and at the end of their masters courses, but again for reasons of access and time, this was neither practical nor necessary for this thesis.

The breakdown of nationalities of students interviewed in the U.K. is as follows: Chinese: 23, Taiwanese: 7, Thai: 7, Japanese: 3, Korean:1, Indonesian: 1. As can be seen, the majority of these were Chinese, as this was the particular focus of the research. A further 18 Chinese students were interviewed in China University. In addition, sixteen interviews with lecturers at the three case sites were conducted (five Chinese and eleven British). They were interviewed about their understanding and awareness of the different cultural

academic norms, and the perceptions of the problems that face East Asian students in the U.K. (Appendix V). In addition, their perceptions of U.K. academic norms at masters level were explored. Six British students in Southern England university were also interviewed, as their expectations and understanding of academic norms needed to be explored and compared with those of East Asian students. Because of the small number of British students recruited onto full-time masters courses in the U.K., it was not possible to obtain quantitative data from these. Thus the majority of British students in the quantitative questionnaire sample were MBA part-time students. Although some differences were identified between the British students on full-time and part-time courses in terms of ages, gender and work experience, these were not deemed to be significant enough to make a distinction between the two groups. The basis for this judgement was the qualitative interviews conducted with full-time British students which triangulated and supported the questionnaire responses from the British part-time students.

Altogether, 82 people were interviewed and 94 in-depth interviews were conducted for this thesis over a three and a half year period, the majority of these being individual interviews, although there were some paired and group interviews in each of the Case Studies. The breakdown of these interviews is seen in Table 5.

	East Asian students	British students	Lecturers
<i>Southern England University</i>	29	6	6
Repeat interviews	7		
<i>China University</i>	18		6
<i>Mid England University</i>	13		4
Repeat interviews	5		
Total	72	6	16

Table 5: Number of in-depth interviews

Interviews were between half an hour and one hour long, and were tape recorded. For Southern England University some of the earlier interviews were transcribed by a paid secretary. However, it was found that some of the pronunciation was indecipherable to the secretary, whereas I, the interviewer, was more familiar with various accents, and moreover could rely on memory of the interview to make sense of any poorly recorded or

unclear portions of the tape. Hence I decided to transcribe all subsequent interviews myself (see Appendix VI for examples of annotated transcriptions of interviews).

After the first few minutes the students did not appear to be distracted by the equipment. They were all informed of the confidential nature of the interviews and assurances were given that their real names would not be used in any report. Only a few of the students who were offered the opportunity to re-read and edit their transcripts actually took up the offer. This may have been because of time constraints – they were busy preparing dissertation proposals or writing assignments. This aspect of member validation is discussed at greater length on page 106.

English Language Competence Necessary for Effective Interviews

Given the language of the interviews was English, students needed to have sufficient competency in English oracy in order to express their thoughts clearly during the interview. It was frustrating to the interviewer, and presumably to the participant, to feel at the end of an interview that they had not been able to explain their thoughts in sufficient depth and that their answers had been superficial. Hence it was decided after the first dozen interviews that a linguistic criterion had to be applied, and that interviewees would need a minimum of IELTS 6.5. to be selected for interviews (see Appendix VII for IELTS level descriptors). This was not a problem at China University as all the Chinese students there were studying English as their major, and the majority of final year students had achieved IELTS 7.0. Mid England University only accepts students on their masters course with IELTS 6.5 or above. For Southern England University, however, a certain amount of purposive sampling regarding language competence was necessary. Although interviewing in their second language may be seen as problematic, as English is used as the medium of study in U.K. universities, this is arguably a suitable research medium.

Individual, Paired and Group Interviews

There are benefits and disadvantages in using paired/group interviews. It is certainly more interesting for the interviewer when interviewees interact with each other, so stimulating the discussion. However, in this thesis, there was be a certain reticence on the part of some students to be open in front of each other, not wishing to lose face or cause their colleague(s) to lose face by openly disagreeing with them. Similarly, language competence imbalance made it difficult for the interviewer to ensure that both parties had

equal opportunity to talk. Gender was another factor that at times seemed to influence freedom of expression in the paired interviews. For whatever reason, whether language, gender or fear of offending the other, it was noted that occasionally one of the interviewees would appear to 'close down'. Friendship groupings seemed to reduce this reticence in talking openly, as did careful pairing of students with similar English language competence.

The benefit of interviewing students individually is that they do not have to take other students' opinions and judgements into consideration. They need not fear offending another student or be embarrassed by expressing their thoughts honestly in front of a peer. Of course their relationship with the interviewer will have a significant bearing on this, and this will be discussed further under the heading 'the role of the researcher' on pages 113-117. For all three case studies I used paired/group interviews and individual interviews, as I appreciate the strengths of both, but with the emphasis on individual interviews.

An interview schedule was drawn up for the first set of interviews in May 1999 (see Appendix VIII). This group of interviews was exploratory in nature, in line with the grounded theory approach. As I started to analyse these interviews and continue with my reading, the focus shifted from initial exploration of classroom behaviour and language skills, to exploring the students' expectations at the start of their masters course, and their first impressions of the U.K. higher education approach to teaching and learning. The interview schedule was redrafted for subsequent batches of interviews at the three Case Sites (see Appendices IX & X). For Mid England University it was more focused on those categories that required saturation, and on an active seeking of deviant cases. As mentioned previously, twelve East Asian students in the U.K. were interviewed twice with the second interview focusing more on how the students perceived any changes in their own thinking and attitudes over the year.

Confidentiality

The informed consent of the following people was sought when they were approached to participate in the study: subject lecturers; study skills and language support tutors; appropriate senior staff, such as Heads of School/ Department; and the international and British students. All data were treated in a way that protected the confidentiality and anonymity of lecturers and students involved in the study. Names of individuals, Schools

and universities have not been used, other than for organisation of the raw data, and coding has been used in the draft and final reports.

4.5 Analysing the Interview Transcripts

The key to grounded theory lies in its coding system. Corbin and Strauss(1990), building on the earlier work of Glaser and Strauss (1967), have defined three stages of coding in grounded theory: open, axial and selective, and all these coding processes take place simultaneous with data collection:

We grounded theorists code our emerging data as we collect it (...). Unlike quantitative research that requires data to fit into preconceived standardized codes, the researcher's interpretations of data shape his or her emergent codes in grounded theory. (Charmaz 2000:515).

From the interviews of case study 1 during 2002/2001, I developed initial open codes which aimed to reduce the data by labelling incidents, attitudes or ideas (Appendix XI). Appendix XII shows how these initial codes developed over the next six months of progressive analysis of interview transcripts. At this stage the coding was very open and tended towards description rather than abstract conceptualisation. The codes were sometimes based on ideas already in common use or expressed in the literature e.g. face-saving, plagiarism, risk-avoidance.

At other times I used as labels the actual words or phrases used by the interviewees themselves e.g. 'safety' or 'saving face'. At a later stage I created labels myself e.g. critical journey. Daymon and Holloway, however, warn that researchers need to 'take a great deal of care in making this type of construction, in order to avoid creating things that are not really in the data' (2002:238). This tendency was minimised by constant comparison analysis whereby I scrutinised the data against the conceptual labels several times.

The researcher acknowledges that the observation and recording of data 'can themselves never be wholly free from the values, assumptions and theoretical perspectives of the researcher' (Seale 1999:154). Coding is an attempt to fix meanings and if this is done too early in the analytic process then, as Seale suggests, this may stultify creative thought. Thus the early coding in this research acted more as signposts to interesting data, aiding

developmental thinking, 'rather than representing some final argument about meaning' (Seale 1999:154).

As trends and patterns began to emerge, I began to sort out similarly labelled segments into categories, such as 'Freedom of expression' and 'critical thinking journey' (see Appendix XIII). This is done through the Constant Comparative Method, a term first coined by Glaser and Strauss to describe the process of comparing similarities and differences in the data (Strauss 1987:25). At this point in the process the initial categories generated from Southern England University were compared with those arising from China University. Amongst other things, I wanted to explore whether the impressions and perceptions of the masters Chinese students who had been interviewed in Southern England University, on their arrival in the U.K., were similar to those of Chinese undergraduate students back home. From the initial matched pairs questionnaire surveys conducted in Southern England University (discussed on pages 121/123), it appeared that the pre-session course run by that university might expose students to the language and concepts of the U.K. educational system in a superficial manner, without allowing them the time to understand these concepts at a deeper and more meaningful level before their masters course began. Hence by taking, as it were, a step back and interviewing students in their home country, before being exposed to these concepts in an induction course, it was felt that the research could more readily assess their true understanding of what academic critical thinking and evaluation means, and what were their expectations of a masters course in the West.

During the months following the visit to China University, the transcripts were open coded in the same manner as those for Southern England University. Because the raw data were so fresh in my mind, I immediately proceeded to the next stage and reduced these open codes into conceptual categories (see Appendix XIV).

For subsequent data analyses, two concurrent types of coding took place. Data were continually being sought to 'flesh out' these initial categories. It was necessary to saturate all the categories until it became clear which were the core categories i.e. those most relevant for prediction and explanation of the phenomena. It was only when it was that no new insights were forthcoming on a particular category, and that it had been 'saturated', that the data collection on that particular category ended: "Saturation means that no additional data are being found (...) to develop a category. But similar instances occur

over and over again.” (Glaser and Strauss 1967:61). This saturation was only finally accomplished with Mid England University.

At the same time, comparisons were being drawn across the newly emerging categories, and linkages and relationships between categories were sought, such as cause and effect and conditions (Appendix XV). In this way some of the original categories e.g. ‘motivation for studying abroad’ and ‘English language competence’ became subsumed in what became the final five categories. There then began to emerge ‘working propositions /hypotheses’ of how these categories influenced and interrelated with each other. This stage is characterised by ‘axial coding’ (Corbin and Strauss 1990).

I continued to search through the data with the aim of challenging the plausibility of these emerging hypotheses and to seek out negative instances of the emerging patterns which could then be integrated into a revamped hypothesis if necessary. Throughout this process I practised the strategies advocated by Strauss and Corbin for opening up the data. These included: asking questions such as ‘who, what, how, why, when, how often, how long, how quickly, what kind of?’; analysing single words used by respondents representing concepts e.g. ‘safe’, ‘risky’ ‘shy’; the ‘flip-flop’ strategy where opposite phenomena are considered so as to give more insight to the one being investigated; and ‘red flagging’ where no statement is ever taken for granted e.g. not accepting ‘never’ or ‘always’ from a respondent without questioning it (1990:75-95). An extract from a transcript as an example of ‘red flagging’ can be seen in Appendix XVI.

4.6 Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Research Findings

The next section discusses issues concerning ‘trustworthiness’ and the four criteria which it contains - namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). I have chosen to use these terms for the qualitative data, rather than reliability and validity, as they more closely reflect the interpretist research approach (Bryman2001:272; Daymon & Holloway 2002:92).

Credibility

Credibility relates most closely to the notion of internal validity, as described by Le Compte and Goetz (1982). It concerns the interpretations of observations: whether or not ‘the researcher is calling what is measured by the right name’ (Kirk and Miller 1986:69).

Internal validity is the extent to which findings of a study are ‘true’, or ‘credible’ (Lincoln & Guba 1985), and whether they accurately reflect the aim of the research and the social reality of those participating in it. In other words, how truthful are the findings and conclusions, and how influenced or distorted are they by the researcher’s own assumptions, preconceptions and bias?

By its nature qualitative research is subjective, and cannot be ontologically ‘objective’ (Eisner 1993). It is not dealing with statistics, but people and what they choose to disclose about their social worlds. To what extent and which aspects they reveal depends in part on their interaction with the researcher. Interpretists argue that social reality can never be represented by only one truthful account that can be accessed by the researcher, but by several possible, equally credible, representations of the same phenomena. The aim of the researcher, therefore, is not to ensure the validity, or ‘truthfulness’, of their account, but rather to ensure the *integrity* of their account, that the claims are credible and that the researcher has correctly understood the social world s/he is investigating and that the theoretical inferences s/he makes from the data are justified.

Credibility can be strengthened through member validation and triangulation, researcher reflexivity and a transparent methodology (Bryman 2001, Daymon and Holloway 2002). Lincoln and Guba consider member validation ‘the most crucial technique for establishing credibility’ (1985:314). For this research, during the interviews I regularly presented participants with observations and statements from previous interviewees. I only did this after first obtaining their personal responses, however, so as not to shape their answers in any way. Emerging concepts and working hypotheses were also checked out with participants in later interviews, asking them if they recognised these as true or not. In addition, transcripts were offered to some of the interviewees to check for accuracy.

Although interviews are not as direct as first hand observations and experiences, they are justified as valid evidence because they ‘capture tacit knowledge’ of interviewees (Daymon & Holloway 2002:120). However, the interviews in this study were all conducted in the subjects’ second language, English, and this may have hindered their communication. Furthermore, what interviewees can share in the limited time of an interview is only partial. Coding and categorizing may further fragment the subject’s story (Coffey & Atkinson 1996; Coffey, Holbrook & Atkinson 1996). Validation of interviews

is increased, however, if the interviewer's questions and comments are included in the report and utterances are not analysed in isolation (Seale 1999:153). The interviewees and interviewer constructed meaning together in this research, and therefore, in the analysis chapters, the interviewer's question, where appropriate, is included in the analysis of the interviewee's response.

Data source triangulation increased credibility as three case sites were used, and multiple viewpoints were sought – from lecturers (both Chinese and British), and British students, as well as from the East Asian students. A multiple method approach further strengthened the findings. The student interview data were triangulated with lecturer interviews and a survey questionnaire, as well as some participant observation. Investigator triangulation was also used, as the emerging findings as well as the rationale for methodology were subjected to independent review through the process of presentation of papers at three international conferences (see Appendix XVII). However, it is acknowledged that member validation and triangulation cannot be viewed as 'final adjudications of truth, but rather as potential aids to deeper and more multi-layered understanding' (Seale 1999:68). In other words, they can support the credibility of the research findings by helping to back up key claims with adequate supporting evidence.

A further argument for the credibility of my research is that for Southern England University the research was longitudinal, taking place over a three-year period. Trust was built up between myself and the students, mainly because of the study skills support I was offering them (see page 115). I consequently found the majority of the students very willing to speak openly to me, especially when I interviewed them during their dissertation stage, when they felt safer academically. My familiarity with the context as a lecturer also provided greater understanding of the issues they raised (Daymon & Holloway 2002:95).

Finally, in an attempt to increase credibility, I sought to find alternative explanations for negative cases which contradicted the emerging concepts and theory :

Research is a process whereby the investigator should expect to change his or her mind about things which may currently be cherished, an event that is facilitated greatly if methods of data collection and analysis incorporate an active search for negative instances. (Seale 1999:75).

Hence, in attempting to saturate the categories I was actively seeking not just supportive examples, but also any contradictions or deviations, the aim being not to ignore these but

to scrutinise them for alternative explanations (Coffey and Atkinson 1996:191). An example of a deviation is seen on page 191/192.

Transferability

This notion is most closely related to Le Compte and Goetz' (1982) idea of 'external validity', which means the degree to which findings can be generalized across social settings. Generalization in quantitative survey research is based on choosing representative samples and using ideas about probability and chance to estimate the likelihood of events occurring in similar cases outside the sample. According to positivists, a generalization is an assertion of enduring value that is context-free (Kaplan 1964:91). Many would argue, however, that social phenomena are not time-free; neither are they context free because conditions are constantly shifting and temporal (Lincoln & Guba 2000:31/32). Qualitative researchers acknowledge that generalization presents a problem because of the tendency to use small non-probabilistic samples and the contextual uniqueness of case studies associated with qualitative research. Nevertheless, whilst generalization is not the aim of the interpretist research approach, many qualitative researchers would agree with Daymon & Holloway that "whilst a case may be interesting in itself, few relevant insights are likely to emerge if the reader is unable to transfer these to another setting" (2002:113). As Perakyla (1997:215) explains, the results may not be generalizable as descriptions of, for instance, East Asian students' learning behaviour and attitudes, but of how they *may* behave and the attitudes they *may* develop in similar circumstances. In other words, the results may generalize not *what is*, but *what could be*, the potential relevance rather than clearly predictable relevance.

The concept of a 'working hypothesis' was first proposed by Cronbach who suggested that there are always factors that are unique to the locale that make it useless to try to generalize from them: 'When we give proper weight to local conditions, any generalization is a working hypothesis, not a conclusion' (1975:124,5). Lincoln and Guba (2000:40) have coined the terms 'fittingness' and 'transferability' to describe when a working hypothesis from one context can be applied to another context. They argue that the onus is on the reader to assess how far a case study's findings might transfer to another context, and that the responsibility of the researcher is to provide sufficient information about the originating context. Such a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) allows the reader to make an informed judgement as to whether it may be transferable to another context. In

line with this argument, I have provided details of the sampling, access and procedures undertaken for the three case sites, together with an audit trail detailing the rationale behind the key decisions made during the research process.

The strength of case study is that it provides insight into causal relations. However, Hammersley et al (2000:238) contests that conclusive causal relations through a small number of case studies cannot be validated because of the difficulties with generalization. The strengths and weaknesses of the two research approaches are put in rather black and white terms by Connolly (1998:124): Quantitative work 'aims to produce generalizations but can tell us little about causal relations, while qualitative work can help to identify relations of causality, but is unable to generalize from these'.

Gomm, Hammersley & Foster (2000:106) suggest that generalization can be increased if researchers select either case studies that are as far as possible 'typical' of the larger population, or cases that cover the extremes of expected heterogeneity. For this thesis there is no claim that any of the three case sites are typical of all universities in their respective countries. Indeed, the two U.K. universities differ in that one is established and the other is a new university. The two British sites, however, do share certain characteristics i.e. the requirement of critical thinking and writing in the masters assignments in the schools selected, and the general proportions of international students on the masters courses of the Schools in the study. The fact that similar findings have emerged across all three sites does suggest, however, that there is potential for transferability to other sites.

Moreover, 'cases do not all have to be studied in the same depth: one or two may be investigated in detail, with others examined more superficially to check the likely generalizability of findings from the main case study' (Gomm et al 2000:107). These multiple case studies could be cumulative, later studies building on the earlier ones, with the aim of making comparisons between them. This is the approach taken in this thesis i.e. Southern England University was the key site where a longitudinal study took place over three years, with findings from Mid England and China Universities building on, and compared with, the findings from Southern England University.

Another way of increasing generalizability is to actively seek out and explain data that do

not fit the pattern emerging. Rather than putting these aside, the researcher focuses particular attention on them, because the examination of incidences that appear at first to contradict the working hypothesis can in the end strengthen the final hypothesis. I have dealt with the negative cases in the following three ways outlined by Perakyla (1997):

1. They can be seen as additional support to the normal pattern because the participants demonstrate that they too view them as abnormal. Thus they can be integrated into the existing hypothesis
2. They can be explained and the hypothesis adapted and reconceptualized so as to integrate them
3. They can be viewed as aberrant cases which have special/individual explanations i.e. they cannot be integrated into the hypothesis.

To summarize this section, the aim of this thesis— in line with the interpretist approach – is transferability, not generalization. However, as is discussed on pages 119-121, in order to strengthen the potential transferability of the emerging theory, some quantitative data has been employed. This, Seale argues, is ‘a legitimate goal for social researchers’ which ‘is enhanced by exploiting the potential of numbers’ (1999:113).

Dependability

As a parallel to reliability in quantitative research, Guba and Lincoln (1994) have developed the concept of dependability. The quantitative concept of reliability concerns whether another researcher would expect to obtain the same findings if they used the same methodology and the same context i.e. whether the research is replicable or not.

Qualitative researchers, however, would argue that reliability is neither relevant nor achievable in their studies because the researcher herself is the main tool in qualitative research. She is intrinsically and uniquely involved in the collection and interpretation of the data. The participants no doubt would respond differently to another researcher.

Moreover, a certain degree of subjectivity would inevitably influence the data interpretation, and different researchers would find different issues significant. Many qualitative researchers (e.g. Charmaz 1995, 2000; Silverman 1985, 1993, 1997, 2000, 2001; Holstein & Gubrium 1997, Riessman 1993, Collins 1990, Miller and Glassner 1997, Denzin 1989) argue that the traditional views of reliability cannot be applied to qualitative in-depth interviews, because they are unique, interactive and therefore not replicable. Both

parties are involved in the production of meaning: 'interviews are conversations, but cooperatively built up, received, interpreted and recorded by the interviewer' (Holstein and Gubrium 1997:119). The story is being told to particular people and it might have taken a different form if another researcher were the listener (Riessman 1993:11). Furthermore, it is impossible to 'freeze' a social setting; therefore social research can never be wholly consistent and replicable.

Le Compte and Goetz (1982) suggest that efforts should be made to replicate the original researcher's social role in an attempt to approach the requirements of external reliability. Guba and Lincoln propose that complete records of the research process be kept, and made accessible, in the form of an audit trail. As mentioned previously, this practice has been followed in this thesis and an effort has been made to ensure transparency by giving explicit reasons for the various choices and decisions made throughout the process, as well as being explicit about the procedures followed to select samples, and collect and analyse data. First impressions or 'hunches' were recorded in memos, and a record was kept of all initial code labelling of transcripts, as well as subsequent coding.

Silverman suggests that another aspect of reliability is the quality of tapes and transcripts, and guaranteeing public access to the process of their production (1993:146-148). In this thesis audiotapes and the full transcripts of all the interviews are available for public access, with extracts given in Appendix VI. Perakyla (1997:204) also points out that if the transcripts are only snapshots, single encounters, then long-term changes and processes are not captured. Longitudinal studies, she suggests, are more appropriate to prevent transcripts just recording temporal events. Phenomena may change over time, she argues, and rather than rely on temporal observations, long-term observations are better (Gomm et al 2000:109). In line with this argument, Southern England University is a longitudinal study conducted over three consecutive years, with some students being interviewed at the beginning and at the end of their masters course. Similarly, interviews with some students at Mid England university were undertaken at the beginning and towards the end of their masters course, although only over a one year period.

The tapes for this study were not transcribed with conversation or discourse analysis in mind as the focus was on meanings. The participants were all using English as their second language, and so because of the time implications, the transcripts did not include

discourse notations for pauses, intonation etc., but were simplified where necessary in order 'to make the reception of the analysis easier, especially [for an] audience not specialized in conversation analysis' (Perakyla 1997:207).

Confirmability

This idea relates to objectivity. As already discussed, one of the main criticisms of qualitative research is that it is subjective and impressionistic. The positivist view of research interviews is that they are potential sources of bias, error, misunderstanding or misdirection, and that interaction must be tightly controlled and reduced. In the pursuit of objectivity, the interview conversation is viewed as ideally being a pipeline for transmitting knowledge. Information is just waiting to be discovered and by asking the right questions, i.e. carefully formulated questions, in a highly structured manner and by providing a conducive environment, open and undistorted and 'reliable' communication can be achieved.

Interpretist researchers, in contrast, acknowledge that complete objectivity is not possible in qualitative studies. Nevertheless, every effort can be made to avoid bias, personal values or theoretical inclinations from influencing the data and findings. Rather than attempt to reduce and control the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, the interaction is seen as contributing to a deeper understanding of the participants' social worlds:

We start with the experiencing person and try to share his or her subjective view. Our task is objective in the sense that we try to describe it with depth and detail. In doing so, we try to represent the person's view fairly and to portray it as consistent with her or his meanings.
(Charmaz 1995:54)

Holstein and Gubrium (1997:14) go further and suggest that meaning is constructed in 'active interviewing'. Here the interviewer explores with the participant possible explanations and interpretations, conceptualising issues and making connections: 'meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter' (1997:114). They admit, though, that this type of co-operative interviewing 'seems to invite unacceptable forms of bias' (1997:125). My initial interviews in Southern England University were more structured than this, in that I followed my interview schedule quite closely and endeavoured to cover the same material with all the respondents. This was

important as I had very little theory to guide me and I wanted to build up a body of data which I would find relatively easy to compare and contrast, and with which to begin my search for common categories. As I began to saturate a category, however, I engaged more in 'active interviewing' as described above. These interviews were more constructive, in that the participants were given some freedom to choose the topics to be discussed and the way in which they were discussed. As a result they became unique encounters and could not be replicated. To combat the criticism of subjectivist impressionism, I have regularly and consistently engaged in reflexivity and critical scrutiny of the emerging findings.

Authenticity

As well as the above four trustworthiness criteria, Guba and Lincoln suggest authenticity criteria. This concerns the wider political impact of research and is closely related to the action research approach, which is not relevant to this thesis. Neither is it envisioned that international masters students studying in the U.K. for only one year could be empowered politically, through the study's findings, to challenge the status quo. This is not to say that the findings may not influence practitioners, however, and so act as a catalyst for educational change.

4.7 The Role of the Researcher in this Study

To encourage open dialogue it is essential for the researcher to establish a sense of trust with the interviewee. Assurances of confidentiality, showing genuine interest and not being judgemental are some important elements of building rapport (Glassner and Loughlin 1987:35). Some scholars (e.g. Collins 1990:232, Mac an Ghail 1991) argue that researchers should be members of the group they study to truly understand their experience, and that social distance that includes differences in relative power can result in suspicion and lack of trust. Bond (1996) argues that ethnic and social alignment between interviewers and interviewees may generate more authentic data, since rapport and 'sharability' are more easily established. Likewise, Jia (1997, 2001) argues that cross cultural research should ideally be undertaken by researchers from the same culture as the participants; otherwise there is a danger of the researcher's ethnocentric perspective influencing the data interpretation. On this basis, one could also argue that interviews and questionnaires should be carried out in the mother tongue of the participants, so as to avoid ambiguities or mis-communication. A practical consideration for not utilising mother tongue in such cross cultural research, though, is that no researcher could be equally fluent

in all the languages involved, and translation costs would be prohibitive for the vast majority of researchers.

These arguments I have considered during each phase of the research, and have come to the conclusion, from my own experience, that although there are obvious benefits and advantages in sharing the language and culture of participants, there are also benefits in being an outsider. A Chinese doctoral student, recently discussing this very issue with me, considered that it could even be a disadvantage operating from the same cultural norms as the participants with regard to 'face' issues, for instance. Students may feel less inhibited talking to a Westerner, as there is less need to act and speak within the bounds of cultural norms which are held in common. Greater allowances may be made for penetrating questioning by outsiders than by insiders, who might thereby be breaking common cultural norms that are recognised and internalised by both parties. However, a heightened sensitivity to cultural issues should be an essential characteristic of any Western researcher.

The students who participated across the three case sites were equally communicative and keen to tell their stories, and this despite the fact that I played three different roles in the three sites. In one of the U.K. universities I was an 'in situ' lecturer and was therefore, by virtue of my teaching role, seen as an authority figure. In the second U.K. case site I was seen as an outsider researcher with less of an authority role. Because of my tutoring involvement with the students in Southern England university, my interpretation of the data was inevitably subjective. My role as international study skills tutor gave me front-line knowledge of many of the issues, which was very helpful. I was also able to view these issues from a subject lecturer's perspective, however. In the Chinese case site the participants told me that they did not view me as an authority figure at all, but more as a 'friendly researcher' who was interested in their academic experiences.

Miller and Glassner (1997:105) argue that social distance (i.e. interviewers seen to be superior in terms of status, education, age etc.) can be beneficial because the interviewee can then see himself or herself as 'an expert on the topic of interest', and this empowers them. When the needs of these groups are ignored by the authorities, then social distance is more attractive because the participants believe that their contributions may change things in future i.e. that their voice may be heard by practitioners.

As it was not one of the aims of this thesis that it should directly implement change, one ethical concern I faced was whether I might have raised a false hope amongst student participants that the research findings would change the policies and practice of the universities. The research aims had been explicitly outlined to the participants, and although they were aware that I would be writing a report on my findings, there was no suggestion that any changes would result as a consequence. Many of them, however, appeared to express some relief in sharing their experiences with someone who was genuinely interested in hearing their story. At this point it would be helpful to give a brief account of my background and role as researcher.

For the last twenty years I have been involved in supporting international students in the U.K. education system. I have also travelled and lived in Japan, China and Thailand, and have therefore experienced the cultural shock of having to adjust to alien expectations and norms. In Southern England University I have had a dual educational role. I am a subject lecturer on a masters course, and I am also a study skills lecturer for the masters international students. As I run the pre-masters study skills course, I am their first point of contact with university lecturers and Western teaching methods. During this course I identify their particular strengths and weaknesses in terms of academic writing skills, and provide workshops and tutorials throughout the masters courses to specifically address these. The study skills programme is not formally assessed, and students attend the workshops and tutorials on a voluntary basis. They are aware that I will sympathetically represent them at staff meetings and exam boards if I feel their concerns have been overlooked or misrepresented in some way. Very often it is to myself that students turn when they need re-assurance and the role includes some elements of student counselling, although I have had no formal training in this area.

In my role as support tutor, therefore, I may be perceived by some students as 'being one of them', providing a link between the students and the lecturers (Mac an Ghail 1991). This was strongly demonstrated to me when I was invited to one group of students' end of term party in one of their flats. During the course of the evening the conversation turned to discussing the various course subjects and their respective lecturers. At first I was acutely embarrassed that they appeared not to have realised that one of the 'staff' was in fact sitting in their midst listening to their comments (the majority of which were very positive,

thankfully). It struck me that they were not perceiving me as a member of staff, but rather as 'one of themselves' and thus felt free to discuss their concerns and feelings openly - a fascinating experience, which then left me with a dilemma. Was it my professional duty to report back to staff those concerns which, if addressed, could improve the course? Or was this a matter of confidentiality and trust which, for ethical reasons, I should not betray? I decided on the latter, although it was a difficult decision to make.

My dual role has enabled me to have, as it were, two 'insider' viewpoints. As a subject lecturer I am very aware of the time pressures on lecturers. Lack of time often forbids them spending time in discussing cultural differences in academic expectations, and from focusing on the study skills needs of students. I make every effort to ensure that my input supports and complements that of their subject lecturers with whom I liaise very closely. Through my support role, however, I am keenly aware of the pressures on international students. Moreover, through my travel and career experiences I have developed a sensitivity to the strong family and social pressure on international students to perform well academically. Through international students sharing their anxieties as well as successes with me over the years, and by tracking their progress and development in confidence and skills throughout the duration of a masters course, I find I can empathize strongly with some of the conflicts and difficulties they face. Indeed the research study arose very naturally out of my interest and concerns in this area.

Has this dual role, then, influenced the extent to which the students were prepared to talk candidly to me in interviews, especially with regard to questions on what makes a good teacher? The majority *appeared* to speak quite openly with me and some of them were surprisingly honest. Indeed most of them seemed to be very eager, if not anxious, to talk about their perceptions and concerns. Perhaps this was a reflection of a lack of opportunity to voice these concerns elsewhere.

For one of the masters courses I support, I am also a subject lecturer. The students on this course therefore see me in two roles – one solely in the supportive role of the study skills tutor, with no assessment responsibility; the other as one of their subject lecturers with the power to assess assignments and award marks. These roles are sometimes in conflict (Daloz 1986), and a few of these students seemed a little less at ease during the interviews. They, too, presumably saw the conflict in the dual role of informal support tutor and

formal subject assessor. Because of the small numbers of students in the study who were exposed to this conflict, their perspectives on the researcher's dual role did not become a major issue in the study.

I have therefore not 'gone native' (Mac an Ghail, 1991). Indeed in my role as subject lecturer in Southern England University, this would be impossible. I am, nevertheless, aware that I am British, white and culturalised into the British perspective on social norms, and that I can never see my own culture as the non-British see it. Neither can I hope to understand fully the cultural norms of my students' cultures. However, the data analysis is strongly orientated to participants' meanings and their own interpretations of their experiences. In my concern that I may be looking at the research question from a euro-centric perspective, I have been particularly careful lest the participants interpret the interview questions as suggesting that their cultures are inferior in some way, or that Western ways are best. The interview questions, and perhaps even the research question itself, needed to be continually reviewed with this in mind as the research proceeded. The equal value of other academic cultures has therefore been stressed in all discussions with students, and member validation of all findings and conclusions has become an important element of this thesis. The qualitative researcher, especially, needs to be continually sensitive to the possibility his/her ethnocentric perspectives unconsciously creeping in to the data analysis and interpretation. This is most difficult, and I do not claim to have avoided this entirely, but only that I have endeavoured to be reflective as to this issue throughout the research process.

4.8 Ethical Issues

I faced a number of ethical issues concerning the protection of identity of individuals and the case sites. The study in China highlighted these ethical concerns because of the political environment there- although similar, though less critical, concerns of anonymity and confidentiality also apply to the U.K. case studies. There is a need to balance the need to protect respondents and the need to accurately report data (Baez 2002).

I was welcomed in China as a researcher and the observation of two lectures in China were arranged through the Head of Department, partly because of the trust built up with the university by my British 'gatekeeper' friends over years, and also because of the credibility of having been awarded a British Council grant for the research. Critical observations and

comments about the teaching methodologies, teaching aids, learner attitudes and behaviours in these classes, could jeopardise the reputation of the university and of the teachers, who could be easily identified if all the details were revealed. Inappropriate disclosure of sensitive material would betray their cooperation and openness with me.

Furthermore, some of the teachers in China revealed their dissatisfaction with the educational system and the slow progress of reforms in their university, as well as commenting on the lack of library resources and of research skills amongst the lecturers. Such revelations might jeopardise their jobs if their identities were known. Only a few Chinese teachers were interviewed, and as my movements were carefully watched throughout my stay, no doubt these people could be identified even though individual comments in the data could not be linked to any one person.

The students in China University also spoke very openly about their experiences of the Chinese educational system, and occasionally this was quite negative. I do not believe there is any threat to the students' academic achievements or references as a result of participation, as again all contributions are anonymous. Also most of the students interviewed were in their final year, and will have left the university when the thesis is completed.

I had originally intended to follow up my China interviews with email communication. However, I soon realised that in the current political climate such communication would be inappropriate, unless very carefully censored, as I would have less control over confidentiality and anonymity than in face-to-face discussions. One of the Chinese teachers I interviewed, for instance, was very dissatisfied with the educational system and was planning a trip abroad. My fear was that if her identity and dissenting comments were revealed, this may have repercussions on her freedom to travel.

Although sensitive, the data I collected in China is extremely relevant to my research. My concern, however, was that any critical comments may be seen as an indictment on the university by those in authority. Might I be jeopardising not only the protection of staff and students, but also my own credibility and any further opportunities for research in China if I were to reveal the 'negative' aspects of my findings? On reflection I decided that anonymity for the universities, teachers and students, with no reference to the lecture topics should be sufficient to protect the participants. An additional restriction on library

access to the final thesis would also help protect the identity of the participating institutions.

Having discussed the qualitative methodology employed in this thesis, the next section presents the rationale for including some quantitative data.

4.9 Rationale for Including Subordinate Quantitative Data

It would have made for a less complicated research study had I restricted it to qualitative instead of adopting a mixed method approach by including a survey questionnaire. The reason for doing so, however, was because I think it important for this qualitative research to be supported by subordinate quantitative data if this helps make it more ‘transferable’ and credible. Yaeger, Sorensen, Lu and Bengtsson (2004:666), in their cross-cultural research into organisation culture styles, also stress the importance of using combination methodology in complex cross-cultural studies ‘where language, culture and tradition play an important role in the interpretation and responses to research questions’. As discussed on pages 108/9, I do not claim that these findings are generalizable to the wider population of all international East Asian students in the U.K. The scope of this research, limited to three case studies, forbids such generalisations. Nevertheless, the questionnaire widens the scope of the findings, and adds credence to the possibility that they may be applicable to other cohorts of similar students on postgraduate courses in the U.K.

As far back as 1967 Glaser and Strauss, the founders of the grounded theory concept, argued that qualitative researchers should adopt a flexible and creative approach to including some quantitative data in their analysis. They were radical in their age in proposing that quantitative data could also serve to generate theory: ‘Quantitative data is so closely associated with the current emphasis on verification that its possibilities for generating theory have been left vastly underdeveloped’ (1967:185). Such theory could be induced from the emerging relationships evident in the data, without the need to theoretically explain the actual findings, as against the predictions, as is done in verificational studies (Glaser & Strauss 1967:196). Similarly, Seale argues that: “an insistence on artificial and essentialist divides between data expressed in words and data expressed in numbers damages rather than enhances the quality of social research” (1999: 102).

However, I have had some reservations about combining the grounded theory approach with some quantitative data. As Denzin expresses it: ‘By making qualitative research ‘scientifically’ respectable, researchers may be imposing schemes of interpretation on the social world that simply do not fit that world as it is constructed and lived by interacting individuals’ (1988:432). Likewise, Atkinson, Coffey and Delamont (2001:11) argue that ‘one of the abiding strengths of qualitative traditions is that we are attentive to the life-worlds and voices of individuals and social groups’. Would the non-personalised quantitative data, fit comfortably with the ‘voices’ of individuals, even though the former is clearly subordinate? This section states the reasons why I overcame my reservations and decided that there was a case to be made for using some quantitative data to support the qualitative findings.

Some researchers would argue that the two approaches stem from different philosophical and political commitments, and so are incompatible (e.g. Kuhn 1970, Denzin 1988). Hammersley on the other hand, claims that the differences are not significant and he argues that methods can and should be mixed ‘to capture the full range of options that (researchers) face’ (1992: 52). He and others (e.g. Bryman 1992, 2001; Silverman, 1985, 1993, 2000, 2001; Seale, 1999; Bird 1992) advocate that choices should be made based on practicalities and the purpose of the research.

Brannen, on the other hand, although recognising that there is a great deal of overlap between the two approaches, argues ‘in favour of retaining some elements of the dichotomy’ (1992:33). She claims ‘it is useful to think in terms of opposites’, believing it important for researchers to confront the tensions between the different theoretical perspectives. So it seems there is a fairly strong current view that the conventional polarization between quantitative and qualitative approaches is rather artificial; many researchers routinely mix and blend them.

One method of incorporating quantitative data into a qualitative study is to count the actual observations or interview responses; what Silverman has called ‘simple counting techniques’ (Silverman 1993:163). Percentage counts convey a clear sense of the relative prevalence of certain attitudes or themes, hence giving ‘a sense of the extent to which certain beliefs are held or a certain form of behaviour occurs’ (Bryman 2001:440). This can help readers gain a sense of how widespread particular instances are, and can make

anecdotes and impressions more convincing and representative (Seale 1999:122).

Such 'simple counting' of interview responses, however, was not possible for this research as some interviews were based on 'active interviewing' which allows the participants to drive the discussion. The same topics, therefore, did not appear in every interview and this made meaningful percentage counts of responses not possible. Instead, I chose to develop a questionnaire survey based on the qualitative data.

To summarize this section, then, qualitative grounded theory was adopted as the most appropriate approach for this research, with some quantitative data to substantiate the qualitative findings and help make them more transferable. I have taken the stance that the inclusion of some subsidiary quantitative research helps provide a clearer picture of the phenomena being investigated.

4.10 Collection of Quantitative Data

How the Questionnaire Evolved

After the first year of conducting interviews at Southern England University, it was evident that certain themes and responses kept re-occurring. In an attempt to capture the frequency of some of the responses to my questions, I decided to create a questionnaire based on the qualitative interview data, as I felt this would substantiate the latter.

I first of all tried using matched pairs of statements (Appendix XVIII), this design being based on Goodman's (1986) research. At that time eighteen British and forty East Asian postgraduate students completed the questionnaires, the data from which seemed to support the qualitative findings. Examples of some of these findings are briefly illustrated in Appendix XIX. However, this questionnaire proved to be problematic for a number of reasons. Some of the participants reported that they were unable to answer some questions either because they a) agreed with both statements, or disagreed with both statements, depending on the context of the learning situation, b) their view was somewhere in-between both statements or c) to answer honestly may cause loss of 'face', either for themselves or for their teachers.

As a result they either selected both options, or left the question unanswered. It was consequently concluded that there was an inherent weakness in the design of the

questionnaire, and it was therefore deemed necessary to design another questionnaire which would provide intermediate options and not just two extreme alternatives. The decision was made, therefore, to reject the matched pairs questionnaire as a valid research tool for this thesis, and not to use any data from it.

It was also recognised that because the statements were de-contextualised they seemed abstract and divorced from reality. The design may perhaps have also reminded the students of multi-choice exam papers with which East Asian students are very familiar, and for which they were expected to give the 'correct' answers. I decided, therefore, that the research would be more valid and reliable if the questions could be set in more concrete and less ambiguous contexts (mini-scenarios or vignettes), with as wide a selection of options as possible for each vignette (see Appendix XX). This is in agreement with the research of Hird and Low, which has shown that questionnaires to be used with East Asian students need to be 'friendly' and sensitively worded 'so as to avoid placing the answerer in a situation where s/he would lose face by answering' (Low 1991:123). A conversational format needs to be adopted where 'sociality rather than interrogation' is emphasised (Hird 1999:37). The vignettes of this thesis were the nearest medium to a conversational format that I could create, and they fit the definition of 'short descriptions of a social situation that contains precise references to what are thought to be the most important factors in the decision-making or judgement-making processes of respondents' (Alexander & Becker 1978:94).

The statements of the matched pairs questionnaire could be selected purely on the basis of cognitive recognition and assent of Western academic norms, which may not be reflected in the actual learning behaviour of the respondent. The vignettes and response options, on the other hand, were based on personal 'stories' which had been related to me during the in-depth interviews, and on actual student behaviour. In this sense, the behaviour is a window into their real understanding and beliefs concerning the various issues, and therefore would provide a more valid measurement than mental assent of the 'correct' answer. As Ajzen and Fishbein (1980) point out, attitudes towards specific behaviours, as illustrated in the vignettes, are better predictors of behaviour than more global or general attitudes.

Thus a vignette questionnaire, where students have to apply their perceptions and beliefs to

a real life situation, rather than respond to abstract statements, would go some way towards eliminating 'false' awareness responses, and would be a more valid tool for discovering actual learning habits and preferred learning styles. The vignettes were set in the third person so that the respondents would feel less personally confronted than with the more direct questions in the matched pairs questionnaire. Moreover, to encourage students to answer honestly and not feel they needed to provide 'correct' answers, it was necessary to emphasise the anonymity and confidentiality of the questionnaires.

Jia (2001) successfully used scenarios in his Chinese group interviews on face values in order to stimulate responses and discussions. His scenarios provided a much fuller description of the various situations, the issues and the characters involved. Such full scenarios would not be appropriate for a questionnaire, when group discussion was not the purpose. The vignettes for my questionnaire were therefore in the same format as Trompenaars' (1993), although the actual situations were all drawn from the students' experiences. Although the scenario technique is widely used in psychological, management and marketing research, Wason, Polonsky and Hyman (2002) point out that the overwhelming majority of these are author-only inspired, or adapted/borrowed from previous studies. Very few (e.g. Jacobs 2004) have been developed, as the vignettes in this thesis have been, from insights and examples provided by the research participants themselves.

By way of checking the clarity of the language and the contexts, the questionnaire was reviewed by a number of participants during interviews, when the six vignettes were used as discussion points. Through such triangulation, I have been able to explore more deeply the underlying assumptions and reasons behind their answers and to check for any ambiguity in the questions.

Piloting and Distribution of the Vignette Questionnaire

The questionnaire sampling for all three case studies was non-probability and purposive in that the same Schools and courses were selected where the interviews had been conducted. The first draft questionnaire contained eight vignettes, and they were completed by East Asian and British masters students in Southern England University in January of the second academic year of the research. Six out of the eight vignettes demonstrated a clear difference in thinking between the East Asian and the British masters students and these

six were selected for the second draft questionnaire. The reasons for abandoning one of the vignettes are given in Appendix XXI. The pilot also revealed that the wording of some of the vignettes needed to be amended slightly in order to clarify the meanings.

The vignette questionnaire was distributed to 268 East Asian students across the three case sites: 104 East Asian students and 58 British students in Southern England University, over three years; 68 Chinese students in China University in a three week visit in the second year; and 38 East Asian masters students in Mid England University in the third year of the research.

For China University, the questionnaires were translated into Chinese and back-translated (Brislin 1993:93) into English by two professional translators (Appendix XXII). The Mother Tongue questionnaires were then administered to final year undergraduates at the end of their degree course. The rationale for using a translation was that all China University students were Chinese and it therefore was feasible to try and eliminate any misunderstanding due to the English. It was thereby hoped that a mother-tongue questionnaire would provide more credible data. It was possible to translate the questionnaire for China University because there was only one language involved, but it would have been impractical and financially prohibitive to translate the questionnaire into all six target languages. Perhaps this could be fruitful ground for further research. At the time I believed that translating the questionnaire was a logical decision and would help test out the validity of the data. However, I discovered later that it did lessen the consistency across the three case sites, making direct comparisons slightly more difficult. Nevertheless, on reflection, it was a worthwhile experiment which yielded some useful results, which are discussed when the data are analysed in chapters five and six.

Reliability and Validity of the Vignette Questionnaire

The fact that the questionnaire was used in three different settings, administered by different 'gatekeepers', and furnished very similar findings, argues for its reliability. In addition, an audit trail is provided throughout the report which tracks the decisions and steps taken in the design of the questionnaire and the collection and analysis of the quantitative data.

Validation has been ensured by regularly and consistently checking back at every stage

with the respondents, to expose any ambiguities, misunderstandings, unclear language or concepts in the questionnaire. The final design was only completed after a full year of piloting and re-draftings. Moreover, as already mentioned, the findings from the vignettes were member validated during some of the in-depth interviews.

However, there are some weaknesses in the questionnaire data which need to be acknowledged. As noted on pages 27/89, it is argued by Tayeb (2001) and Hanson (1992) that cultural differences are extremely difficult to measure because of all the non-cultural factors involved in any cultural study. Tayeb argues that it is not sufficient to acknowledge the existence and likely influence of these factors; if possible, they need isolating from the main data. However, it is not possible from the survey responses to attribute any differences in behaviour or attitude to any particular cultural factor. The purpose, however, of the questionnaire was to substantiate the qualitative findings, not to statistically prove any factor correlation, as this would be impossible given the above discussion.

4.11 Analysis of the Questionnaire Data

The analysis of the survey findings for the three case studies is discussed in depth in the next two chapters. Suffice it to say here that each of the six vignettes relate to one or more of the emerging categories from the qualitative interview data and shall be discussed in the light of these categories. Graphs showing the questionnaire responses by the East Asian and English students are shown in Appendices XXIII a-e. Descriptive statistics, by way of percentages, a Chi squared test, probability values and ϕ association test, were considered adequate for the purpose of the research (see Appendices IV). Qualitative responses were also requested on the questionnaire in the form of 'Why?' questions at the end of each vignette. This allowed respondents 'to elaborate on the reasons for their decisions' (Jacobs 2004:681). These open comments were generally found to support and triangulate the interview data.

Avoiding Bias

I had considered whether the students should write their own vignettes and response options, but rejected this in favour of selecting those situations which commonly emerged naturally during interviews, as being more representative phenomena, and therefore of concern to the majority of the East Asian students. Also, by writing the vignettes myself I

was in greater control of the language, a necessary consideration, as apart from the British sample, all the students would be using English as their second or other language. However, I was aware throughout the design stage that my assumptions and observations might be influencing the material unconsciously, and so member validation by the students themselves was employed throughout the questionnaire design stage in an attempt to counteract any researcher influence on the material. Because of my easy relationship with many of the students in Southern England University, they were not hesitant about 'correcting' any weaknesses in the pilot questionnaire, once they understood why I was keen for them to do so.

To summarise, the aim of the questionnaire is modest. It is used primarily to demonstrate numerically that there does appear to be a significant difference in expectations between the British and the East Asian samples of students. It also substantiates the qualitative findings, as the vignettes are derived from, and relate to, the emerging categories in the interview data. Nevertheless, even though generalisation is not a realistic goal in this research, the fact that a questionnaire, which has been intensively member validated, reveals the same trends as some of the qualitative data, strengthens the objectivity of the research and therefore the transferability of the findings.

Having discussed the methodology underpinning the collection of interview and survey questionnaire data, the next two chapters are concerned with the analysis of the qualitative data.

Chapter 5: Factors Affecting the Learning Experience

Introduction

This chapter and the next analyse the interview and questionnaire data. Sixty seven in-depth interviews were conducted with East Asian students across the three cases, two universities in the U.K. and a third university in China. Eleven British lecturers, five Chinese lecturers in China, and six British students were also interviewed. Five categories emerged from the interview data: critical thinking skills; style of teaching; second language challenges; referencing, plagiarism and paraphrasing; and hindrances to freedom of expression in the classroom. A questionnaire of six vignettes was created, based on the emerging qualitative categories, and shall be discussed in the light of the qualitative data categories.

‘Critical Thinking Skills’ emerged as the core category to which all the other categories relate. The data indicate that students’ ability and willingness to engage in critical thinking are determined to a large extent by their previous learning experience: the role played by their teachers; the style of teaching and assessment; and freedom to express opinions and ask questions in class. In addition, their ability to write and read critically in English is determined by their second language skills. So this chapter begins with an analysis of the data relating to the core category ‘Critical thinking skills’, and this is followed by a discussion of the other four categories.

Many common ideas and themes emerged from the interviews, and these commonalities are represented by the quotes selected for these next two chapters. Quotes were selected because they articulate, not just that individual’s viewpoint, but the viewpoint of the vast majority of the interviewees. As the research is focusing on Chinese students, it is inevitable that there are relatively more quotes from Chinese students. For the sake of brevity, quotes from the three case sites are referred to by way of the letters A, B, C to denote the three cases as follows:

A = Southern England University (pseudonym)

B = China University (pseudonym)

C = Mid England University (pseudonym)

In addition, quotes are labelled with transcript codes and line references.

5.1 Critical thinking skills

5.1.1 Perceptions of what 'Critical Thinking' Means

The data suggest that many East Asian students, when they commence their masters course in the U.K., do not understand what their lecturers mean when they ask them to critically evaluate ideas and theories. When asked how they would define critical evaluation, many see it in a negative light only: that it means to disagree with, or even disprove, an author's theory:

Interviewer: What do you understand by 'critically evaluate'?

Participant: To say something opposite to what the author thinks.
(B5:50, Chinese)

An author gives a theory, and I say that according to my experience there is something wrong with his theory or his definition. Criticising and challenging the authors and authorities. (C6:9, Chinese).

This misconception causes difficulty for East Asian students, who traditionally have always shown great respect for authority and who view authors as 'experts' that are beyond criticism or challenge:

Lecturers say 'don't just read that book but think about what the author says, what do you think? But for me the book was to be believed, so to analyse or critically evaluate what the scholars say is difficult. (A 37:34, Japanese)

Some of this confusion may be due to the word 'criticise'. Although, academically it means to weigh up the positives and negatives, for many East Asian students the word has only a negative connotation, as these two students explain:

At first critical thinking was very negative for me, because in Korea critical thinking is never mentioned in the whole educational system. When they talk about critical thinking it's about communism, like in North Korea when they invaded a village, everyone was gathered in the market and then they criticised themselves, criticised their parents, criticised their son. So to the older generation, my parents, criticising is very bad. So as we grow up our parents teach us 'don't criticise people. Don't criticise other people's opinions'. (A38:40, Korean)

When you say 'criticising' it's more like a negative term ... for many Asian students they take it as negative. But if you say 'compare and contrast' they will think you want them to do both positive and negative. (C9:42, Taiwanese)

To use the term 'compare and contrast' may therefore be more appropriate for East Asian students in the early stage of a masters course, as a step towards a deeper appreciation of critical evaluation.

In agreement with other research (e.g. Triandis 1988:326), all the East Asian students interviewed spoke of the cultural inappropriacy in their home countries of criticising others, especially authority figures. It is seen as impolite to 'point out somebody's mistake or weaknesses directly' (C6:22, Chinese). Overt confrontation is seen as threatening and insulting in collectivist cultures, whereas in individualist, democratic cultures it can be seen as constructive (Young 1994:125, Ting Toomey 1985:74-77):

The West tests everything, but we are supposed to receive everything the teacher tells us and if we question it, we challenge the authority of our teachers. (B3:97, Chinese lecturer)

There appears to be an issue here of trust, respect and belief: "For us, we believe what someone says because we believe that person" (B3:117, Chinese lecturer). As far as teachers in China are concerned students "believe that some people started the search earlier than us, and so they may have found more truth than we do. So we'd rather believe in somebody else than believe ourselves" (B3:123, Chinese lecturer). Therefore to question or seek evidence for what is taught is to imply mistrust and disrespect. Neither is it appropriate to 'stand on the same level as the author, the expert' (A40:30, Chinese). This is reflected in the fact that in all but the most modern Chinese classrooms the teacher is raised higher by standing on a platform at the front.

5.1.2 Cultural/Political Inappropriacy of Individualistic Thinking

Interviewees also spoke of the cultural inappropriacy in their home countries of being independent and individualistic in thinking and decision-making, especially for females:

In China your parents and teachers make decisions for you. Your mind stops working; we become lazy. But here each day all my senses are motivated because in your life there are so many things you have to decide, and it will change your ability to be independent. (C5:32, Chinese, female).

The data support the view that in collectivist cultures, interdependence like this is high, with the in-group providing resources and security in return (Triandis 1995, Trompenaars 1993, Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars 2,000). Taking risks or personal responsibility for one's learning is not generally encouraged (B9:3, Chinese lecturer); it is not 'safe to debate', and views outside the party line are discouraged. All this results in an apparent conformity of thinking:

Traditional mentality of the Chinese is to be safe and to be stable. To conform. They don't want to take risks. They want to be safe or take the middle way.

They don't go to extremes. (B10:46, Chinese lecturer).

Teachers like students who listen to them, and also the exam system does not encourage you to be different. You are taught to be the same, to think the same, to say the same thing, to answer with the correct answers. (B10:50, Chinese lecturer)

Likewise, a Taiwanese student explained: "My tendency is not to criticise or to argue or to find out my personal point of view. I try to conform" (A10:147: Taiwanese). A Japanese student equated individualistic thinking with being more aggressive and complaining (A34:37,38, Japanese).

Non-conformists appear to be sidelined or rejected. However, for many students if they do not believe what their teachers say, although they would not disagree with them directly, they may discuss the matter with friends or classmates outside class-time (C3:18, C5:6, Chinese). In this way a person may hold to inner dissent whilst externally conforming. Some students related the lack of critical thinking to the political system of their country:

You cannot challenge them because you'll have trouble. This means you have less critical thinking. Because usually the Party says 'This is true', so you're not allowed to argue, even a little (...). When people have critical thinking - two sides - they will think more, and I think the educational authorities are afraid to give more ability, give more trust to develop the students' ability in critical thinking, because they will have more ability to challenge the thoughts of the Party. (A30:3, Chinese).

In Taiwan we only present one side because I think it is a kind of political control. So we don't get used to seeing the other side of things. We are confined to see only one side. (A10:40, Taiwanese)

When asked whether people critically debate issues privately, a participant replied:

We do that secretly. We have our own point of view; we view things differently from our government and we keep it for our own. Teachers may disagree with our government, but they have to agree officially. (B3:89, Chinese lecturer)

If masters students are particularly sensitive to these influences then, naturally, they will be less willing to express their opinions freely in class discussion, particularly in the first weeks of the course when they are 'testing the waters' to gauge how safe it is for them to be open.

5.1.3 Cognitive skills in Evaluating Alternative Perspectives

At the start of the masters course the students tend to *describe* scholarly ideas and theories, but fail to analyse them. This Chinese student describes how his approach to assignments began to change in the first few weeks of his masters course:

Formally my concept about writing assignments was to read many books from different authorities about this theory and I collected their ideas and organised their ideas, and just listed them one by one. But now I begin to think, to compare their ideas. (C4:58, Chinese)

This is borne out by a language support lecturer's observation:

They seem to have got the idea that it becomes basically a sausage factory, that you just turn out 'he says this, she says that, according to him'. (C14:12, British)

The data indicate that many East Asian students have under-developed academic critical analysis skills because of the way they were previously taught: "You are not expected to use critical analysis or to challenge the established view, although you know it is not true for your real situation" (A33: 12, Chinese). This is illustrated by the following story:

I read on the web a few days ago about a student writing prose about spring. In the middle schools or universities the teachers always choose prose on spring that is positive, in praise of spring. So when you write about spring you are always expected to write positively. This one student said that spring is very noisy because it rains a lot, and it is very cold, and flowers do not bloom in the spring because it is too early. Then his teacher said 'You are wrong!'. So there was a discussion about this [on the website]. Should we be taught how to critically analyse and use our mind, or are we expected to accept what others say? (A33:12, Chinese)

One Taiwanese student described how she had asked her Taiwanese lecturer why they did not have discussions in class like the Americans who "can discuss the reasons why and develop their thinking". He had answered: "You don't need to discuss things in class. You just need to come and learn". She concluded "In Taiwan students don't have the right to think" (A9:125, Taiwanese). Similarly, a Japanese student described critical thinking as 'unnatural' and unfamiliar to him:

In my country I just looked at it just one way, but now I have to look at it all different ways. (A37:36, Japanese)

A Chinese student described the majority of Chinese students as thinking "in a very narrow way; they don't know how to jump out of the limits [the box]" (A40:36, Chinese). Another student described it this way: "In China most of the students, not all of them, won't jump out

of that circle and see in another way” (C3:16, Chinese). This suggests that the more creative, imaginative or original aspects of critical thinking will be especially unfamiliar.

Critically looking at alternative views and weighing up the arguments was not taught in the majority of the students’ undergraduate courses:

In Taiwan we just think about the positive answers, but here we have to think also about the negative perspectives. It makes me develop my thinking. (A9:47, Taiwanese)

Here I am allowed to see the other side of things. But I still find that in the class my tendency is not to criticise or to argue or to find out my personal point of view. I try to conform. (A10:140, Taiwanese)

To consider alternative viewpoints to an issue is confusing for some, who would prefer clear and unambiguous conclusions (A10:114, Taiwanese). This, of course, is very different from the discussion-based seminars and extensive reading lists that they encounter in their first weeks of a masters course in the U.K. The British lecturers who were interviewed also recognised that critical evaluation was a new concept for many East Asian students:

The concept of synthesising, having multiple views on something and then perhaps challenging or questioning themselves is probably the most difficult. (5:2, British lecturer)

For some students there is a real inner conflict in critically evaluating ideas:

It is very hard to confront with ourselves, it is a struggle to write. Thinking in English is like arguing with another person. I am not allowed to confront or to conflict with myself in Chinese. (A10:495, Taiwanese)

Sometimes I feel like there are two separate [people] inside my head and they are fighting each other (...). I feel my character, my personality is cut into half; one is pro and one is con. Your two sides will always be fighting each other and never come to an end. (A30:5,7, Chinese)

However, as discussed on page 63, academic writing in a British context encourages the writer to think dialectically (Scardamalia and Bereiter 1994), and Paul (1993:349) equates the kind of internalised dialogue these students describe as the normal struggle involved in critical thinking. When one of the interviewees was asked, however, if this struggle was linked to a search for truth, he replied that some Chinese students approach critical evaluation in a very mechanistic manner and ‘never search the truth’. There is a Chinese saying ‘Honour the hierarchy first; your vision of the truth second’ (Bond 1991:83), which accords with Hofstede

and Bond's findings (1988:11) that 'man's search for truth' – equated with the original uncertainty avoidance dimension conceived by Hofstede – is not seen as an important cultural value in China (see page 33). Paul notes too that one cannot be a 'a seeker of truth' unless one is a 'strong' critical thinker (Paul 1982:3).

For some students critical thinking is seen as 'just another set of rules' which need to be learned and then followed (A10:197, Taiwanese), with no conviction about the philosophy underlying it. Others engage in what Paul describes as 'weak critical thinking' where they argue one side of an argument, refuting alternative views, but do not go onto synthesise the most convincing arguments from all perspectives (Paul 1983:23). In other words, they are focusing more on 'warding off the enemy' than in being fair and open minded. Some students, however, once they accept the ambiguity and uncertainty arising out of thinking critically come to prefer the Western freedom to debate ideas:

I'm really keen on discussion. Because sometimes I have wrong ideas, wrong knowledge, but someone else's idea - even though it's only a mustard seed, it's a very small idea - I can think about it. (A24:145, Indonesian)

A Chinese student claimed that she had been enjoying watching T.V. debates led by Jeremy Paxman: "It's very open, you know. I like this kind of way. But it's totally different in China" (A32:77, Chinese). Another Chinese student, on the other hand, thought that critical debate can degenerate into mere rebelliousness:

British students have been encouraged to challenge – too much. Rebellious! Sometimes the challenge makes no sense! (A40:36, Chinese)

As a consequence of these cultural differences, when East Asian students are presented with an assignment question at the beginning of a masters course, the majority automatically assume that the title is presenting the 'side' of the argument which is accepted by the experts, since it has the presumed approval of the teacher. So they "always agree more with the quote than disagree"(A10:171, Taiwanese). Similar comments to these kept re-occurring throughout the interviews, and so in an attempt to substantiate this data, vignette 1 of the questionnaire was devised. The analysis that follows demonstrates how the qualitative and quantitative data complement and support each other.

Vignette 1

A lecturer gives a student the assignment title: 'The U.K. is in recession'. Discuss.'

What should the student do?

1. Discuss all the reasons and evidence for why the U.K. is in recession
2. Discuss all the reasons and evidence for why the U.K. may be in recession and also describe all the reasons and evidence why it may not be. However, make sure that the conclusion agrees with the essay title
3. Discuss equally both sides, and in the conclusion make an honest judgement about which side the student thinks is more convincing

Questionnaires containing six vignettes were distributed to East Asian and British students in the three case sites. A total of 104 East Asian students and 58 British students, at the start of their masters course, completed the questionnaires in Southern England University over a period of three years. 68 Chinese students in their final term of their undergraduate course completed the questionnaire in China University, and 38 East Asian students about to embark on masters courses completed the questionnaire in Mid England University. The aim of the questionnaire was to provide supporting quantitative evidence for the qualitative interview data. Raw data, graphs and statistical probability and association scores for each vignette are to be found in Appendices XXIII and XXIV.

For vignette 1, 85% of the British students selected option 3, which is most in line with the expectations of the interviewed British lecturers (Jin 1992). This is compared to 59% of the East Asian students in Southern England University, and 64% in Mid England University selecting option 3 (see Appendix XXIIIa). Using a one-way contingency table, the χ^2 test was conducted to compare the responses of the East Asian and British students. The χ^2 permitted me to reject the null hypothesis for Southern England ($p = 0.005$) and Mid England ($p = 0.028$) students. A measure of association (ϕ) is included as an indication of substantive significance. These results are reported in Appendices XXIVa and XXIVb.

One would not expect all the British students to have a full awareness of U.K. lecturer expectations, as the analysis of the interview data, discussed below, demonstrates. There is, however, a significant difference between the expectations of British and East Asian students in the two British universities, indicating that the East Asian students were less able to interpret the assignment question. The majority assumed that they were expected to agree with the title of the assignment, rather than debate it.

China University, however, showed a higher percentage (75%) of the East Asian students selecting option 3. Because all these students shared the same mother tongue, the questionnaire was translated into Chinese so as to eliminate one of the key factors which might influence their responses i.e. their second language. This was in accordance with Tayeb's (2002) argument that there are often so many factors involved in cultural surveys that it is very difficult to identify cause and effect (see pages 27/89). The other likely positive influences on these student responses were their substantial exposure to the Western teaching methodology of foreign language teachers during their undergraduate courses, and the fact that they had studied Western culture and education as a component of their degree. One can tentatively conclude, therefore, that where East Asian students have exposure to Western teaching methodology and educational approaches, they are more prepared for a masters course in the U.K. As we shall see, Mid England East Asian student responses were all (except for vignette 2) significantly different from the British responses, but less so than Southern England East Asians. This can be explained by their different English language competence on recruitment (see Table 4, page 95). Students are recruited with IELTS¹ 6.0 upwards in Southern England, 6.5 upwards in Mid England, and the majority of China university students, who majored in English, had IELTS 7.0. This, obviously, has implications for recruitment onto masters courses, with regard to English language competence and undergraduate subjects studied.

The questionnaire data therefore support the qualitative findings that many East Asian students are not familiar with the expectation, normal in the U.K., of evaluating alternative perspectives on an issue and arriving at a personal opinion.

One way in which lecturers in both U.K. cases help students develop these skills is to encourage them to evaluate theories in the light of their own work experience and culture:

Interviewer: What has helped you to understand it [critical evaluation] more?

Participant: One tutor always encourages us to talk out our own opinion in our own context. So you can relate it to China. They give you the one theory and you can listen to different students from different countries, experiences, and you can be critical. (C2:36, Chinese).

Another student described how an Australian lecturer ran a research-style course which helped her to appreciate the value of applying theory to the real world (B18:8, Chinese). This

¹ International English Language Test Score

appeared to be a turning point in the way she viewed teaching and learning. Through this critical application method, students begin to compare their personal experiences with theory, and so learn how to critically evaluate the latter:

Now (...) I have the idea to compare them and to connect their theory with my context and experience in China ... some [theories] suggested by the authorities are very idealistic and very appropriate in certain cultures, but in China maybe they are not so suitable. (C4:58, Chinese)

It is not just East Asian students who benefit from this approach: “I can apply what I am learning to my work, day to day. That aids my critical thinking” (A44:4, British). Of course, this can only work if students have work experience, and can base their opinions on personal experience. However, this can result in students thinking the most important aspect of critical thinking is giving their own personal opinion, based primarily on their own perceptions and experience, rather than understanding that reasoned opinions need to be based on evidence and on objectively debating alternative viewpoints. This quote at the end of a masters course reflects this limited level of understanding:

Interviewer: What do you think now about critical thinking?

Participant: I think my opinion is important when I read anything. Every time I try to think what I think. I ask myself, if I were in this situation what would I do?

(C11:8, Japanese)

The reverse situation is when students are reasonably comfortable criticising alternative viewpoints but refrain from including their personal opinions, believing this to be unacceptable to U.K. lecturers:

I don't see why we always have to write so much about what other people have written. Often I have a lot of individual thoughts, but I don't find them in journals or books. What about these? Can I mention these? I just feel I can agree with A and disagree with B. Of course I think it's important for us to read a bit about what others think, but I especially like to express what *I* think. (A31:13, Chinese)

Many students in this stage tend to perceive the Western notion of critical evaluation as not being creative: “I use critical argument, but I don't need to be creative here” (A32:109, Chinese). However, when the following student was asked to define academic creativity she associated it only with initiating entirely new and original ideas, not with synthesising ideas into new models:

Interviewer: What about the idea that creativity is synthesising ideas into new formations?

Participant: I think if you use your definition of creativity, it plays a very important role in our studies, but not my definition.
(A32:110,115, Chinese)

The perception that creativity always requires entirely new ideas was prevalent in the interviews with many of the East Asian students. A Japanese student thought that East Asian ‘holistic thinking’ allows for more creativity than the linear thinking of the West (A34:45). This is in line with Thayer-Bacon’s (1993) view that Western-style academic critical thinking does not encourage creativity, even though Paul (1993:106) insists that good critical thinking is intrinsically creative (see page 64).

5.1.4 Critical Thinking Skills of British Student Interviewees

Five out of the six British masters students interviewed were very confident about their critical thinking skills. Those recruited straight from an undergraduate course were the most at ease with the concept of critical evaluation, especially those who had studied for a Bachelor of Arts:

It’s something I’m very used to, which developed a lot in my final year particularly. You begin to realise in the third year when your essay writing skills develop. I really got a grasp of it, and got my highest marks.
(A42:3, British)

It’s something I’ve homed in to do since GCSEs onwards. We were always comparing and contrasting what different writers thought. It’s within the British system. (A41:2, British)

The whole educational environment and society in the U.K. encourages one to ask questions and query things without being ‘sat on’. I felt very well prepared for this masters course, although I realise there is still plenty of scope for improvement (...) we’ve all been institutionalised into the argument culture.
(A43:2,26 British)

These interviewees thought that in order to gain a good graduate degree in the U.K. a student would need to engage in critical thinking, and normally only the better British students progress onto a masters degree. They also thought that wide reading was essential for critical thinking (A42:13, British). The sixth British student, however, is from a minority ethnic background, and she felt unprepared for the demands of a masters course. She claimed she had not needed these skills in her undergraduate course, as students ‘were told one way to think, and you had to accept it.’ (A46:2, British). However, when asked whether her undergraduate lecturers had encouraged critical thinking or not, she answered:

Yes, they did encourage it, because for every assignment they had criteria – you have to criticise and all that – but we weren't quite sure what they meant by that. When we got the essay back, most of us got comments like 'it was good but you need to be more critical'. (A46:4, British)

By the end of the first term in her masters course she claimed that she was beginning to understand and use critique in her essays and began to see the value of what her undergraduate lecturers had been asking her to do all along:

I think it's very good to challenge. I wish I had challenged at undergraduate level. It really opens up my thinking. I don't accept everything. (A46:34, British)

This begs the question as to why, after only ten weeks on a masters course, she had a better understanding of critical thinking, when she had previously completed three years of a British undergraduate course without being 'quite sure' what it meant? She claimed it had not been explicitly taught during her degree course. It could be that the extensive reading required for the masters course helped develop her critical thinking skills. Another contributing factor may have been the keenness of the other Western masters students to engage in seminar debates, so that she learned from example, much as the East Asian students do.

Active prompting and probing by lecturers can help East Asian students, as well as helping those British students who need to develop skills in critical thinking, by leading them "step by step with a series of questions, starting with the general and going onto the specific" (C9:26, Taiwanese): "Teachers often ask questions to guide us, to lead us to think critically or to contribute" (C4:16, Chinese).

5.1.5 The 'Middle Way' – Constructive Thinking

Because many Eastern cultures place so much value on maintaining harmony and not taking an extreme or polarised position in any discussion, the idea of a 'middle way', what Thayer-Bacon (1993) calls 'constructive thinking' may be a more acceptable approach to debate. Alternative views would be accorded equal validity and neither position would be rejected outright, as happens in Aristotelian debate. Some Chinese students claimed they had no clear opinion about issues. Many, when faced with two opposing views think:

... this is right and this is also right. They are equal. This happens a lot in China – the middle way. We are encouraged to think this way. (B7:50, Chinese).

Similarly a Japanese student (A34:17) and an Indonesian student (A24:144) found they were

more comfortable combining 'Eastern holistic' and Western linear thinking. The Japanese student described the differences he had found in how ideas are linked in Western linear logic and Japanese holistic logic. First of all he describes how he thinks in Japanese:

When I think in Japanese I usually use holistic thinking. I put every idea and all information down at the same time, and ponder for a while. Suddenly I find the overall idea. Once I find the overall idea, linkage is automatically shown up ... Japanese emphasises the overall idea and principles.
(A34:14, 35, Japanese).

This suggests a search for harmony. In contrast to this, people who use linear thinking "are looking for the gaps, the difficulties, the weaknesses and focusing on detail rather than the whole (...). They are usually good at negotiating or assertiveness" (A34:37, Japanese). This student was aware that U.K. lecturers were seeking linear logic in essays, but he had discovered a 'middle way', which combined both linear and holistic thinking, and he felt that this 'synergy' (Jin 1992, Jin & Cortazzi 1995, 1998) was the most comfortable way for him, even though it did not gain him the highest marks. Interestingly, he claimed that he found this middle way so useful that he thought he would prefer to use it when back in Japan (A34: 24-29, Japanese). In East Asian terms, the expression 'Middle Way' signifies moderation and shunning extremes. It would have strong overtones of the path of self-realization or renunciation of self in Buddhism, of the mystical or natural way of the Tao in Taoism, and of the path of Humanity, Heaven and Earth in Confucianism. The notion of the academic 'Middle Way' is discussed further on pages 224-230.

From the above discussion, it can be seen that many East Asian students come to the U.K. with misconceptions about what Western lecturers mean by critical evaluation and debate. Criticism of others, especially of those in authority, is seen as culturally inappropriate, impolite and in some situations, unsafe. Students are therefore initially perplexed when lecturers tell them to engage in critical evaluation, both in class discussions and in their written assignments. Many continue to sense that it is inappropriate to challenge the ideas of lecturers and scholars, even into the second or third term into their masters course.

The data further suggest that for the majority of East Asian students the teaching in their home universities reflects the official view, and allows for no alternative interpretations. This confirms Bond's (Chinese Culture Connection 1987) premise that the 'search for truth' does not appear to be as important an aim in Further Education in East Asia, as it is in the West.

The effect of these differences in expectations and norms is that many East Asian students are thrown into an academic ‘cultural shock’ (Gudykunst & Kim 2003:382) in the first few weeks of their masters course. The speed with which they make their journey from one set of norms to another depends, amongst other things, on the style of teaching with which they are accustomed, and this is the next category to be considered.

5.2 Style of Teaching

All the East Asian interviewees said that in their home countries the teaching was traditionally teacher-dominated, with students passively receiving the information given them. Such transmission teaching encourages hierarchical relationships and status, whereby lecturers have high power distance, and this makes challenge and debate difficult. This teaching approach, as described by the students, is next examined and contrasted with university teaching in the U.K., as perceived by the British interviewees.

5.2.1 Status & Role of Lecturers

Caring

The data suggest that most teachers in China, especially during school years, are seen as loco parentis:

Chinese teachers care about us, not only to help us to study, but if we are having difficulties in life they act not only as a teacher, but like a relative or a friend or a parent, to give you guidance in your life. (B5:4, Chinese)

There is a Chinese saying ‘One day as a teacher, the whole life as a father’ (C1:95, Chinese)

This is in line with Scollon and Scollon’s (1981:18) and Cortazzi and Jin’s (1999) research, who found that in cultures with a highly developed hierarchical relationship structure, such as Neo-Confucian cultures, those in dominant positions are expected to take care and show concern for subordinates. The apparent high power-distance and formality in East Asia can be misunderstood by Westerners, Cortazzi and Jin (2001) argue, unless these features of care, concern and friendship are considered. This explains how the young and single Chinese lecturers, even though they are highly respected, may also be seen as ‘friends’:

Participant: I would often go to their home. We are just like friends. Some are single so they live in the next building [the teachers’ dormitory]. So we go skating, everything together. We eat at the same canteen.

Interviewer: So did you experience any power distance with these lecturers?”

Participant: No. No power distance. Respect, yes. But even in the classroom we are still like friends.

(A31: 39-41, Chinese)

In contrast to this, U.K. lecturers are often seen by East Asian students as uncaring and unwilling to form friendships with students. There was a perception by some that U.K. lecturers do not care for the welfare of their students, and that they make little or no effort to demonstrate genuine interest. Students seem puzzled by this at first, and put it down to them being too busy:

There is a distance with most lecturers (...). They say ‘I don’t have time’ or ‘I’m doing research’ or ‘I can only see you ten minutes’. That makes us feel we shouldn’t occupy them. (A31:43, Chinese)

The British students, in contrast, did not expect lecturers to take a personal interest in their lives. However, lecturers at masters level were seen by some British students as ‘more human’ than at undergraduate level (41:32, British), and they felt at ease calling lecturers by their first names. In contrast, according to the British lecturers interviewed, East Asian students often find it difficult to call lecturers by their first name, often preferring to call them ‘professor’ or ‘doctor’, as a form of respect.

The student interviewees thought that learning and using the names of international students in class is one strategy that lecturers could employ for building relationships and engendering a sense of caring. This, of course, becomes more difficult the larger the class size. To address this, one of the British lecturer interviewees always has a photo sheet in front of him in lectures and seminars so that ‘if I need to talk to someone, rather than saying ‘You’, I will glance down at the photo sheet and ask them by their first name’ (A2:116, British lecturer). Unfortunately many U.K. lecturers have problems in pronouncing East Asian names correctly, which may explain why some East Asian students adopt Western names for the duration of their course.

Power Distance

Generally, student-lecturer relationships in the U.K. are characterised by low power-distance, in line with Hofstede’s findings: “Here I can feel that we are the same status” (A10:365, Taiwanese). This is commonly seen in the informal use of first names. As already seen, many

East Asian teachers, especially the older teachers, have a high power distance relationship with their students. This Taiwanese student, in contrast to the Chinese student quoted on page 140, experienced a hierarchical, high power-distance relationship with all his teachers, regardless of age, even outside of the classroom:

There is a hierarchy in the Taiwanese system. In school students have to respect teachers even if they meet outside of lectures. Otherwise you will receive punishment. (A9:59, Taiwanese)

It therefore takes time before many students feel confident in approaching U.K. lecturers to ask questions or seek individual help. This seems to be associated with a fear of their peers disapproving their seeking 'special relationships' with lecturers (A20:117, Chinese, A10:358, Taiwanese):

In Indonesia if we want to meet separately with the lecturers then other students will think we are trying to get better marks. But here it's better. I've heard that here we can meet personally with the lecturers without feeling afraid that somebody else would think that we are doing something behind others' backs. (A30:185, Indonesian)

According to Jia (2001:3,156) East Asian students are strongly motivated to gain group approval and are also fearful of talking with authority figures. So these two factors may hinder students from approaching U.K. lecturers at first. All the East Asian interviewees said that they highly valued individual and group tutorials, where they felt more able to speak freely. However there was some confusion as to how often students could approach their tutors for support:

One big difference is how much I can depend on teachers here. I got confused. In Japan if I asked lecturers they help a lot. We can ask anything and they give us plenty of information and support. But here they are expecting us to be more independent. So I'm still confused how much I can depend on them. I'm not sure if it's good or bad to ask every time. (C11:14, Japanese).

Students were also fearful of offending lecturers by appearing over-demanding or impolite. Assertiveness may be seen as a sign of disrespect (Gao & Ting Toomey 1998:43):

When I speak to my tutor I always think 'is this the right way, to be polite?' and I'm always afraid of my behaviour and my speaking way, because if the tutor thinks 'this Chinese student looks a bit aggressive, then this is related to my fellow Chinese students, to my country. So I should behave as polite as I can. (C2:119, Chinese)

When students feel unsure in this way then their "language doesn't work. You can't express

your meaning very clearly. When I'm nervous I think my language can't happen!" (C2:118, Chinese). Other students do not seek out their tutors for help as this would cause them to feel shame, supposing that other students understand the lecture when they do not. They fear they will lose face if they reveal their shortcomings: "I don't want to expose my weakness" (C6:38, Chinese, Jia 2001:31; Cortazzi & Jin 1996). The majority of the students would rather ask their peers for help. This hesitancy to ask questions openly or seek clarification from lecturers hinders their learning experience. However, there appeared to be little understanding of these student perceptions by the U.K. lecturers who were interviewed.

Infallible and Unchallengeable

Most East Asian students respect their tutors and accept what they say uncritically:

In Taiwan we're so used to accepting everything that teachers taught us. Maybe we just lack the ability of critical thinking or we just get too used to that style of teaching. (C:12, Taiwanese)

We are just students and we don't have experience. How can we challenge and debate what the experts say? So we don't do that. In most of our essays we just quote what the experts say, but we do not challenge them. (C6:6, Chinese)

I'm used to just checking the information from the lecturer and that's the truth. (A29:27, Indonesian)

In China you have to be careful not to disagree with the lecturer In Chinese students' minds, the teacher always know more, so they tend to agree with the teacher. They are not encouraged to do critical thinking. They are too busy taking in the information. (B15:5, Chinese lecturer)

Some think of teachers as the 'font of all knowledge':

Because we think teachers are someone really intelligent. We not only ask them exam questions but also personal, because we expect them to know everything. (A10:341, Taiwanese)

The lecturer in Indonesia is like a guru. (A24:82, Indonesian)

According to another student, teachers may see themselves in this light also:

Chinese teachers think 'I am the teacher, what I tell you is the truth. So follow me and listen to me and do what I tell you to'. (B14:1, Chinese)

The teacher is therefore a model for knowledge and morality and as a result, students expect lecturers to always provide them with the 'correct' answers:

In China the teacher usually tells us what is right, what is wrong, how to do things right. 'You should do it this way'. (B11:30, Chinese)

In Chinese I try to find the right answer. You must feel that your answer is correct. I still can't understand here that the tutors say 'I don't know'. I know it is Western way, but I still feel I should know (...). In Taiwan we almost always are given an answer. I got used to be given an answer. (A10:506, 576, Taiwanese)

This is probably due to the fact that for many East Asian universities assessment is almost entirely through exams for which:

You must have the right answers. You can't have different answers. So you must have the same thinking as the teacher. So sometimes in the lectures we only listen to the teacher's opinion. Your opinion maybe is the wrong answer – you don't need to give it. (A9:43, Taiwanese)

What impressed one Taiwanese student about British lecturers, however, was that 'they admit they don't know' (A36:21, Taiwanese). This caused confusion at first:

At first I preferred the teacher to give me the right answer, because I think 'you are professional' (...). We prefer to follow teacher's ideas. We want to know the teacher's opinions. (A9:120, Taiwanese)

Once the East Asian students accept the notion that U.K. lecturers do not claim to know the answers to everything, it does not lessen the students' respect for their lecturers, or make them feel they are not knowledgeable in their subject, but rather that they have specialised, and not all-round, knowledge: "We know they specialise, so when we ask some questions, some just cannot answer" (A36: 21, Taiwanese).

The following quote describes the inner conflict a student experienced as she tried to come to terms with these different expectations:

I still find that in the class my tendency is not to criticise or to argue or to find out my personal point of view. I try to conform. I fear to challenge with my point of view. I tend to accept automatically everything. What the tutor says, I tell myself 'ah, yes, that is correct'. Here the lecturers say 'you don't have to agree', and I feel 'can we say that?'. (A10:152-163, Taiwanese)

According to the interviewees, school teachers in China maintain their hierarchical status through strict discipline and control, often by means of shaming those who deviate from the accepted behaviour, or who make mistakes:

At school if you are a poor student you will be laughed at the first time and the

second time. The third time you will be really afraid. (B1:63, Chinese)

In the Chinese style, the teacher controls the whole lesson (...). Talking in class can be viewed as not disciplined (...). In ancient times students bowed to their teachers or kneeled down. So teachers had complete authority over them during class time. If the teacher wants to punish them, no problem. Also if students in a class are well disciplined and listen to the lecturers very carefully, then the teacher will be viewed as an excellent teacher. But if students talk, then teachers will be viewed badly. (B3:11, Chinese)

As commented previously, some younger lecturers in Chinese institutions appear to prefer a lower power-distance relationship with their students, although it seems that the hierarchical relationship continues in the majority of higher education institutions. Strict, disciplinarian teaching is rare nowadays in British schools, and generally absent in universities. So during the first term of a masters course, as East Asian students come to terms with the different expectations, they begin to accept that in the U.K. students have ‘the right to make mistakes and that the tutor doesn’t have the right to judge’ them or humiliate them for asking ‘stupid’ questions (A36:11, Taiwanese).

Having drawn a distinction between East Asian and British students at masters level, it must however be recognised that stereotyping a wide spread of personalities, outlooks and behaviours in any culture is misleading and unhelpful (Cray & Mallory 1998, Hanson 1992:3, Tayeb 2001). As Munshi and McKie (2001) point out, stereotyping can be simplistic at best and racist at worst. Thus it was no surprise to find that one of the British students (the same student who had difficulty in acquiring critical thinking skills in her undergraduate course - see pages 137/138) disagreed with her five British peers on this issue of teacher infallibility. She had believed that her undergraduate lecturers were ‘always right, and you look up to them’. She discovered after a few months on the masters course, however, that ‘they are not always right – well, they may be right, but they are there to challenge- that’s their role’ (A46:26, British). The British student is Gujerati and speaks her mother tongue at home. Similar to many East Asian households, she has a culturally instilled trust and respect for her parents and teachers:

I’ve always been brought up to believe ‘just listen to your parents, they are right’. I’ll never do anything to go against my parents. (A45:28, British).

This raises an interesting question, as increasing numbers of minority ethnic British students study at university. In common with East Asian students, some of their cultural values may be

in contrast to academic cultural norms in U.K. universities, especially at masters level, although their schooling should have at least exposed them to the latter.

Vignette 2 of the questionnaire attempts to address this difference in perceptions of the teacher as the 'font of all knowledge', and of the notion that the 'accepted' knowledge being transmitted is the 'truth'.

Vignette 2

Through her reading, a student discovers some new theories which contradict what the lecturer is teaching. These new theories seem far more convincing to her than the lecturer's. What should she do?

1. Ignore the new theories because if the lecturer disagrees with them, then they must be incorrect.
2. Ignore the new theories because she does not want to disagree with the lecturer.
3. Further explore the new theories, but not use them in her assignment for this lecturer.
4. Further explore the new theories and if she still finds them more convincing, then introduce them in her assignments and show how they are more convincing than the theories taught by the lecturer.

84% of the British students selected option 4, which is closest to the expectations of the U.K. lecturers who were interviewed. This compares with only 57% of East Asian students in Southern England University, and 70% in Mid England University selecting this option (see Appendix XXIIIa), which indicates a significant difference in perception between East Asian and British students. However, the Chinese students in China University scored closer to the British, with 82% selecting option 4, probably for the same reasons as given for vignette 1 (see page 134). Using a one-way contingency table, the χ^2 test was conducted to compare the responses of the East Asian and British students. The χ^2 permitted me to reject the null hypothesis for Southern England ($p = 0.0005$). A measure of association (ϕ) is included as an indication of substantive significance (see Appendix XXIVc). The reason for China University students scoring close to British students has already been explained on page 135. This is the only vignette, however, where Mid England East Asian responses did not differ significantly from the British responses. This may have been to do with the language competence factor

(see page 135).

To summarise this section on the status and role of lecturers, East Asian students, on arrival in Britain, are likely to expect lecturers to take a personal interest, not only in their academic achievements, but also in their personal lives. The majority would expect a high power-distance relationship with lecturers, although a few would hope that the younger lecturers would want to socialise with them outside of the classroom.

The notion of contradicting or intellectually challenging lecturers is alien to many East Asian students. It may take weeks, sometimes months, for them to accept that U.K. lecturers welcome debate, and to feel comfortable challenging the ideas of authority figures and ‘experts’. Even after several months some students are still struggling with the notion that lecturers at masters level see their role as facilitators of learning, rather than as ‘gurus’, knowing all the answers.

This change in thinking from one set of norms to another, is a gradual process, or ‘journey’, which may span several weeks or even months, depending on age, personality, previous learning experience, and English language competence, amongst other factors. In some cases they may never come to terms with the differences in teaching and learning styles, preferring to keep to the familiar and well tried paths instead, and this, of course, has an impact on the development of their critical thinking skills.

5.2.2 Information Transmission

Typically, the East Asian transmission approach demands that large amounts of information be memorised and reproduced in exams (e.g. A10:101, 108 Taiwanese; A25:16, Chinese; A29:113, Indonesian; A1:280 Thai). Imparted knowledge is taken as ‘truth’ and not to be analysed or debated. The emphasis is on the teacher imparting a solid foundation of accepted knowledge, rather than concentrating on application and critical evaluation. A few of the East Asian students interviewed considered that the transmission approach is a better way to learn because less time is wasted ‘searching the wrong way’ (A9:129, Taiwanese). Students learn passively and are taught to accept what the text or the teacher says without questioning:

Students in Taiwan are really passive and just receive what the teacher gives them, so they don’t think whether what the teacher says is true. But here, it’s different (...). Both teachers and students play important roles in the classroom. (C9:2,30, Taiwanese).

Thus students are seen as receptors of information and are generally too busy absorbing this information to have time to reflect on it. As Paul (1993:viii) notes, the acquisition of knowledge in this educational environment is 'reduced to believing what those around us believe'.

A Chinese teacher, who had gained a doctorate in America and who therefore understood the differences in educational systems, explained that in China the ultimate purpose of teaching is to impart knowledge: 'class time is a very condensed time to receive knowledge', as compared to the West 'which tends to let students use the knowledge they have already mastered, to apply it' (B3: 5, Chinese lecturer). The East Asian students themselves agreed that they are not familiar with applying theory to practice, and that they therefore find this difficult (A9:53, Taiwanese; A5:45, Thai). Gardiner (1989) points out that in China the model of learning is an 'apprenticeship' in which creative application is postponed until knowledge and techniques are fully mastered and can provide the basis for originality.

Because less transmission, and more application, of information occurs in Western postgraduate courses, by necessity the students have to read and research extensively outside of class. As one Chinese student put it:

The difference between China and the U.K. is that in China we always focus on theory. In the U.K. we focus on how to think ... this is why at the beginning of this course Chinese students are not used to lecturers asking you to think. (A26:24, Chinese).

Large, lecture-style classes are suitable when the transmission approach is used, and so smaller seminar groups and tutorials are not utilised in many universities in East Asia. Cortazzi and Jin (2001) point out that some mainland Chinese teachers do manage to teach interactively in large classes, albeit within constraints. In contrast to this, however, a Taiwanese student described the normal scenario for her undergraduate classes:

We are always in a big class in Taiwan, at least sixty students, so there is not two-way communication. The tutor just talks for three hours and we keep silent, whether we understand or not. (A10:30, 92 Taiwanese).

There can be little debate or discussion in this type of transmission classroom:

Most Taiwanese teachers have an authoritative style and they won't give a lot of chances for students to speak out in class. (C8:6, Taiwanese)

In China the teacher gives knowledge to us. They don't discuss with us, they don't want your thoughts. (B8:11, Chinese)

The East Asian interviewees claimed that, having experienced the Western style of teaching in seminar discussions, they were in favour of this approach as they recognised and appreciated the value of student participation:

If somebody asks a question or if someone has an interesting idea or opinion, then the class becomes more interesting, of a higher quality. Maybe the lecturer knows a lot, but also the students know different things. So the quality is raised. (A37:16, Japanese)

Likewise, an Indonesian student who, had already completed a first masters degree in Australia, saw little benefit in Western universities employing transmission-style exams: “ exams are O.K. but don't ask us to reproduce again from books, but give us a question like case studies which requires us to think” (A24:122, Indonesian).

Synergy of Eastern and Western Methodologies

Some East Asian students and teachers believe that a combination of both styles of teaching would be best for them, providing a solid foundation of knowledge, together with the opportunity to creatively think about the information: “The Chinese teachers need to give us the foundation” whilst the Western style “can enrich our horizon” (B18:4, Chinese). So, although they appreciate the freedom to think, some interviewees would prefer their courses in the West to include more transmission-style teaching, with more information imparted in lectures and in handouts. Some would like the seminars and tutorials to concentrate more on clarifying the lectures, and the majority want ‘clearer’ guidelines from teachers as regards assignments (A 24:31, A9:34-38, A2:79, Taiwanese; A4:43, A1:128-135, Thai). It needs to be said at this point that many of these comments have also been echoed by undergraduate British students (Court 2003). However, all but one of the British interviewees valued highly the emphasis on autonomous learning at masters level, and indeed one of them claimed she ‘loved’ that aspect of the degree (A42:33). Nevertheless, this appreciation comes with a caveat: ‘providing there is also adequate tutorial provision’ (A42:33, A45:30, British) i.e. they also want mentoring-style support from lecturers when they need it. These preferences have philosophical and time implications, however. Firstly, they would necessitate a longer masters course, and secondly, transmission teaching is in conflict with the post-graduate emphasis in the West on autonomous learning, and many U.K. lecturers would reject such changes on philosophical grounds.

To summarise this section on information transmission, the data suggest that education in East Asia traditionally does not encourage free thinking and personal interpretation of the information taught in the classroom. Instead, learners have relied on the assurance that all the necessary information for passing exams is transmitted in class, and through the subject textbook. Some interviewees found it difficult to make the transition to a more autonomous style of learning, whilst others welcomed the opportunity to think more freely.

5.2.3 Resources: Information availability

In many East Asian universities, because of adherence to the transmission style of teaching, and because it is often quite difficult getting hold of academic resources (A24:14, Taiwanese), texts are very restricted, often to one official text book per course. Established theory and accepted authors and texts appear to be authoritative in East Asian universities (“The book was to be believed”), and this accepted knowledge, which is unchallengeable, is often presented in a single course text book:

In China, no matter what the course, we have a fixed text book so during the whole term we are learning the one book. So in the classes we are listening to the teacher, taking notes, take exams designed by the teacher based on the text book and the notes we took in class. (C4:2, Chinese).

A good student just needs to read the main text and understand it and the lecturer’s notes. (A9:103, Taiwanese)

Interviewer: Are you expected to read many books in Indonesia?

Participant: No. Usually we have one text book for each course (A29:102, Indonesia)

When I first arrived here I was very surprised that we had no text books. You have to buy yourself or borrow from the library. Sometimes I don’t know which ones I had to buy and which ones I had to borrow. (C5:10, Chinese).

These text books contain the official view on all subjects, and teachers and students have to publicly agree with what is in the book, even if they may disagree privately. The alternative is costly:

Interviewer: How are books selected in China?

Participant: The government selects the books

Interviewer: And you can’t disagree with them?

Participant: No. I gave up my post-graduate studies because of that reason. I can’t agree with the government and I can’t force myself to memorise those kinds of things.

(B3: 80-83, Chinese lecturer)

In their undergraduate courses, many East Asian students appear to be provided with books that “all say the same thing, not different opinions” (A39:23, Chinese). As a consequence, East Asian students in the U.K find that “to analyse or critically evaluate what the scholars say is difficult”(A37:34, Japanese).

The extent to which students are expected to read extensively is linked to the availability and range of library resources. Only two of the East Asian students interviewed found no difference in the library skills expected of students in the U.K. and in their home university, and both these interviewees had been undergraduates in top universities in Shanghai. They said they had read extensively back home, one claiming that she had skimmed five or so books a week and had used her library extensively to borrow books. Moreover, she thought her British library inferior to that of her Chinese university (A20: 288, 297-309, Chinese).

However, the majority of the East Asian interviewees told a different story. Many students claimed to have rarely used libraries back home, except as quiet places to study (A1: 323 Thai, A32:89, Chinese). A Taiwanese student explained that “In Taiwan, few students will go to library to find books on our course or subject” (A10:109, Taiwanese). This statement was typical: “We can’t use the resources in the U.K. library at first, because we don’t know how to use it.” (B18:28, Chinese). On the other hand, students in East Asia are increasingly using the internet to resource their studies.

Many said they were unfamiliar with academic journals, had never read or had access to English journals before commencing the masters course, and therefore found this a daunting new area to face (A30:183, Indonesian, A1:322, Thai, A31:21, Chinese). Some students also thought that they were not skilled in note-taking from texts, especially in English (A21:390-400, Chinese). The notion that only certain theories are recognised as acceptable is reflected in vignette 3 of the questionnaire:

Vignette 3

A lecturer is teaching about several different theories about effective management techniques in an organisation. Some of these theories oppose each other. To gain the highest marks in your assignment should you:

1. Find out which theory the lecturer thinks works best, and concentrate on that one
2. Discuss all the theories, but make sure you give most attention and credit to the theory which the lecturer thinks works best
3. Discuss all the theories equally, but not give your own opinion about which one is best.
4. Discuss all theories equally and give your own honest opinion about which one works best, even if this disagrees with the lecturer's viewpoint

55% of the East Asian students in Southern England University, and 56% in Mid England University selected option 4, which is the option most in line with the expectations of the interviewed U.K lecturers'. This compares with 84% of the British students choosing this option. The responses for China University were again closer to the British responses at 78% (see Appendix XXIIIa). Using a one-way contingency table, the χ^2 test was conducted to compare the responses of the East Asian and British students. The χ^2 permitted me to reject the null hypothesis for Southern England ($p = 0.0005$) and Mid England ($p = 0.009$) students. A measure of association (ϕ) is included as an indication of substantive significance. These results are reported in Appendix XXIVc.

In summary, East Asian students often expect set textbooks for their masters course, which would contain the official viewpoint or theories, and which they would not be expected to challenge or critically evaluate, but rather accept as 'truth'. They also expect teachers to hold set views, following the official line, which students need to agree with. As a result, students arriving in the U.K. are faced with uncertainty as they are provided with a plethora of academic ideas and contradictory perspectives that they are expected to independently evaluate. As they 'journey' through the year, students cope with, and accept, this sense of uncertainty to varying degrees. This issue of uncertainty is explored next.

5.2.4 A Sense of Certainty: Guidance from Lecturers

The need to know one is 'right' is very strong for many East Asian students:

For Chinese people if we know, like a wise man, what is right, then it gives us confidence that what we study is right. So critical evaluation makes everything doubtful. You don't know which way is right, what to believe. You cannot find which direction to go, which books to study. (B5:60, Chinese lecturer)

The freedom they are given in the U.K. in selecting what to read and how to answer an assignment, can be overwhelming:

They don't know what to do because suddenly they are given so much freedom. You are free to do anything, but you haven't tried before (...) frightening, so uncertain. (A40:34, Chinese)

Students may feel they need to read everything in their subject in order to have the confidence to engage in critical evaluation:

Participant: [critical evaluation] is too huge a task (...), it's hard to review all the literature – it's impossible.

Interviewer: Do you think lecturers expect you to review all the literature?

Participant: No, of course they do not ask us to do that. But in my case, I would like to. I would like to grasp everything in this field so that I can have a sense of certainty. If I have only a small part of the literature, I still feel uncomfortable. I mean I'm not quite sure whether what I write is right or wrong.

(C10:28, Chinese).

This need to know that one's opinion is the 'right one' is linked to the fear of making mistakes and a feeling of discomfort in having to comment before having a sense of mastery of the subject:

before I do it I think 'how many mistakes will I make?' or if I'm not sure about something or think I'm going to make a lot of mistakes, maybe I won't do that. (C3:64, Chinese)

Critical thinking then can be a risky exercise: "You take some adventure, some risks, if you do strong critical thinking" (C6:14, Chinese). Financial investment in the course also leads to risk aversion. There is a strong fear of failure for many:

We spend a lot of money studying here (...). I think if I use different ideas the lecturer will fail me. (A24:48, 59, Chinese)

I have to answer what the teacher taught us or if we write something else he will fail us. (A1:292, Thai)

Some students, however, even in the first term were beginning to believe that it was safer taking risks in the U.K. than back home (C2:84, Chinese, C6:16, Chinese). This may be due to them gaining more confidence, or more 'emotional security' as Siegel puts it (1988:41). It would appear, then, that the extent to which students avoid uncertainty depends on the environment (Chapman and Antoniou 1994, Sondergaard 1994:451, Masakazu 1994:14 – see

page 35), and that East Asian students are more willing to take academic risks in the U.K. once they are convinced of the acceptability of doing so.

As long as students continue to seek this sense of certainty, they expect Western lecturers to give them the same level of explicit guidance they were accustomed to back home. Hence, students often want very clear and definite feedback from lecturers on assignment drafts before submitting the final version. If they find that different lecturers have different standards of marking, or lecturers give different messages to them about their work, then they quickly lose confidence:

This makes me feel bad because I don't know if I am doing the right thing. I feel panic (...). Asian students like confirmation and we feel comfortable if we get answers to our questions. (A31:17, Chinese).

So they do not like it when lecturers tell them to 'go back and think about it [the essay] some more, and then come back to me'. A Taiwanese student explained:

You must feel that your answer is correct. I still can't understand here that tutors say 'I don't know'. It's all right – the Western way - but I still feel I should know. (A10:506, Taiwanese)

Another student described her panic at the beginning of the masters course when she perceived that “nobody supervises me or tells me what to do”. Even one of the high achieving East Asian students did not like this perceived lack of explicit guidance from the lecturers:

According to my own experience, the Western teachers give students uncertainty. Non-Western teachers usually give you everything explicitly, directly. Personally speaking I prefer the Chinese teachers' way. Maybe all Chinese students prefer the Chinese teachers' way. (C10:4, Chinese)

This student went on to say that he could not “understand why British lecturers do not give me the sense of certainty” when they ‘knew everything’. Similarly, the search for a clear conclusion in any discussion seemed of paramount importance to many East Asian students, again because this would give a sense of certainty:

Here the lecturer [does not] draw a clear conclusion, because often it is controversial. I like discussions that have clear conclusions. If it ends with no right or wrong then we feel very confused. We really like if the teacher gives us the answer! We can remember it. We want to end it, we don't want to continue, not knowing. (C6:52, Chinese)

According to Hofstede's (1980) study, uncertainty accepting cultures, such as the U.K. are

more tolerant of behaviour and opinions differing from their own, and they view personal risk as more acceptable. For East Asian cultures, however, where uncertainty avoidance is high, reticence to speak out, may have more to do with feeling unsafe and not wanting to stand out as different:

If you are in a strange circumstance, first of all you want make sure you are safe. So you want to listen to other people's opinions, you want to watch how they behave. Then you learn to behave like them because everyone wants to be like others, because that feels safe. (B4:36, Chinese lecturer).

According to an older Chinese lecturer, a lot seems to relate to risk-taking:

Traditional mentality of the Chinese is to be safe and to be stable. To conform. They don't want to take risks. They want to be safe or take the middle way. They don't want to go to extremes. It is interesting, though, that a lot of young people are beginning to change. (B10:46, Chinese lecturer)

This last statement suggests that attitudes may be changing in some East Asian countries. Sondergaard (1994:451-2) points out that risk avoidance varies depending on the political and environmental stability of a society. This reluctance to take risks seems to be particularly strong when talking with strangers. This is particularly relevant at the beginning of a masters course, when all the other students and the lecturers are strangers. This Chinese lecturer went on to say that "if they are friendly with the teacher, then they would feel freer to speak. Relaxed chats about families, interests etc. over a cup of tea would help students not be afraid". Social events would also help to build relationships and trust, which would in turn encourage them to be braver in speaking out in front of their colleagues and lecturers (B5:69, Chinese lecturer). It appears, then, from the data, that a lot depends on the personality of the students and how motivated and prepared they are to experience and face the challenge of the unknown. Their willingness to take risks depends a good deal also on how much encouragement they receive from lecturers. Some pick up quite early on lecturers' encouragement to take risks orally, and will therefore be prepared to engage with risk in face-to-face discussion. However, written coursework is normally assessed cumulatively, and so any risk taking will have an impact on the final result. This factor may over-ride lecturers' encouragement to take risks.

In summary, then, the extent to which students are prepared to experiment with this new approach to learning depends on how 'safe' they feel in doing so. However, willingness to take risks and cope with uncertainty and ambiguity is a pre-requisite for 'strong' critical thinking (Paul 1983:23). It would appear from the data that the fear of failing and making mistakes is

deeply ingrained in many East Asian students and for some, a change in attitude would require much testing of the system before they can trust it. Warm, accepting relationships with lecturers help build this sense of safety.

5.2.5 Assessment

In the East Asian cultures the majority of assessment is through exams in which the information taught in class is reproduced (A1:469, Thai), even to the extent that “for some exams some lecturers wanted us to write the lecturers’ own words in the answers” (A29:110, Indonesian). In contrast, U.K. postgraduate exams generally require critical thinking and not just reproduction of facts: “Your exams are more flexible, and creativity is important” (A21:175, Chinese). Many masters programmes in the U.K., however, place the assessment emphasis on assignments and coursework than on exams.

Many of the interviewees expressed continuing confusion over the marking criteria in the U.K., mainly because they were not familiar with formalised assessment criteria (e.g. A29:197, Indonesia, A36:77, Taiwanese). They suggested that lecturers could help dispel this confusion by showing them examples of assignments together with the assessment comments and marks. According to one British lecturer, a top Chinese student received thorough tutorial feedback on his first assignment, and yet in his interview this same student claimed:

I was still really confused about the standards of marking the assignments; still not sure what the teacher is expecting of me. I think this is very typical of Chinese students. They want examples. For example, if you give me an assignment which you mark A, I know what A is. You don’t have to explain to me that we have criteria which says ‘Clear Structure’. With examples of A we know what is expected of us and we know how we can do it to get a good mark. (C10:18, Chinese).

Many of the students similarly requested that exemplars be made available early on in the course so that they could understand the assessment criteria more easily:

(...) particularly examples of descriptive writing compared to critical writing, so I can compare by myself and understand. I don’t want to think I am being critical but am still staying at the descriptive stage. (A39:19, Chinese)

However, when the interviewer asked the previous student “And if you saw three essays, all marked A, and they were all very different, how would you feel then?”, he admitted he would again feel uncertain. One of the British lecturers interviewed thought that although showing examples can be very useful, there is a danger that students may over-rely on these models, and

that they would have to realise that good essays vary in structure, style and originality:

There is a great desire to find this formula (...). The danger is, of course, that giving models put restraints on people. (C14:4, British lecturer)

Nevertheless, this same lecturer thought that 'most East Asian students are usually creative enough, once they have the basic model, to develop out from this'. Good examples of critically argued journal articles can be another way lecturers can help students understand expectations:

The lecturers give us examples of articles, and when I read them I catch how they evaluate some theory and how they compare. So lots of articles have given me some hints. (A38:48, Korean)

It is not as though assessment criteria are very explicit in their home universities. By all accounts they are not, and many East Asian students do not receive explicit feedback on their essays (A29:200, Indonesian, A31:8, Chinese).

Interviewer: What are the assessment criteria like in Taiwan?

Participant: I think it is quite personal. We don't really have assessment criteria.

Interviewer: How do they know what mark to give?

Participant: They never give us criteria. They never discuss with us about that.

(A36:76-79, Taiwanese)

Indeed, assessments would often appear to be subjective and not necessarily based on an individual's merit. One Chinese student claimed that for her degree course in China 'I got a good mark but probably only because the teacher liked me a lot. I don't think would get a good mark based on the criteria in the U.K.'" (A31:4, Chinese). This can also work in reverse, and students who do not conform will be marked down, regardless of their capabilities (A12:72, Taiwanese).

Lecturer-student relationships appear to have a strong bearing on marks in East Asia, and lecturers view their role as assessors quite differently from Western lecturers:

If a Chinese teacher has to fail a student they are feeling very sorry for them. Lots of Chinese teachers struggle with this because we have very good relationships with our students. Some students try to keep good relationships with their lecturers in order to get benefits from them, like better marks. (B3:39, 51 Chinese lecturer)

These special relationships between lecturers and students support Hampden-Turner and

Trompenaars' theory (2000) that some cultures, like the Chinese, are 'particularist' as opposed to 'universalist', in that there is ample scope for exceptions to the rule, personal commitments and bending of the rules. In contrast, the Western tradition in education is for non-favouritism. The general view of the interviewed students was that 'lecturers here [in the U.K.] are honest about the mark and they are objective' (A29:193, Indonesian). The common practice of second marking, they say, makes it even more objective.

Although the entry requirements for East Asian universities may be very competitive and the failure rate is high at the entry stage, once accepted onto a degree course, the failure rate would appear to be low, with lecturers providing guidance and support to students to ensure that the vast majority do eventually pass: "For assignments it is very rare to fail [in China]. 100% is the top mark, 80% is a high mark. The lowest mark is 60% or 65%" (A30:41, Chinese). The students interviewees claimed that back home it had been unnecessary to receive any feedback on assignments once they had been marked, because they had already received maximum guidance beforehand in re-drafting their essays, until they were guaranteed a pass:

As a teacher he should try his best to help her. The teacher should let the student pass, then should have the student correct their mistakes before the final date. (B1:123, Chinese)

Lecturers tend to take on a parental, mentoring role rather than an assessor role, and a lecturer who has failing students is seen as not 'caring' about them:

The teacher's responsibility is to guide the student and to show him or her the correct way, not just as a judge, but as a father. He should tell the student which parts need correcting or improving. (B1: 124, Chinese)

At masters level in East Asian countries, there is even less chance of a student failing:

Interviewer: How difficult is it to become a masters student in China?

Participant: It's very difficult to pass the entrance examination. But when you are in, you are free.

Interviewer: So if you work hard as a masters student in China, can you still fail?

Participant: No chance!

(B1:117-120, Chinese)

As a consequence, once East Asian students realise the importance of working independently on assignments in the U.K., they tend to attach more importance on achieving a good mark than on attending regular seminars, especially towards the hand-in deadline:

As the course goes on we understand that the most important part is the

assignments, not to learn, but to write essays. The tutors always encourage you to learn, but the students understand that it does not depend on how much you learn, it depends on the essays. So in the final two or three sessions the students simply don't show up. I think the tutors understand the situation. (A33:63, Chinese)

However, an Indonesian student who had experienced a dramatic change in his outlook whilst studying for a first masters degree in Australia, placed more importance on learning than on achieving high marks in assignments:

I found it interesting in Australia because the students set their own goals – the marks were not everything (...) whereas if I compare with Asian background, the mark is *everything* to them. (A24:4-10, Indonesian).

This attitude, however, was not common amongst the interviewees, and it reflects the fact that this particular student had already been engaged in the critical thinking process for eighteen months before commencing his masters course in the U.K. For him, the journey was not commencing, but rather continuing. Vignette 4 of the questionnaire addresses this issue of the lecturer's role and responsibilities in assessing assignments:

Vignette 4

A student showed her assignment outline plan to her lecturer in a tutorial. He said the plan looked O.K. The student then wrote the whole essay and handed it in for marking. Later, the student discovered that the lecturer had failed the assignment. Do you think:

1. The lecturer had a duty to make sure the student passed the assignment, and that the lecturer should have spent more time helping her get it right.
2. The lecturer did not have the responsibility to make sure the student passed. It was ultimately the student's responsibility alone, and she had to achieve the pass herself.

This vignette shows a clear distinction between the British students' responses and those of the East Asian students. 76% of the British students selected option 2, which is the option closest to the expectations of the interviewed British lecturers. Only 36% of the East Asian students in Southern England University, 42% in Mid England University and 48% of the students in China University selected option 2 (see Appendices XXIIIa, XXIIIc). The χ^2 test was

conducted to compare the responses of the East Asian and British students. The χ^2 permitted me to reject the null hypothesis for Southern England ($p = 0.0005$), Mid England ($p = 0.002$), and China university ($p = 0.002$) students. A measure of association (ϕ) is included as an indication of substantive significance (see Appendix XXIVc). It would appear, then, that it is commonly assumed by East Asian students that lecturers have a responsibility to ensure that they pass their assignments. This is in contrast to the perceptions of the majority of British respondents, who see it primarily as the student's responsibility to achieve the right standard. The evidence suggests that it is important for U.K. lecturers to explain these differences in expectations clearly to East Asian students before assessment takes place.

Whilst discussing vignette 4 with interviewees, it emerged repeatedly that students wanted more individual tutorial time to discuss their assignments (e.g. A2:398, Thai, A21:330, Chinese). Also that lecturers should explicitly signpost when assignments are weak if seen before the hand-in date, 'it is very important to give the correct message to the student' (A32:66, Chinese).

[In China] if the lecturer says 'it's brilliant' then it's brilliant. But here, if a lecturer says it's brilliant you have to go back independently and develop more. Here it depends how you develop it. (A32:68, Chinese)

To summarise this section on assessment, then, the data suggest that many East Asian students are unfamiliar with the U.K.'s emphasis on individual student responsibility for their grades. Moreover, they are surprised that in the West the assessing role of lecturers is more dominant than their mentoring role. From personal experience, I have found that this is reversed in thesis supervision, where mentoring/guidance through a series of re-draftings is the norm. There may be underlying philosophical reasons for this, but I suspect it is more to do with more individual tutorial time being allocated.

Formative assignments

One strategy used by some of the U.K. lecturers interviewees to provide adequate assessment feedback and guidance to those students unfamiliar with the British system, is to include a formative assignment very early on in the first term. This can either be assessed or non-assessed. Here a lecturer explains what motivated him to introduce a formative assessment into his course:

I was very disappointed at the quality of work and the depth of work being

submitted in assignments that were completed after my course had finished. So there was no possibility of feedback to the students or for me to feel whether they were making progress or not, whether they were struggling with the subject matter. So I thought I've got to understand this a little bit earlier. (A 5: 20, British lecturer)

This lecturer provides his students with individual written feedback on two formative essays in the first term as well as group discussions afterwards on good and poor answers to the questions he had set. As a result of this mid-course feedback, he has observed that the students gain a better grasp of academic expectations at masters level. The downside, of course, is the extra time and marking involved, for which there is no official allocation. Although it has proved to be a very successful strategy, he could only see other lecturers adopting it if the extra workload is recognised "because marking is not formally part of the staff loading model" (A5: 24).

The above section has dealt with teaching styles, and has illustrated that there are significant differences between the perceptions of many East Asian and British students and lecturers. These concern pedagogic issues, such as the role of lecturers, the emphasis on information transmission versus evaluation, the extent to which scholarship can be challenged, uncertainty avoidance, and assessment procedures.

In order for East Asian students to come to terms with, and adapt to, these differences during their masters course, they must first of all recognise and understand them. This awareness is a gradual process, which is aided when lecturers themselves appreciate the issues involved. Students suggest that comprehensive verbal and written explanations, together with other means of illustration e.g. exemplar assignments, are necessary if East Asian masters students are to adapt sufficiently quickly to achieve their potential.

Of course, the bigger question arises of whether the norms of the U.K. higher educational system should themselves undergo adaptation to accommodate what the interviewees describe as 'the middle way'. This is a synergy of Eastern and Western methodologies and roles. Should U.K. lecturers adopt a more caring and mentoring role, for instance? These issues will be discussed further on pages 231-234.

5.3 Second Language Challenges

According to Paul (1993, 1994), a critical thinker will engage in both critical reading and critical writing. The data indicate that many East Asian students are not practised in the skills critical reading or critical writing in their mother tongue. Given this, it follows that it must be even more difficult to acquire these skills in a second language. This section considers some of the frustrations and struggles that East Asian students experience in their attempts to acquire critical literacy skills during their masters course.

Before discussing this, however, a brief comment on the language recruitment requirements for overseas students is necessary. Some East Asian students, who have not attained the required IELTS or TOEFL score (see Appendix VII) required for their masters course attend an English Language School in England prior to entry onto a masters course, and as a pre-requisite to being accepted. Others, depending on their language test score, are either invited or required to attend a university-run Pre-masters language / study skills course. East Asian students are normally recruited onto masters courses if they have attained an overall IELTS score of 6.5, some, however, are accepted with IELTS 6.0, although the data suggest that these meet with real difficulties in oral discussions, written assignments and understanding lectures.

5.3.1 Critical Reading Skills

Critical reading is a challenge for many East Asian students, and their difficulties may be due to a time issue, a lack of critical reading skills, language, or a combination of these. Student interviewees identified time as being a major factor. Because their reading English is often slower than that of non-Western students, they tend not to read as much:

I can read very quickly in Chinese. If I skim in Chinese ... I can look quickly at one page and I know what it is about. But in English I have to read paragraph by paragraph. (C7:29, Chinese)

Consequently, they spend most of their time just trying to understand the material they are reading (C38:36, Korean), and have no time to reflect on it:

I really don't have time to challenge articles and always be asking 'why?'. I have to read and arrange my references, that's the basic thing I have to do. I know it takes time to critically think, but this term I do not have time to reflect on my learning. (A39:17, Chinese)

However, it appears that some of the difficulty is due to confusion about intensive and selective reading. Some thought they had to thoroughly read everything on the reading list (C9:40

Taiwanese, C5:12, Chinese), and this led to worry and anxiety.

One Chinese student said that it was only by the end of the first term, that he and his Chinese classmates fully appreciated that they were not expected to read whole books, but only relevant chapters (A33:16, Chinese). Not being practised in the techniques of selective reading, students felt they needed more guidance from the lecturers in the first term:

The tutor told me you don't have to read the whole book, you just need to choose some chapters, but I don't know which chapters are useful for this topic. It looks all helpful to me, because every chapter [heading] has one or two words related to my assignment. (C6:60, Chinese).

Less emphasis is placed on extensive reading in many degree courses in East Asian universities. Instead, intensive reading, memorising the course text book, and listening to lectures are emphasised as effective ways to understanding (Watkins & Biggs 1996, 2001):

In England they think I can study by myself and I have to read a lot of books. But in Hong Kong my teacher will give me a lot of knowledge without books. So I just listen. (A26:31, Chinese)

When extra reading *was* expected in their home universities, the lecturers would give specific guidance on reading, as this Chinese lecturer, who was herself currently studying for a masters degree in China, explains:

In China, for any subject you won't have a huge list of reading to do. Even for masters essays you'll only have three or four books at most. Usually the professor will tell you 'Next time you come you should have read chapter so and so'. But if a lecturer recommends a whole book I wouldn't know which bits to read. (B15:23, Chinese lecturer)

I need the teachers to guide me through the readings. (C8:52, Taiwanese)

5.3.2 Critical Writing Skills

For many East Asian students commencing a masters course, writing extensively in English is a new experience. The longest English text that some interviewees had ever written was no more than two hundred words, and the essays had been descriptive and not evaluative (e.g. A9:9-19, A2:281, Taiwanese). Moreover, the structuring of English discourse is very different from discourse in their mother tongue (see page 82).

Linear Writing Using Cohesive Devices

In high context cultures (Hall 1976), the meaning is negotiated through using inference and

implicitness and there is therefore more reader/listener responsibility to interpret the meaning, so that “one does not spell out everything, but leaves the ‘unspoken’ to the listeners” (Gao & Ting Toomey 1998:37). The interviewees compared the ambiguity and implicitness in Chinese writing with the explicit, directness of Western academic writing:

It’s to do with thinking, and the link words. I think in Chinese, everything is implicit. You can get the message behind the language (...). There are a lot of ambiguities, you have to sort it out yourself by reading the whole article.
(C8:18, Chinese)

Consequently, Western literary explicitness may be seen as unsophisticated in high context East Asian cultures (Gee 1994, Hall & Hall 1990:6). Inference is traditional in Chinese literature and poetry:

Chinese language is better used in literature, poems, rather than in argumentative articles. Chinese poets are always trying to imply things, rather than telling things directly (...). Asian culture believes that a higher level of communication is communication without language. Maybe that’s influence from Buddhism. (B4:14,16 Chinese lecturer)

It is also traditional in Japan, another high context culture, to use an inferential, ‘restricted code’ (Bernstein 1964):

In Japan we are not required to follow arguments through. We can write more randomly. This is because of the language difference, and also context difference, high and low context cultures. Britain is low context compared to Japan and you need more explicit information here. But in Japan we don’t need to express ourselves explicitly. So lecturers can infer what I imply; just simply some ideas in the assignment and lecturers can infer them. All I have to do is just imply. But here I have to form strong linkages to the point of result. Nobody infers my ideas. (A34:68, Japanese)

Similarly, in Taiwan:

Interviewer: What is the difference between the Taiwanese style of writing and the British style?

Participant: The biggest difference lies in the linkage. You link very closely, we are allowed to have broader themes. Here it is very focused – I won’t say narrow – but very linear. But in Chinese it is like a branch. Chinese tutors assume we understand the link, why we have put it in the assignment. But here tutors question me about that. They wonder if I can see the link.

(A36:65, Taiwanese)

So whilst East Asian students use their traditional techniques of inference in their writing,

British lecturers expect meanings to be expressed explicitly and not to have to guess at what is meant. To compensate, East Asian students often make the mistake of writing in an elaborate code of English, believing that this is academically more acceptable:

One of my Chinese students was telling me she was trying to find the most elaborate academic word: 'Is this long enough? Is this academic enough?' (C14:38, British lecturer)

U.K. lecturers, on the other hand, often prefer simple, message-clear English. Low context, Western writing is more overtly linear in its logic and more explicit so that, as Foucault claims, a text can be unambiguous in its meaning and de-contextualised (1973:49):

In Western style writing when you want to write about cause and effect, you will write about the cause first and then the effect, or if you want to say something about the effect then you will state clearly what's the cause. It's linear. But in Chinese sometimes you just write about the effect. The readers themselves think about the cause ... the readers will get the hidden message behind the language - they will know what are the causes by just looking at the effects themselves. In Western style writing you have to state it very clearly and everything has to be in logical sequence. (C8:29, Chinese)

A Taiwanese student at the end of her masters course described Western linear logic in this way:

It's just like a line – you go from one paragraph to the next paragraph. You don't have to think by yourself. You are absolutely sure what this assignment wants to say. (A36:75, Taiwanese)

It would appear, then, that the U.K. and East Asia use opposite academic frameworks. In the West, explicit writing is expected and no room is left for inference, whilst lecturers' guidance and instructions are more open and allow for personal interpretation, uncertainty and risk taking. East Asian cultures, in contrast, use inference and ambiguity in writing, and yet lecturers' instructions and guidance are explicit, unambiguous, and encourage conformity rather than risk taking.

Link words, or transitionals, play an important role in cohesively developing the linear logic in English. One of the most useful experiences for a Taiwanese student in learning how to think and write in a linear manner was being paired with an American student for a project:

I had to do a presentation with [a native speaker]. She linked [ideas] all the time. I learned from her, and I grasped some concepts about linkage that I have never fully understood. I had no problem at all with the next assignment and got a good grade. (A36:53, Taiwanese)

The difficulty with cohesive markers kept recurring in the interviews as East Asian languages do not use similar cohesive devices to link ideas between paragraphs:

I can write a paragraph on one idea, and then another paragraph on another idea, but I don't know how to combine them together. And the link between them is very important (...). This is a very big problem for us.
(C8:16, Taiwanese)

When I write something and read it again it seems like I'm jumping from paragraph to paragraph. (C3:44, Chinese)

For this reason, some students prefer the idea of using a lot of headings and sub-headings in essays:

Interviewer: So do you know what is needed to bridge the paragraphs?

Participant: I think it should be sentences, but I'm not sure. When I read what I wrote I'd like to divide them into separate parts and give them all sub titles. I think that would be better than putting them into one whole essay.

(C3:50, Chinese)

When they do start using cohesive markers they tend to overuse them, as this lecturer observes:

Once they discover that the linking is important and that there should be tight linking in argument and ideas and flow, then they tend to overuse these overt markers. (C14:4, British lecturer).

In summary, then, there would seem to be some confusion for East Asian students over how explicit an academic writer needs to be when presenting an argument. The data suggest that their traditional literary preference for inference and understatement is not understood or appreciated by some U.K. lecturers.

Focusing on the Assignment Question

Another skill closely associated with academic critical writing is the ability to critically analyse assignment questions. Postgraduate assignment questions in the U.K. invariably contain a debate or alternative viewpoints in the actual wording of the title. Lecturers expect students to thoroughly analyse the wording and to address the question explicitly, referring to the argument throughout the assignment. East Asian students, on the other hand, often have the perception that the assignment question is to be regarded 'as a departure point for their own thinking' or as a 'jumping off point, not something which needs to be kept in mind all the time' (C14:8, 24, British lecturer). Another British lecturer commented that the understanding of some of her

students was ‘that you look at the question and you make it into a research question’ (C12:14, British lecturer). In other words, they interpret the assignment question to mean what they want it to, instead of answering it specifically. This more open approach to assignment questions is viewed by some students as more creative and original, which they believe will earn them more marks.

Translating from Mother Tongue

There are other writing difficulties facing East Asian Students. For instance, some students with lower English competency translate their thinking from mother tongue to English when writing assignments:

Normally we will use Chinese to think, but in English it is a bit slow. I must translate. (A9:21, Taiwanese)

Interviewer: When you have an assignment question, do you first of all try to understand it in Chinese or English?

Participant : The first impression is in Chinese. I try to translate every word, every sentence.

Interviewer: Do you write it out in Chinese?

Participant : No. I just try to work it out in Chinese in my mind. For every paragraph I think it through in Chinese and then try to translate it to English. Even when studying English text books, we try to translate it back to Chinese.

Interviewer: Is it difficult to translate it word for word?

Participant: Difficult because of the word order

(A9: 78-84, Taiwanese)

As a result of having to translate, it is sometimes difficult for the students to grasp the focus of the assignment question. Those with poorer English tend to think through the structure and arguments in mother tongue and then translate their thoughts into English. It requires a high competency in the two languages, however, to be able to switch in this way:

When my English was still not so good, I tried to translate. But I found it impossible because the systems of language are completely different.
(A34:12, Japanese).

As this Taiwanese student explains, it is also very time consuming to keep translating:

I have to switch and it takes time. Now it is an English concept and then it is a Chinese concept, and I have to come back again. (A10:411, Taiwanese)

Those with better English tend to think in English when writing assignments, which is more

efficient: “If I find information in English it is easier to think in English” (A20:367, Chinese). A Japanese student explained ‘If I think something in Japanese, it should be written down in Japanese. But when I think something in English, it’s easy to write it in English’ (A34:19, Japanese). As their English improves, they find that only the occasional translation of a word is necessary and students develop their own strategies to deal with this problem. One student explained how she made a decision to think only in English when writing, and if she didn’t know an English word, she would write it in Chinese. Later, when she had finished writing, she would look these Chinese words up in a bilingual dictionary. This allowed her to continue with the flow of her thoughts without having to constantly stop to look up a dictionary (A10:400, Taiwanese).

Language, culture and thought are so linked that it is not only the language systems which are different, but also the thinking, values and norms behind the language (Kulick & Stroud 1993, Scollon & Scollon 1981), and so translation is further complicated :

I can talk in English about my ideas, but if you ask me to write in Chinese I cannot find the characters to express my English opinion. (A32:83, Chinese)

Western-style critical thinking and argumentation seems to be particularly difficult to translate into mother tongue for East Asian students:

When you think in Chinese the concepts are already confined only to one side of the argument. It is very hard to confront with ourselves. It is a struggle to write. (A10:495, Taiwanese)

For those with lower competence in English, then, the need to translate into mother tongue slows down and complicates their reading and writing tasks. So much time is spent on trying to understand texts and to express their thoughts clearly in English, that very little attention can be given to the more demanding language and cognitive requirements of critical evaluation and argumentation. This presents a strong argument for recruiting onto masters courses only those students who can cope with the second language demands of the work.

Thus the data suggest that in order for East Asian students to develop critical writing skills in English, they must first demonstrate high competency in their second language, so that they do not have to rely on translation whilst reading or writing. Literary strategies for linking ideas and paragraphs explicitly in English is a challenging notion for East Asian students. It requires a good competency in English as well as an understanding of the value placed on explicitness

and linear logic in Western academic writing. Moreover, their cultural preference for inference may appear to U.K. lecturers to suggest a lack in critical thinking skills.

In order to engage in academic critical writing at masters level, the writer needs to have already acquired the basic tools, or skills, of academic writing, including library information retrieval skills; the ability to argue cohesively and explicitly, evaluating various points of view; and skills in selective reading (skimming and scanning) as well as notetaking. The interview data suggest, however, that many East Asian students have had limited experience of, and have therefore not acquired, these academic literary skills in their mother tongue, and thus find it difficult to acquire them in a second language on an intensive masters course. Naturally, the more competent they are in English, the greater the chances of them developing these skills to a satisfactory level during the course.

5.4. Referencing, Plagiarism and Paraphrasing

The data indicate that many East Asian students at the commencement of their masters course are not familiar with academic referencing and do not understand the rationale behind it.

Interviewed lecturers claimed that East Asian students are often found plagiarising texts in the early months of the course, even after being told that is an unacceptable practice in the West.

There appeared to be genuine confusion over referencing, paraphrasing and plagiarism, well into the second term for some students. Without a firm grasp of these issues, students will consistently lose marks, or even fail assignments. This section tries to identify, from the interview data, what are their perceptions of referencing, plagiarism and paraphrasing.

5.4.1 Referencing

Many of the East Asian students interviewed had little or no experience of referencing in their degree courses back home (A29:168, Indonesia; A38:70, Korea; A2:318, Thai; A34:68; Japanese; B5:34, Chinese):

We just write without mentioning who had these ideas. (A29:168, Indonesia)

When I was a university student I didn't use any citation system in assignments. But here, referencing is strictly required. This is completely different. (A34:68, Japanese)

Interviewer: What difficulties do you think Chinese students have when studying abroad?

Participant: The main problem might be because they don't know how to use references. They find their assignment is not concerned with just one text book, but different books and they don't know which books to study and how to choose them.

(B5:34, Chinese)

There appeared to be a lot of misunderstanding over why lecturers require extensive referencing in essays. Some students thought that referencing in the West was stressed because lecturers want to 'make sure that you really read these books, and that the information is from books and not just from your imagination' (B5:36, Chinese). Other students thought that referencing would be penalised because the lecturer might then think the student was unable to think creatively and independent of the text:

[In Taiwan] when we write we had better not put references in. Maybe teacher will think we don't have your own thinking, we just copy from books. If you write your own sentences you are more clever. (A9:28, Taiwanese)

Another Taiwanese student explained it this way:

Participant: If I reference from someone that means it is not in my mind, that the assignment is not my own work.

Interviewer: But if you have copied it word for word, is it your work?

Participant: I find these ideas in books. It is my effort. If I show that someone has already said it, that is not valuable.

(A10:249-256, Taiwanese)

There were few students in the first term who understood that a more important reason for referencing was to distinguish alternative views and opinions and to draw links and comparisons between different 'camps' of thinkers. There was also little recognition at this early stage of the course that sources need referencing for the benefit of readers and researchers. However, once familiar with the technique, many students saw the benefit of referencing:

At first I thought that if I think about plagiarism a lot then my essay becomes full of authors' names. All the ideas come from the authors and nothing from my mind. But now I realise it shows you have read a lot. (A37:53, Japanese).

When you try to read a Korean journal or article it is very difficult to find where the information comes from. So I found referencing very logical and it helps us to develop academically. (A38:70, Korean)

Even when students do understand the rationale behind referencing, they still need training in 'mining' texts for suitable quotes and weaving them into their essays (Ryan 2000:55).

5.4.2 Plagiarism

The concept of individual ownership runs contrary to ideas of collective ownership (Scollon 1995, see page 65) and as a result, copying wholesale from texts is quite common, and is generally accepted in many universities in East Asia:

In Indonesia we just write without mentioning who had these ideas. We just think and write – it is not important who thinks of this idea. We never think of it as plagiarism. It is common in Indonesia. (A29:166, Indonesia)

In China you get a better mark if you copy. Chinese teachers do not have the time to read all the books, so students think you can get a better view if you copy from the books. The teacher sees that paragraph and thinks 'that's excellent (.....) good point of view. (B3: 67, Chinese lecturer)

Interviewer: Are you allowed to copy, what we would call plagiarise?

Participant: Yes, sure

Interviewer: You don't have to reference?

Participant: No. We don't have that kind of concept. We do have some tutors who were educated in Western countries. They did tell us it was serious.

(A10: 243, Taiwanese)

One girl described how for her undergraduate thesis in China she 'borrowed maybe twenty books and copied a little here, a little there. No argument, just listed what other people say' (A31:2, Chinese). When asked why they think the West places such a lot of emphasis on not plagiarising, some of the interviewees replied that it was due to 'authority' and protecting intellectual rights.

The West stresses intellectual property rights. They want to protect the individual because that's their [the author's] wisdom, that's their hard work, their efforts. But in China intellectual property rights are not so well established. Pirated video and faked books are common. (B18:20, Chinese)

Another student explained that in China:

Students are not taught to respect others' rights. People think if we can copy something, we are not robbing (...). They don't think of it as plagiarism but knowledge (...), it doesn't matter who says it, just as long as it is correct. You are expected to use what is accepted. (A33:38- 42, Chinese)

Traditionally, famous authors are quoted verbatim in China, not paraphrased. Also because text books are regarded as always and only 'correct' (B1: 100, Chinese), then to quote the text book as the authoritative 'truth', is what is called for, not paraphrasing alternative viewpoints:

In China the book is authoritative. You must agree with it (.....) in the West you should really understand the meaning of the theory [by paraphrasing it]. But in China the teacher thinks that if you put the famous sentence in your essay, that means you accept the idea. (B3:105, Chinese)

Many said they did not understand the rationale behind the West's strict academic rules.

Interviewer: Has anyone explained why there is such an emphasis?

Participant: No. Just that we have to be aware of it. In Japan they don't care so much. When I started writing essays here I tried to find out why they care about it so much, but there is no reason maybe.

(C11:38, Japanese)

They also wonder why it is not considered plagiarism when some authors seem to be saying what earlier authors have said, but in a different way and without acknowledging these sources (C2:100, Chinese). The main reason why East Asian students may plagiarise, however, appears to be due to their English language competency. Many students whose English is not of a very high standard feel that it is 'safer', as well as easier, to copy a text verbatim rather than struggle to express the same ideas in their own English:

Here we are not allowed to copy the words exactly the same and we have to use our own words. That's difficult for us because my level of English is not high. (A29:116, Indonesia).

Copying 'beautiful writing' in Chinese education is rewarded and is a traditional practice in essay writing (A31:9, Chinese). What many students fail to realise, however, is that plagiarism for a second language writer is more easily detected than for first language writers. Plagiarism in Chinese is 'very easy ... you just need to change one character to change the expression' (B11:57, Chinese lecturer). But when these students use the same technique in English, the result is frequently incoherent and incohesive writing.

Downloading from the internet into an essay is again common practice in much of China and East Asian countries (B15:17, Chinese lecturer). Some universities and lecturers are strict about plagiarism, especially those hosting foreign teachers or majoring in English:

Interviewer: What did you think when you were first taught by foreigners?

Participant: I thought it was very strange. You can't copy others'

assignments. You must be honest. It impressed me very much because my teacher placed so much attention on it.

(B8: 36,37, Chinese)

Other lecturers, the student interviewees claimed, 'don't emphasise it', or else don't recognise plagiarism when it occurs (B7:16, Chinese). A student can write his or her thesis "very easily by using quotes, but not using quote marks, and the professors don't find it" (B7:16, Chinese). It was suggested that exemplars of plagiarism would help students understand this aspect of academic writing more rapidly (A2:324, Thai; A40:42, Chinese).

5.4.3 Paraphrasing

There was a lot of confusion over the rationale behind paraphrasing. U.K. lecturers and British students were clear in their minds that it is to demonstrate the student's understanding of a text by being able to rephrase it in their own language. Many East Asian students, however, held the notion that the primary purpose of paraphrasing was to avoid plagiarism (C38:68, Korean). Some did not understand that a paraphrased text may also require referencing:

Here the teacher says even if you paraphrase and you don't say where it's from it's also plagiarism. (C3:58, Chinese)

Some see paraphrasing as just a clever way of copying i.e. cheating:

Some students are quite clever. Actually it's copied, but they paraphrase it and organise it very well in their own way. I think it's better if I just quote the author's idea, better than I correct some words and steal the main ideas from the author. It made me feel I still copy (...). Actually, when I do my assignments, I'm really confused about whether it's paraphrase or plagiarism, because sometimes if I paraphrase and still have the main idea as the author, it's still plagiarism, is it? (C2:93, Chinese)

For those students with poorer English, paraphrasing is very difficult as sophisticated techniques and high language competency is needed to paraphrase (Ryan 2000:55):

When I heard we have to use our own words in essays I got worried, because it's very difficult. Because the words in books, I think, are already the best words, so I just copy these words. So now I'll need to look at a Thesaurus. When I look at the author's sentences it's difficult to use other words, because firstly my vocabulary is not that wide, and secondly it might change the meaning if I use other words. (A29: 149, Indonesian)

There was little understanding amongst the interviewees that paraphrasing can be a tool for critical thinking and evaluation (Hyland 2000). Although some students did see this link (e.g.

C9:40, Taiwanese), others seemed only concerned to avoid plagiarising a text by ‘mixing it up’ (B11:52, Chinese).

To summarise this last section, East Asian students’ misunderstanding about academic referencing, and the tendency of some to plagiarise, seem linked to their cultural perceptions of intellectual property rights, and the cultural practice of repeating the words of experts verbatim, without needing to acknowledge the authors by name. The individualistic culture of the West, on the other hand, values and protects the intellectual property rights of scholars and authors, and severely penalises those who do not share these values. The issue is further complicated because the East Asian students are paraphrasing complex ideas in their second language. Effective paraphrasing requires a high competency in English –some British students also experience difficulty in developing this skill. As this is a key element of academic critical writing at masters level, it has implications for recruiting students with adequate English language skills.

Chapter 6: Hindrances to Freedom of Expression in Class

This chapter continues with the analysis of data and focuses on the last of the five categories which emerged from the qualitative data. The interview data indicate that many East Asian students feel inhibited from openly sharing their thoughts in seminars. The general observation of the interviewed lecturers was that the majority of East Asian students are reluctant to speak out in class. This can be frustrating when the lecturer wants to encourage lively debate. One British lecturer claimed that this apparent reluctance causes newly appointed lecturers to soon lower their expectations:

I would not have an expectation that there would be good, rigorous group discussion. I would have an expectation that I wouldn't be challenged if I was to say something quite provocative, that it would be almost accepted.
(A2, 26, British lecturer)

Few lecturers, however, seemed to understand the reasons for this phenomenon. Underlying causes may include the need to preserve 'face', a sense of shame if mistakes are made, and a cultural perception of discursive politeness:

The majority of Chinese tend to watch and evaluate within themselves, and then they decide whether they want to say it out or not. They evaluate it in many ways, for example: 'Will the teacher accept it?', 'What will the authority think?', 'What will be the danger if I speak out?'. A very complicated system. 'What will the other students think?', losing face. It's a very big struggle for them. They may change but you have to encourage them.
(B3:95, Chinese lecturer)

In part, this can be explained by Hofstede's (1980) theory that East Asian cultures try to avoid uncertainty, whereas British people are more open to risk-taking. Ting-Toomey (1994) also claims that the notion of preserving 'face' in East Asian cultures can act as a deterrent to public exposure of private thoughts.

This next section explores the various reasons for this hesitancy in more depth: students' fear that their English will not be understood; their educational tradition of not asking questions; fear of not looking intelligent; and cultural inappropriacy of being outspoken and of disagreeing publicly with others.

6.1 English Language Competence

For many East Asian students the fear of making grammatical and vocabulary mistakes

resulting in their English not being understood, inhibits them from speaking out (Ryan 2000:46, Felix & Lawson 1994). Lack of English competency can be frustrating for them:

It's quite annoying because I have ideas but I cannot speak, because whenever I start to think about what I am going to speak I have to think about 'O.K. what is the grammar? And what shall I say? And how can I make them understand?' (A2:95, Thai).

This same student claimed that when speaking in her mother tongue in her home university, she was far more active in the classroom than she was in the U.K.:

When I am in Thailand in my class I always speak with the lecturers who are quite young (...) they like us to interact in the class. (A2:106, Thai).

As Ryan (2000:79) highlights, these students may 'feel like they are becoming a different person' because they are stripped of their usual resources for coping and expressing themselves. Their slowness to think and speak in English may also result in constantly being left out of the discussions:

Once they start discussing freely I can't take part, because I can't come up with English so quickly. They start discussing freely with each other – very, very fast exchanging opinions – and I can't speak anything. I couldn't contribute. (A34:52, Japanese).

Some prefer lecturers to ask specific students to answer questions because 'everybody is going to stop the conversation and listen to me, which is good' (A2:137, Thai). Others, however, feel frightened when selected by lecturers to answer a question because they feel uncomfortable being the centre of attention: " Scary, you know. Because it's like twenty people in the class and if the teacher point at me, everyone have to look at me" (A1:191, Thai). They may lose dignity and 'face' if they try to participate with inadequate language.

Another difficulty the students face is that they may not understand the English or accent of other international students, and so they cannot follow the class discussion. Some students suggested that one solution might be for lecturers to repeat questions that international students ask in class, especially if their English is not good, or their accent is strong (A1:156, Thai).

Working in small groups may help students gain confidence in speaking English: "I feel more confident and they try to understand me, but to answer the teacher's question in the whole group for me is very difficult" (A38:18, Korean). Group-work can be a negative experience, however, if other members are unaware of the difficulties facing second language speakers, and

fail to understand why they are not contributing to the discussion:

I need time to think about the question. But after the lecturer gives us a question in the small group, straight away they start to talk, but for me it's very hard. So one day my classmate said to me 'you are always nodding'. I didn't want to be just nodding, but their ideas were coming so quickly.
(A37:22, Japanese).

This next student recognised, however, that it was not just a matter of language but also a lack of familiarity with brainstorming ideas quickly. She desperately wanted to contribute, and had a sense of shame for not doing so:

I feel all my classmates are always contributing in the classes but I do not. So I feel shame. So I dream to contribute like others, but it's hard because of my character and my Japanese way. But I really want to, because the others do.
(A37:6, Japanese).

Some of the East Asian interviewees see Western assertiveness as selfish and egocentric (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan & Typton 1985), and wish that other students would be more sensitive to their needs: "European students don't mind if they speak fast. They don't care. They just speak their own opinion" (A34:58, Japanese). When lecturers facilitate discussions and are aware of these issues, East Asian students often have more opportunity to contribute:

In my class some people talk a lot. Those with native or good English keep going. It makes some of us very annoyed because it means not all of us have a chance to speak. But some people talk too much, so the lecturer needs to keep the balance and encourage people to be involved. (A32:37, Chinese)

Some of the British lecturers observed that many East Asian students gain confidence in speaking out in class and in asking questions through having to conduct presentations early on in the course.

As thought and language influence each other (Vygotsky 1964), critical thinking can be developed through discussion and debate with others (Scardamalia & Bereiter 1994). Contributing to class discussions, and trying to articulate arguments and counter arguments, are all helpful in developing one's thinking on an issue. This is the premise on which Socratic dialogue is based, and is the *raison d'être* of higher education seminars in the West. The data indicate that as East Asian students overcome their reticence to contribute, and to 'air' their thoughts in classroom discussions, they are to likely to improve their critical thinking skills, especially if lecturers and other students help them in their learning journey towards freer expression.

6.2 Educational Tradition of not Asking Questions in Class

Many East Asian students have experienced a tradition of restraining from asking questions, especially of their superiors: “ I worked there [Korea] for seven years, and the first golden rule is ‘never ask the question ‘why’ to someone with experience.’” (A38:72, Korean). Similarly, many are not used to asking questions in class: “the custom is not for students to ask ‘why?’” (A39:2, Chinese). Instead, the emphasis is on listening to the teacher. They may have asked the odd question after class or, more commonly, asked their peers if they had not understood something taught in class:

If someone asks a question he is strange. He wants to show off. We don't really do that unless we have a special relationship [with the teacher].
(A10:91, Taiwanese)

Some hesitate to ask for clarification publicly for fear of being laughed at because of their lack of understanding:

Participant: Westerners sometimes ask questions about what they are not sure about, ask the teacher to confirm something. But even if Chinese students are not sure, we are not used to asking. We don't do it.

Interviewer: Why?

Participant: Maybe we are afraid of being laughed at by others. Maybe others can understand but we cannot.

(C4:34-36, Chinese)

They try to understand on their own, rather than appear stupid before others:

When I want to ask a question, I usually ask myself first ‘Is it clear enough for everyone else, but just confusing for me? Then I try to understand on my own.
(A29:46, Indonesian)

Neither do they want to appear to waste others' time: “Some questions may not concern the class and I don't want to waste time” (A39:4, Chinese). Another interviewee spoke of how asking questions in class can require a lot of risk-taking on the student's part:

Interviewer: What sort of risks do students face here [U.K.]?

Participant: In class we have to ask the lecturer if we don't understand. Some Chinese students dare to ask and are not afraid.

(B18:27, 28, Chinese)

Nevertheless, some students are prepared to brave it, even in the first few weeks of the course. This Indonesian student felt he owed it to himself, because of the expense of the masters course, to occasionally ask the lecturer for clarity during class:

If I don't understand - I've paid for this course and I spent a great deal of money so I have to understand – I just think about it, but if I still don't get it then I will ask about it in the seminar later on. (A29:71, Indonesian)

Western students are viewed by East Asian students as being far more active in class, and their questions in class are generally welcomed: “ I like people raising questions in our seminar group because it helps me understand what others think.” (A39:6, Chinese); “ They prompt me to think even more critically” (C20:1, Taiwanese). Problems may arise, however, if only the Westerners contribute, for then resentment can build up against the East Asian students' non-involvement, and their apparent reliance on Westerners to speak in class. One Chinese lecturer felt that East Asian students ‘need to be told the feelings of others. If they don't contribute, for example, that they are selfish’ (B3:133, Chinese lecturer). However, through observing how Westerners behave in class, some East Asian students gain confidence to ask questions themselves: “When they see foreign students asking questions, they may follow.” (B18:30, Chinese). Others, however, find that the contribution of outspoken Westerners can be overpowering, to the point of being offensive: “They like to grab the power, to direct and control the discussion” (A24:35, Chinese).

It was generally felt by the East Asian interviewees that small classes, preferably no larger than ten, were favourable for seminar groups. They thought a good balance of East Asian and non-East Asian, though not necessarily British, students make for effective discussions, due mainly to the hesitancy of many East Asian students to speak out in class, particularly at the start of the course:

Non Asians are very expressive. They raise questions or they debate against the teacher's opinions, or simply have very good discussions. I've found this very useful for me. (C8:48, Taiwanese).

The data indicate that for many East Asian students, inhibitions such as those described above diminish as the course proceeds. Good modelling by Western students, and a sensitive, culturally aware approach to this issue by lecturers can speed up a student's learning journey towards a more questioning critique of ideas and theories.

6.3 Fear of not Appearing Intelligent

It would appear that in many East Asian classrooms it is only the brave or the very intelligent students who speak out or ask questions. In some universities and departments, however, small

group discussions do take place e.g. on a Fine Arts course (A2:230, Thai), and on a Music Course (B6:10, Chinese). This may be because certain disciplines demand a more open and participatory approach to learning.

Many of interviewees expressed their fear of not looking intelligent:

I don't dare to ask [questions] because I worry that people will judge me that I'm stupid. (A10:71, Taiwanese)

Maybe other people would think that this is a silly question – like, why do you ask that? You should know that. (A1:105, Thai)

Normally when we want to give our opinion we will think 'Oh, it's stupid. Maybe the others will disagree'. So we keep silent. (A9:73, Taiwanese)

This fear of looking unintelligent may be linked to the need for preserving face in East Asian cultures. Many appear to engage in 'self-criticism' to reassure themselves that what they say is worthwhile and will not result in ridicule:

Sometimes I won't express myself, but I will do some self-criticism before I express my ideas. I have to check myself first, whether my ideas are too naïve. It might be that freedom of speech results in ignorance, so I have to check myself. (C10:36, Chinese).

Asian students only talk about the things they understand. If I am not clear, not sure, I don't want to talk about it. (A24:35, Chinese)

Kashima and Triandis (1986) found that East Asian students have lower self esteem than Westerners as they tend to focus more on their weaknesses than on their strengths. Similarly, Triandis, discussing collectivist cultures, notes that 'failure to do things correctly results in criticism. People fear criticism and focus on failures because these failures are the cause of much distress for them' (Triandis 1995:70,71).

One student explained how during his early schooling in China, his natural keenness to contribute in class had been replaced with a habit of silence because he had learned from his teachers' disapproval that his answers were not 'complete' and 'well organised':

When I was a child I always put up my hand to answer questions in class. But after some time I thought that every time I gave my ideas I hadn't enough time to think it over. So it wasn't very complete, well organised. So I think I need to listen to other people's expression and jot some useful ideas to add to mine. This is much better. (B1:55, Chinese)

Similarly, a Taiwanese student claimed that she would not speak out in class unless she could contribute something different and new to the discussion:

I really want to contribute in class, but sometimes I just hold back a bit (...) and I want to say something significant, meaningful, not something which everybody knows, or just a simple idea. So whenever I cannot form a critical opinion about things I just don't speak in class. (C8:54, Taiwanese).

When lecturers encourage students to apply the learned theory to their own work experiences and cultural contexts, this encourages class participation, because the students realise they have something relevant and unique to contribute.

There appears, then, to be a restraint working within many of the students, causing them to be extra careful about what they say publicly. Everything needs to be cautiously weighed and internally tested for significance and correctness before a student will open his or her mouth:

The Chinese think too much about the consequences of their decisions, about all of the advantages and disadvantages. Therefore they lose courage to take risks. They analyse everything. (B2:3, Chinese)

Western students, on the other hand, are often perceived as not always contributing intelligent ideas:

Participant: [Western students] are active to say *anything* they like to say.

Interviewer: What do the lecturers say about that?"

Participant: I think they encourage such kind of contributions (.....) I think I will try to not talk rubbish in class. Every time I want to speak I must make sure that what I say is useful.

(C4:42, Chinese).

Once students realise that lecturers in the U.K. are not looking for 'perfection', and that mistakes and partially thought through ideas are acceptable in class discussions, then some quickly begin to relax:

Now I find it is quite all right because I have other colleagues in my class who seem not perfect. They speak out and sometimes they speak nonsense. It will not happen in Taiwan. In Taiwan we will be aware of how we are talking but here they just talk. I think some colleagues, they talk before they think. We think before we talk. So even if they speak nonsense people still are encouraged to talk. Especially tutors here, when someone asks stupid question, the tutor will say 'hm, it is an interesting question'. In Taiwan, tutor won't say 'interesting question'. He will just look at you and other pupils will look at you and won't say anything, but you know you are stupid and will skip the question. So I feel comfortable here. (A10:46, Taiwanese)

Others, however, although they realise that lecturers are not demanding perfect answers, are still reticent to contribute spontaneously and without rigorous preparation:

Interviewer: How do most students feel if a teacher asks them a question in class?

Participant: Nervous, because you have no preparation. We need time to think about the question.

(B1:67, Chinese)

Even if students find the freedom of Western discussions attractive, they often take time to adjust. Moreover, whilst they are internally preparing what they will say, the opportunity to speak often passes them by. Though this Chinese student has excellent English and is very outgoing, she found it difficult at first:

I'm speaking out more and more. At the beginning during the first two weeks I could not get in: I did not have enough courage and confidence to speak in class facing so many students. (C4:20, Chinese).

A major factor in helping these students overcome their fear of making mistakes is the attitude of the lecturer:

Participant: At the beginning of term I didn't want to make mistakes, but by the middle of the term I didn't care.

Interviewer: What made you change?

Participant: Maybe the others don't care. And the lecturers don't care if it's wrong. They just say 'That's interesting. O.K. Any other ideas?'

Interviewer: How does it make you feel when there is no 'wrong' or 'right' ?

Participant: Easier to participate. Encourages me.

(A37:26-32, Japanese)

Lecturers can encourage those East Asian students who are quieter to contribute to class discussions by preventing native/fluent speakers from dominating the discussion (A38:6-12, Korean, A32:36,37, Chinese). They can encourage students to contribute even minimal responses:

I was glad one time when my lecturer asked something and I thought of just one word 'experience'. So I said 'experience?', and he said 'YES! That's it!'. I was so glad at his attitude. And after that I felt I wanted to contribute if I could understand. (A37:14, Japanese)

This is how a Taiwanese student describes how one of her lecturers encouraged quieter students in her class to speak out:

Interviewer: Has anything in particular encouraged you to speak out and take risks in class?

Participant: Yes. Whenever [the lecturer] wanted me to ask questions, he tried to keep others quiet and let us ask questions. That encouraged me and I felt not ashamed in his class later on (...). He did it in a very skilful way.

Interviewer: What did he do?

Participant: He *chose* me, he gave me a chance, he never criticised. I was not afraid of him. He respected whatever we say ... he tolerated everything.

(A36:23-25, Taiwanese)

It comes as no surprise that the students who adapt most easily to Western-style education are those who have an affinity towards the approach, and who like the idea of expressing their thoughts openly:

At the beginning I was quite shy to talk or to discuss with my colleagues. But after three months now I got used to it, and quite like it because there's opportunity to express your feeling in the lectures and in the seminars. I quite enjoy it. (A26:28, Chinese)

When I speak English I am more confident. I can be individual. I am allowed to be individual. But if I speak in Chinese I am more mindful when talking, but if I speak in English I know I have more freedom. (A10:608, Taiwanese)

A student told of how her attitude to speaking out in class changed through experiencing how important it was for her personally when others contributed in her class presentation:

When I gave my first presentation I was so glad that everyone contributed. I had to involve the audience, so I had to ask questions and many students answered me and contributed to my presentation. So I really wanted to thank them. (A37:8, Japanese)

She did so by making a special effort to contribute in *their* presentations. She also found it helpful when one of the presenters re-phrased her comments so they were more intelligible to the class: "It was very helpful, because I am not so confident about my English. So I always feel worried if they understand my English, and start panicking" (A37:10, Japanese). These students had already built up trust amongst themselves and so this student did not feel loss of face when she was publicly 'helped out'.

The data suggest that the speed with which East Asian students adapt to a freer environment, where mistakes are allowed, even encouraged, and where students are not ridiculed for 'wrong'

answers, depends not only on the cultural awareness of lecturers, but also on the students' own willingness to change and to take risks. It would appear that a good deal of courage is required to break through internal restraints, but that with encouragement from lecturers and other students, confidence grows until they begin to relax in their new environment and some come to enjoy the freedom.

6.4 'Face'

Some students claim that they fear speaking out in class lest they lose 'face when they say something wrong (A38:60, Korean; A10:630, Taiwanese; B5:68, Chinese). There is also a strong feeling that one should avoid, at all costs, losing the face of another:

I never try to make somebody look stupid. Somebody can make a mistake, but I just point out his mistakes privately. (A38:52, Korean)

Other feel a sense of shame in sticking out from the crowd and offering non-conformist views. Shame, according to Triandis (1988:326) is the main restraint against unacceptable behaviour in East Asian cultures:

I think in Chinese culture there are many things that are really good, but one thing I really hate is feeling shame. It's stuck to me, I cannot get rid of it. It is so deep, I really hate that feeling shame. Because when you ask difficult questions you feel shame (.....), we don't want to be different. We must conform. (A10:629, 661, Taiwanese)

Some believe lecturers will lose face if they are unable to answer difficult questions. One Chinese student, however, claims that hesitancy to contribute in class is nothing to do with face but with having nothing worthwhile to say:

It used to be said that Chinese students don't express themselves because they want to save the face of the teachers, and because they want to save their own face. But I think it's not because of face but it's because they have nothing to offer in class. If they really think they have something excellent, something exciting, they will do it. (C10:73, Chinese)

This particular student is very confident and intelligent, and had already graduated with a masters degree from a prestigious university in Beijing before coming to the U.K. His perception may therefore be more a reflection of an elite group of Chinese postgraduates.

Another aspect of 'face', however, concerns students seeing themselves as representatives of their country with a responsibility to uphold the best possible appearance to Westerners:

For the first few weeks we were so nervous, we were afraid to make mistakes or to damage the image of the Chinese students. We wanted to establish a good, an impressive image of the Chinese students. (A40:8, Chinese)

This pressure caused a great deal of stress for one student who, as a result, decided that she had no alternative but to ‘throw face away’. She explained that she had previously cared a lot about other peoples’ opinions of her, but that once she had ‘put her ego, self esteem and face aside’ and stopped worrying about others’ opinion of her, she began to relax. This change in attitude was a reaction to a particular ‘peak of pressure’ that she really ‘couldn’t stand any more’ – it was a critical incident which caused her to dramatically change her behaviour and mindset. She was pleasantly surprised to find a positive reaction to this more relaxed self from her peers and lecturers:

Their reactions made me feel more relaxed actually, because I could feel they were more comfortable with me to talk and discuss with me. Because if you are nervous, then people also feel nervous. (A40:20, Chinese).

She went on to describe how she felt:

It was not that I suddenly became more talkative, it was more something inside. Previously whenever I tried to give my opinion it was in a low voice (laughs) – not shy, but almost whispering. But this time I just gave my opinion in a normal talking voice. And I felt great. I felt *great*. The lecturer also accepts better your opinion. (A40:22, Chinese)

For this student, this was a positive, releasing experience. Others, however, reject Western freedom of expression as being too assertive, impolite and even rude. A sense of impoliteness may restrain East Asian students from speaking openly in class:

At first I found it very difficult because, honestly, when I went to seminar the behaviour and attitude of European students so annoyed me. For example, we never interrupt while teacher talking. We just wait until he finish and he says ‘any question?’, and we ask the question. But here, they do whatever they want, and just ask questions, sometimes completely out of context. (A38:6, Korean)

There were some interviewees, however, who claimed to experience no sense of ‘face’ or restraint in contributing their personal views in class. These tended to be male, more mature in age, and generally more confident than the majority of East Asian students.

Not only may public disagreement be viewed as rude and impolite, it may also be taken very personally, as a direct insult. ‘Face’ can be lost and relationships marred or broken through

directly disagreeing with someone. Indeed one student asked in unbelief 'So do you [in the West] keep friendship with the person you disagree with?' (B7:70, Chinese). In academic discussions in China, however, people can disagree, but only indirectly. They usually begin by acknowledging first what they can agree about. To disagree outright would cause them to lose face and this is avoided if at all possible.

Chang (1989:14) and Bond & Lee (1981) have suggested that protecting one's own, or another's, face in China is more important than speaking in a direct, truthful manner. Thus, Chinese people do not normally show their disagreement publicly:

If you make mistakes, people point them out secretly, try to avoid losing face, try to avoid embarrassing you. Also they may tell you in a very indirect way. But Westerners are very direct. (B3:29, Chinese lecturer).

They find this directness very uncomfortable, even rude, especially when strangers are involved:

In my experience, if I talk to my close friends, my parents and relatives, I talk very forthrightly. But with a foreigner or lecturers, strangers, we do not argue. We would consider it a quarrel if we argue with a stranger. (B7:72, Chinese).

As a consequence, Western-style class discussion can appear more like an argument to East Asian students (A38:52, Korean), and some find it difficult to engage in a critical discussion without feeling personally offended or offensive. Their ability to engage in 'inoffensive' disagreement depends to a large extent on their English language competency. Second language speakers often cannot manipulate English subtleties so as to avoid offence or appearing too 'strong' when making their point:

When I strongly disagree I use very strong English – 'I definitely disagree with you; I don't believe you' – like this. We can't keep in the middle, the tactful way. But when we get involved in the subject we go one of two ways – either we keep silent, or we go into it directly. So we try to be gentle, but when you are talking about a really interesting subject and it's getting exciting, we forget the tactful way. Someone said to me 'You said your culture never argues, but when you start arguing your English is *really*, really strong'. (A38:60 Korean)

This suggests that when East Asian students engage in heated classroom debate, they may lose face because they will perceive themselves, and be perceived by other East Asian Students, as behaving offensively. It is particularly unacceptable to them when Western students interrupt teachers or other students to challenge ideas or to ask questions:

Sometimes when you are talking they will stop you in the middle with

disagreement. That makes you very embarrassed and scared. They should listen, at least until people have finished talking. (A32:69, Chinese)

An alternative way of indirectly disagreeing in China is to use traditional proverbs:

If [you] disagree with someone you would find a clever way to do that, maybe a proverb or some quotation said by someone famous in the past. It's like a belief that if there is a proverb for this situation then you don't use your own language for that (...). In Chinese we have proverbs for everything, from daily life to academic discussion, for everything! (B4:42, Chinese lecturer).

When a Chinese person is offended, however, they tend to hide their feelings behind a smile:

Smiling is something Chinese use in any situation, when you feel embarrassed you smile, when you feel nervous, still some people smile. Maybe in different ways there are different ways of smiling. Smiling is a very powerful weapon for us to face situations. So sometimes there is a misunderstanding for foreigners caused by this smiling thing. (B4:50, Chinese lecturer).

However, it would appear that traditional ways are changing and in website chatrooms in China 'young people will speak very straight and if they disagree they will speak out' (B7:74, Chinese lecturer). However, although there appears to be diminished face on the website, one can still 'sense it' : "although they disagree with others, the tone is very polite and people can accept that" (B7:76, Chinese lecturer).

Some East Asian students appreciate the freedom to question and challenge: "I feel good. I feel 'yes, why do I have to agree with them all of the time? Because sometimes I have questions" (A2: 198, Thai). A Taiwanese student claimed that she did not find it difficult to be open in the West because she was already in the habit back home of disagreeing with what she was being taught, although privately, never publicly because 'We know teachers don't accept wrong thinking. So you think in your house' (A9:66,133 Taiwanese). A Chinese girl from Hong Kong, on the other hand, claimed that she had had complete freedom to disagree with her teachers back home (A26:39, Hong Kong). This may have been due to the number of foreign teachers in her university, or to the fact that Hong Kong had been a British colony with the British system of schooling and government, and therefore more exposed to Western thought and behaviour.

In contrast, some students continue to feel that it is not personally permissible or possible to express disagreement with their U.K. lecturers: "I want to, but it's O.K. for other people to,

but not for me” (A1: 237, Thai). Others, although they understand that Western lecturers ‘accept different ideas’, continue to feel that ‘It is not up to us to dispute what is correct and what is wrong’, and therefore out of respect and politeness would not disagree openly with the lecturer (A33:74, Chinese). Still others refrain from a fear of it being ‘unsafe’, and from a need to gain the lecturer’s ‘approval’ at all times (A38:4955, Chinese).

Interestingly, there is no definitive linguistic equivalent to the English ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in Chinese (Ma 1996), so that when a Chinese student wants to disagree in English, they may use the more polite and ambiguous terms ‘possibly’, ‘perhaps’ or ‘maybe’ (Gao & Ting Toomey 1998:64,65, 85). The British student interviewees, in contrast, saw disagreement in a positive light, even as part of a student’s development:

I don’t feel uncomfortable about challenging. But I don’t see it as challenging, but as asking a question which might lift the lid on a different point of view.... You try and raise issues and debate, and invariably there isn’t a right or wrong answer. (A45:22, British).

Vignette 5 of the questionnaire addresses this issue of disagreeing with a lecturer’s viewpoint in a seminar:

Vignette 5

In a seminar, the lecturer talks about an idea which he strongly believes in. A student has read a lot about this subject and does not agree with the lecturer’s viewpoint. When asked to discuss the idea in a seminar, what should the student do?

1. Truthfully express her own opinion, even though she knows the lecturer disagrees with her.
2. Not openly disagree with the lecturer in class, but after class discuss honestly with the lecturer why she disagrees with his ideas.
3. Wait until other students disagree with the lecturers’ ideas, and then join in with them.
4. Take a middle road and balance both viewpoints without saying what her honest opinion is.
5. Not say anything.

This vignette shows a clear distinction between the British and the East Asian students’ responses. 88% of the British students selected option 1, which is the closest to the

expectations of interviewed U.K. lecturers. This compares with only 38% of the East Asian students in Southern England University, 58% in Mid England University and 43% of the students in China University selecting option 1 (Appendices XXIIIa, XXIIIId). The χ^2 test was conducted to compare the responses of the East Asian and British students. The χ^2 permitted me to reject the null hypothesis for Southern England ($p = 0.0005$), Mid England ($p = 0.0005$), and China university ($p = 0.0005$) students. A measure of association (ϕ) is included as an indication of substantive significance (see Appendix XXIVc). This vignette shows the strongest difference between British and East Asian perceptions, and the reasons for this are now considered.

Lecturers' reaction to disagreement

One reason for East Asian students not wanting to disagree publicly in class is because they believe that either they or their teacher may publicly lose face (C3:10, Chinese). The data suggest that in East Asian universities the majority of lecturers would not allow students to challenge them: "In Taiwan it is difficult because the teacher always think their opinions are right" (A9: 64, Taiwanese). However it is the older teachers who often tend to be traditional in their thinking: "If you talk with young women teachers they may have Western thinking and you can discuss with them" (A9:66, Taiwanese). The difference in perceptions between older and younger lecturers, particularly in China and Taiwan, is a recurring theme in the data and it suggests the potential for a major change on the horizon in educational systems, as a new generation of teachers replace the old.

The interview data also suggest that if East Asian students feel relaxed with their U.K. lecturers they are more prepared to risk questioning them. One student describes how she observed a lecturer over the term and how she slowly changed her mind about the lecturer's attitude to international students:

In the first class I found it really hard to ask question because I found that she has power distance. But now I have observed how she reacts I feel that she pays attention to Asian students. I think perhaps she feel that Asian students are more shy. So I feel relaxed because she understands our difficulties. So I feel relaxed to ask her questions and say anything I want.
(A10:77, Taiwanese)

However, a few of the East Asian interviewees found that some U.K. lecturers, instead of welcoming diversity of thinking in the classroom, appeared threatened and tried to persuade or

prove they were correct and the student wrong, which highly embarrassed or intimidated the East Asian students. It takes courage for these students to challenge a lecturer: “ I have to be well prepared, to think very thoroughly, to encourage myself, and finally to make the decision. I have to be brave” (A32:25, Chinese). This particular student’s contribution was rejected and she lost face: ‘ So I thought the next time I shouldn’t do it that way. It’s too risky’ (A32:28,29, Chinese).

British students who were interviewed had quite a different view of their lecturers. They felt that the majority of lecturers appreciate valid challenges, provided they are informed through reading:

Interviewer: How do you feel about challenging or disagreeing with lecturers publicly in the seminars?

Participant: I find that lecturers usually enjoy it, as long as it comes from something informed and from reading, rather than from some arrogant response of challenging a teacher in authority. I think it’s part of our development as students.

(A42:14,15, British)

They also believed that lecturers do not feel embarrassed when students disagree with them in seminar discussions. However, they all agreed that lecturers vary, and that some are more open to debate than others:

I only had three tutors last term. One is very receptive, providing it [the challenge] has sufficient intellectual content; one that is really open to anything, and one that is extremely defensive. A variety – no reflection on the quality of their output, however. (A45:24, British)

Vignette 6 in the questionnaire addresses this issue of how lecturers react to challenge:

Vignette 6

In a seminar a student speaks out and disagrees with an idea that is being taught by the lecturer. The student explains her reasons for not agreeing with it, based on her own experience and her reading. Do you think the lecturer will:

1. be embarrassed or angry that she disagrees with him publicly?
2. be pleased that she is evaluating the ideas he is lecturing on, but would prefer if she spoke to him after class?

3. be surprised that she disagrees with him, and will spend time in class trying to convince her to change her mind?
4. not mind her disagreeing in class, but will not want the whole class to debate it?
5. be pleased that she disagrees because it will provide the opportunity for discussion?

Of all the vignettes, the findings from vignette 6 show the least difference between the British and East Asian students. 74% of the British students selected option 5, which is closest to what the majority of lecturers in the U.K claim are their expectations. This compares with 66% of the East Asian students in Southern England University, 55% in Mid England University and 71% of the students in China University who selected option 5 (Appendix XXIIIa). The χ^2 test was conducted to compare the responses of the East Asian and British students. The χ^2 permitted me to reject the null hypothesis for Mid England ($p = 0.01$), and China university ($p = 0.007$) students. Southern England showed a borderline probability of 0.069. A measure of association (ϕ) is included as an indication of substantive significance (see Appendix XXIVc).

These results support the qualitative data, as both East Asian and British students at the two British universities commented on how U.K. lecturers vary. Some are threatened by open discussion and do not, as Paul (1993) proposes, engage in critical thinking themselves. This has implications for staff development and training, as well as for East Asian students' learning strategies. They need to understand, as most British students appreciate, that lecturers vary in their attitudes and teaching strategies, and to accommodate their own behaviour accordingly.

6.5 Rejection by 'In-Group'

Disapproval from one's own cultural group can also act as an inhibitor to free expression. A Chinese girl describes vividly how other East Asian students in her class criticised her for being too outspoken in the first few weeks of the course. She began the course as an unusually outspoken student, actively engaging in class discussions, thereby exhibiting Triandis' 'idiocentric' tendencies i.e. individualistic tendencies even though she was from a collectivist culture. The lecturers all appreciated her openness and contributions in class, especially as the majority of East Asian students were very quiet during those first weeks, and this girl had a rich working experience which added value to her contributions. During the pre-masters study skills course she was encouraged to contribute her ideas freely and was made to feel very

comfortable participating in this way:

At the very beginning [the study skills lecturer] always encouraged people to express their own opinion. That was a good beginning and from that I think 'O.K., the Western culture and the teaching is very nice. In that class there was more freedom to say something. (A32:39, Chinese)

However, she quickly discovered that although the British lecturers and British students were very comfortable with her outspokenness, some East Asian students were not:

At the beginning I was very brave to give my opinion, but later I thought it was not that good to be so prominent in the class. Other students felt unhappy and they don't want people so outstanding in the class (...). Some people will stare at me, black-mouth me afterwards, to say I'm ambitious or something. It makes me quite unhappy. So when I realised, I reserved my opinion. (A32:3, Chinese)

She felt hurt and upset, so much so that she made a conscious decision to be quiet in class unless directly addressed by a lecturer. This frustrated her because 'the purpose of me coming here is not to keep silent all the time. It's not the way to improve my English' (A32:17, Chinese). She used a Chinese proverb to explain this phenomenon: 'The bird which flies higher can easily be shot by the hunter', so 'one should not fly higher than the others. You should be the same'. This girl had been able to be more open and expressive in her advertising company back in China than in a masters course in the U.K.: "It doesn't work here. People don't like it. But when I was in my country all my friends said 'I like the way you are'" (A32:75, Chinese). Had her course lecturers understood the problems she was facing, then they may have helped all the students concerned to change their attitude through discussing the cultural issues openly. Why then did she not confide in them? She may have feared they would not understand or be sympathetic, or, more probably, she may have decided it was not worth losing further face by making an issue of it.

Thus, whilst British lecturers may encourage a student to engage in critical debate and discussions in class, there may at the same time be a counter-influence from the student's cultural group suppressing individualist public expression. In the case described above, the East Asian students were working against each other through peer cultural pressure to conform. This particular student had embarked on the 'journey' of developing her critical thinking with great enthusiasm, only to have it dampened and the journey terminated, because she felt victimised by other East Asian students who would not tolerate such Westernisation of her behaviour.

6.6 British Interviewees' Perceptions

All six British students had experienced in their undergraduate courses a classroom environment where open debate and discussion were the norm. They also recognised, however, that a greater depth of critical debate is required at masters level. All but one felt very confident and had no inhibitions about asking questions or contributing ideas in class.

However, three out of the six British students who were interviewed in Southern England University had taken a course in intercultural communication in the first term of their masters course which, they claimed, had helped them appreciate the different educational traditions and norms of East Asian students in their course. This enhanced their sensitivity to, and appreciation of the various language and cultural differences. The East Asian students in their class were seen as quieter than the Westerners, but also as highly intelligent. As the intercultural course continued, all three British adopted strategies to accommodate these differences. They noted, for example, that the Westerners dominated class discussions in the first few weeks, and all three made conscious efforts to hold back on their contributions so as to give the East Asian students more opportunity to contribute:

I did try to sit back to give other people a chance to comment.
(A41:40, British).

As my understanding grew, maybe I quietened down a little bit and didn't say quite so much. (A44:26, British).

One student deliberately started to ask publicly for clarification of any obscure terms because she was more aware of the language difficulties of other students: "So if I'm not sure of the meaning of a word I'll ask 'what does that mean?', because I know it will help everybody else" (A41:40, British).

Cross cultural understanding grew as the East Asian students began to share their perceptions. This British student describes how this affected her:

Participant: A girl in our class from Hong Kong holds the view that we should think more and talk less... and she told us that she was really taken back by the English way of jumping out and saying things, and coming out with things loudly, and jumping in. And she almost thought we were a bit rude, and strange and a bit arrogant, and it wasn't her way. So there's definitely a marked difference in the way we see things.

Interviewer: Was that a new understanding for you?

Participant: Definitely, definitely. As I say we've been looking at intercultural communication and with every bit of reading and every seminar my awareness was getting bigger and bigger (...). I have really become more aware of my own communication – how much I talk, the language I use.

(A42: 19-21, British)

As awareness amongst the class members grew and more East Asian students started contributing, so the British students noticed that they themselves “were sitting back and not talking quite so much, and it makes the dynamics of the group much better” (A44:24, British). The general view was that Westerners ‘miss out’ if the East Asian students fail to contribute to the class discussions : “I feel we are lacking in a perspective. We are missing out on a viewpoint or experience if they don't feel happy commenting” (A41:44, British)

Other changes included a greater effort to be friendly, an understanding that some students were not familiar with the British library system and referencing, and an increased willingness to help them. One student described these changes as:

(...) just more general thoughtfulness about whether they understand what I am saying, and whether they may be feeling vulnerable and ill at ease – that they may not say it outright, but that they may be lonely. I think I make more effort to speak and have conversations with them. (A42:27, British).

In contrast, the three British students who had not attended the intercultural communication course appeared to have more problems coping with the differences and were less culturally sensitive. For instance one British student admitted that she felt resentment when East Asian students on her course continued to be quiet in discussions:

Because even if I was tired I knew I would still have to speak out, because if I didn't there would be this deathly silence and really boring seminars when no one shared anything. (A43:10, British).

This data argues for the inclusion of a cultural awareness element in masters courses, so that all students can appreciate cultural diversity in the classroom in a positive light (see Appendix XXV).

All the East Asian interviewees agreed that traditional attitudes in their home countries as regards critical thinking are changing, albeit to varying degrees:

Interviewer: Do you think you can use critical thinking skills back in China?

Participant: China is changing. It's not always welcome. Shanghai is at front of Western culture. But after 5 or 10 years there will be no difference [between west China and east China].

(C7:21, Chinese)

Teaching styles also seem to be changing in some universities in East Asian countries (B10:46, Chinese lecturer). A few of the interviewed students described how they had studied at more Westernised universities back home, where they had experienced a more open education and where students could 'raise questions and challenge the teacher's ideas' (C9:32, Taiwanese). This is particularly so where teachers had studied abroad at doctorate level, and were trying to introduce Western methods into their teaching. However, the speed and extent of change appears to vary across East Asian countries. As mentioned earlier, Hong Kong may be an exception, as it was a British colony and more open to Western practices. Students from Japan and Korea, however, thought that the educational system in their countries would not change quickly in the future, although they thought the work environment in many companies may change more quickly as an increasing number of young people study abroad and gradually move into management positions.

To summarise this category, class debate and critical disagreement is often seen by East Asian students as public arguing, which is unacceptable in their cultures. Moreover, students often feel intimidated by Westerners' directness in challenging ideas and interrupting others mid-speech. Unlike British students, many are surprised to discover that U.K. lecturers vary considerably in the degree to which they encourage free expression. If, in the early stages of their developing confidence in speaking out in class, they are rebuffed by an insensitive lecturer, they feel it keenly, and further risk-taking can be halted altogether, through fear of losing face.

This chapter has considered the factors contributing towards the development of a student's critical thinking skills. The 'journey' that East Asian students make in adapting to Western academic norms of critical debate is either helped or hindered by the various issues which have been discussed. A lot depends on the attitude, not only of the East Asian student, but also of their U.K. lecturers and of the other students on their masters course. The next chapter continues to interpret the data presented in this chapter by examining the 'journey' that students make as they experience the British learning environment.

Chapter 7: The Adaptation Journey

This chapter begins by introducing the metaphor used to help interpret the findings, and provides a rationale for using metaphors in research. It goes on to develop a conceptual model of the various stages of the learning journey of East Asian masters students and how far they may travel in one year, given the right environment and support. It also explores to what extent any new critical thinking skills developed during the masters course are permanent acquisitions, or only temporary adaptations to suit the present requirements of the course.

7.1 The Use of Metaphors to Interpret the Findings

The East Asian students' learning experience can be likened to a journey of adaptation, which can, in turn, be explained in terms of a metaphor. Aristotle, in the fourth century B.C., believed that through the use of metaphors people could express themselves in a clearer and more attractive way; they could also learn and understand concepts better through metaphors (Mahon 1999:69). According to Cameron, metaphors are in effect 'reduced similes that can be expanded back into the literal' (1999:24). Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 149) suggest that metaphors can be very useful in research by acting as 'bridges' which link and comprise 'the known and the unknown, the tangible and the less tangible, the familiar and the new'. Metaphors can therefore serve as cognitive models of reality, and in this thesis they are used to seek an overall interpretation of the interview and questionnaire results, and from this to develop probabilistic theory which may be transferable to similar situations.

The academic tradition of East Asia is metaphorically illustrated by canal boat travel, and the Western tradition is represented by dinghy sailing on the open seas. At this point it is necessary to reiterate that the terms East and West are not used simplistically in this thesis (see pages 14), but that individual and inter-cultural differences are fully recognised within these broad terms, which describe general tendencies at most. The adaptation 'journey' of East Asian students is represented by the metaphor of learning a new set of sailing skills in a different environment. The medium of water is the same for both modes of travel, although these are quite different in terms of skills, equipment and expertise. In the same way, the underlying purpose of academic study in different cultures may be similar i.e. socialization of citizens into their culture, acquired knowledge, perceptions and skills. However, the mode of this study and how it is tailored to the specific culture are different. The metaphor of water travel, as opposed to other modes of travel, is used primarily because the researcher is familiar

with the skills and mechanics of sailing and canal travel, and so could easily draw parallels with learning acquisition.

Underpinning this metaphor is the insistence that neither mode of travel is superior to the other. They perform differently, and they 'fit' the unique geography (culture) of the different lands. These metaphors, of course, are over simplified and over generalised, but this is the nature of metaphors. Where the metaphor breaks down, as it inevitably must, then further discussion towards the end of this chapter aims to clarify. It must be stressed, however, as it was made clear on pages 108/9, that the purpose of this research is not to generalise the data findings to the wider population of East Asian masters students in the U.K. Nevertheless, an attempt is made here to interpret the data findings by use of metaphors, in the belief that they may be 'transferable' to other similar case studies.

The East Asian educational system suggests a metaphorical country where there is no accessible coastline and where, therefore, there is no opportunity or need to acquire dinghy sailing skills. However, throughout this country there is a sophisticated and long established network of canals for transportation. Some of the people of this metaphorical country travel to a far-off coastal land where there are no canals and the main means of transport is by small sailing boat. A lot of the skills they had previously acquired to master canal travel are not relevant here. This does not mean that they are forgotten or rejected, but rather left to one side whilst the new skills of open-sea sailing are mastered. On return home, some of the travellers return to their former life on the canals and are prepared never to use sailing skills again. Nevertheless, many of these travellers feel they have benefited from the overall experience. Others may search out rivers or lakes in their homeland, so as to maintain these sailing skills back home. Still others try to creatively combine some of their newly acquired skills with their traditional skills. This chapter begins by discussing the two modes of travel – canal travel, representing East Asian academic study, and dinghy sailing, representing Western academic study, and then goes on to develop theoretical ideas, based on the data, about the stages of the adaptation.

Canal Travel: East Asian Academic Study

Canals and their locks are feats of engineering and in some countries have served as the backbone of industrial and economic development (Canals, and canal locks, were developed in

China in 984 A.D., some 400 years before they were developed in Europe (Temple 1991)). The best routes have been chosen by experts and have been well proven and tried throughout the years, or even centuries. These metaphorically represent the traditional educational systems in East Asia. There is security in knowing the exact route and destinations. Stops for fuel and water are clearly marked on maps issued by the water board, the locks are reliable, and as long as one follows the rules of canal sailing, there is little risk involved. The canals are normally three or four feet deep and there are only two main risks: crashing into other boats (loss of face), which would not be life threatening, but would certainly cause damage, and sinking the boat by not following the instructions for using the locks (ostracisation through 'face' loss). These accidents are not common, however, and normally great care is taken to avoid them. Once on the canal, the route ahead is already mapped out and decided for one. The safest position is to take a central position and keep straight. At the locks (examinations) the lock keepers, with their expertise, are there to help one and to ensure safety. In a similar way, lecturers in East Asia are viewed as experts, ensuring safe passage to students, as long as students follow the rules.

There are skills to be mastered, such as manoeuvring the boat around tight corners, operating locks and swing bridges (academic literary styles, procedures for asking for help, exam techniques etc.). Other skills involve knowing the canal thoroughly so that there are no surprises or uncertainties; all the service points are known, for instance, as well as where the route bends awkwardly. There are few surprises in most East Asian exam systems, with much depending on intensive memorisation and rote learning. Once these canal skills are learned, however, one's attention can be focused on the surrounding landscape. Detailed observation, notes and drawing of flora and fauna, for instance, can be undertaken along the route, and in this way intensive and detailed knowledge gained. The canal company also provides an authoritative, comprehensive guidebook on all aspects of the route, which is essential reading for all serious travellers. In a similar fashion, East Asian education focuses on acquisition of knowledge through transmission teaching, and the information and sources are controlled by the authorities.

Collective consciousness is important on a canal boat, both among the crew, and towards other canal users. People must work as a team on the boat itself, as it takes at least three people to manoeuvre a canal boat through a lock. Consideration, turn-taking at the locks, and general

canal etiquette towards other boat users are also essential. Boats must pass on the right, for instance, and bio-gradable detergents should be used. Likewise, the collectivist societies of East Asia are generally more conscious of others' needs and sensitivities, needing to maintain their own, and others 'face'. Cultural norms and habits are acquired or 'inherited' in the society and passed on through the generations, much as canal families learn the ways of the canals from their earliest years. In both settings, there is always a small minority who choose to break these traditional codes, although the vast majority adhere to them without question because they recognise and accept that this is how that system works best. Similarly, conformity to social norms in East Asia provides status and an acknowledged, secure position in society.

Of course, there is a wide variety of personality types using the canals. Some are content to stay mainly on the boat, whilst others venture on-shore to explore, although they do so within the boundaries of the itinerary. Similarly, there is a wide range of East Asian student types and personalities and a range of educational experiences. Some have exercised a high level of critical thinking back home before studying in the West. Others are still struggling with the notion of critical evaluation even after their second term of a masters course.

Much is accepted as fixed and unchangeable on a canal, and there is no challenging or evaluating the underlying principles of the system. Tradition plays an important role in the design of the boats, but as the speed limit is only four mph., there is no scope or need for creatively designing better or faster engines, or more streamlined boats. Instead, creativity flourishes in adapting pieces of furniture within the boat so that they are multi-functional and utilise the limited space to the full. Similarly, there is little perceived need, or indeed freedom, for the established knowledge and theory taught in East Asian educational systems to be creatively challenged. Canal boats are also renowned for their creative artwork. Likewise, originality and creativity in the arts is a hallmark of East Asian cultures.

Dinghy Sailing: Western Academic Study

Dinghy sailing is an individualistic activity (and thus aptly represents Western individualism). Its movement relies on the wind and the skill of the sailor and it is designed to weather the storm. The destination, route, speed and direction are none of them guaranteed; they depend on the decisions and choices made en route by the sailor. Similarly, in Western academic

study, there are many alternatives, choices and decisions to be made autonomously by the student. However, the sailor, if s/he is wise, will maintain on-shore communication, receiving guidance and encouragement from other sailors and from the weather forecasters when needed. In the same way, although Western style learning stresses autonomy and independent learning, the teacher still plays a pivotal role, though a facilitating rather than a mentoring, authoritative one. The sailor may even disagree, or reject the advice of the experts on shore, if his/her own observations and experience contradict this advice.

Nautical maps and a compass are essential as the dinghy sailor is not in uncharted waters, but relies on existing knowledge about tides, weather etc. Likewise, in the West a great deal of emphasis is placed on wide reading and referencing of experts as a base for making one's own mind up and arriving at opinions. The compass is analogous to Western linear argumentation which keeps one on track and stresses a logical, sequential line of reasoning.

Risk surrounds the dinghy sailor, and s/he will have to have faith in him/herself as mistakes are probably inevitable. The wind, for instance, is often unpredictable and the sailor will need to react spontaneously at times. Similarly, in Western argumentation, confidence is crucial, together with a willingness to take risks and face uncertainty and ambiguity. One needs to acquire specialised skills e.g. in nautical map reading, rigging, tacking (critical reading, English competence) if one is to avoid capsizing. But even if one does capsize, the journey is not over and neither is it necessarily a sign of failure (i.e. mistakes are acceptable, provided one learns from them).

During the journey the sailor's attention is focused on the process of sailing and on problem solving. Consequently, s/he will only gain piecemeal knowledge of the coastline and islands passed, as the concentration must be on the process of sailing at all times. Similarly, in Western academia, it is more important to be able to apply and critically evaluate information than to accumulate a mass of knowledge. In other words, the process of learning is more emphasised than the product. Hence specialised, narrow expertise rather than generalised knowledge, tends to be the outcome of Western education.

The dinghy journey is unique in that the sailor will have combined the already 'known' about that stretch of water, the prevailing weather etc, with his/her own experience and observation,

and applied all this to the task in hand. S/he may even find errors in the maps or weather forecasts, or discover a weakness in the design of the boat. The final achievement will be his or her individual achievement, although others may have been involved indirectly.

Having metaphorically contrasted the two modes of travel, the various stages in the adaptation journey can now be explored. In this next section, the actual transition from one mode of operation to another is considered - for the East Asian students, from one academic environment, system and set of expectations to another. In exploring this, there are a number of questions to address: firstly, why do some East Asian students seem to acquire the required skills during this journey more quickly and more effectively than others? In metaphorical terms, why do some canal boat people make better dinghy sailors than others? Can one induce from the data whether a certain learning environment encourages acquisition of these new skills, and if so, can such an environment be described? These questions are explored in the remainder of this chapter. The thesis posits that there are identifiable stages in this learning journey, throughout which the development of critical thinking skills, as a primary requirement for U.K. masters students, is the focus.

7.2 Stages in the Learning Journey

Continuing with the sailing metaphor, the various stages involved in developing Western critical argumentation skills is represented as 'The Adaptation Journey' in Figure 1. In the first stage, the dinghy sailor has to learn the basic skills of the boat whilst still in the harbour ('learning the ropes'). The next stage is to move out from the safety of the harbour ('battling the element'), to skirting the coastline with relative competence but without daring to be adventurous, and then eventually to launch out onto the open seas ('developing natural expertise'). The final stage is full acculturation.

For the sake of simplicity, these stages have been depicted as linear, whereas in reality some students may experience overlap or back and forth movement between stages throughout the masters course. Cultural adaptation, as described by Kim, is a dynamic process:

by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or re-establish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment. (2002:260)

Moreover, students have different entry points and not all of them start at the first stage. On the contrary, East Asian students can enter this journey at any point, and with varying 'EASE',

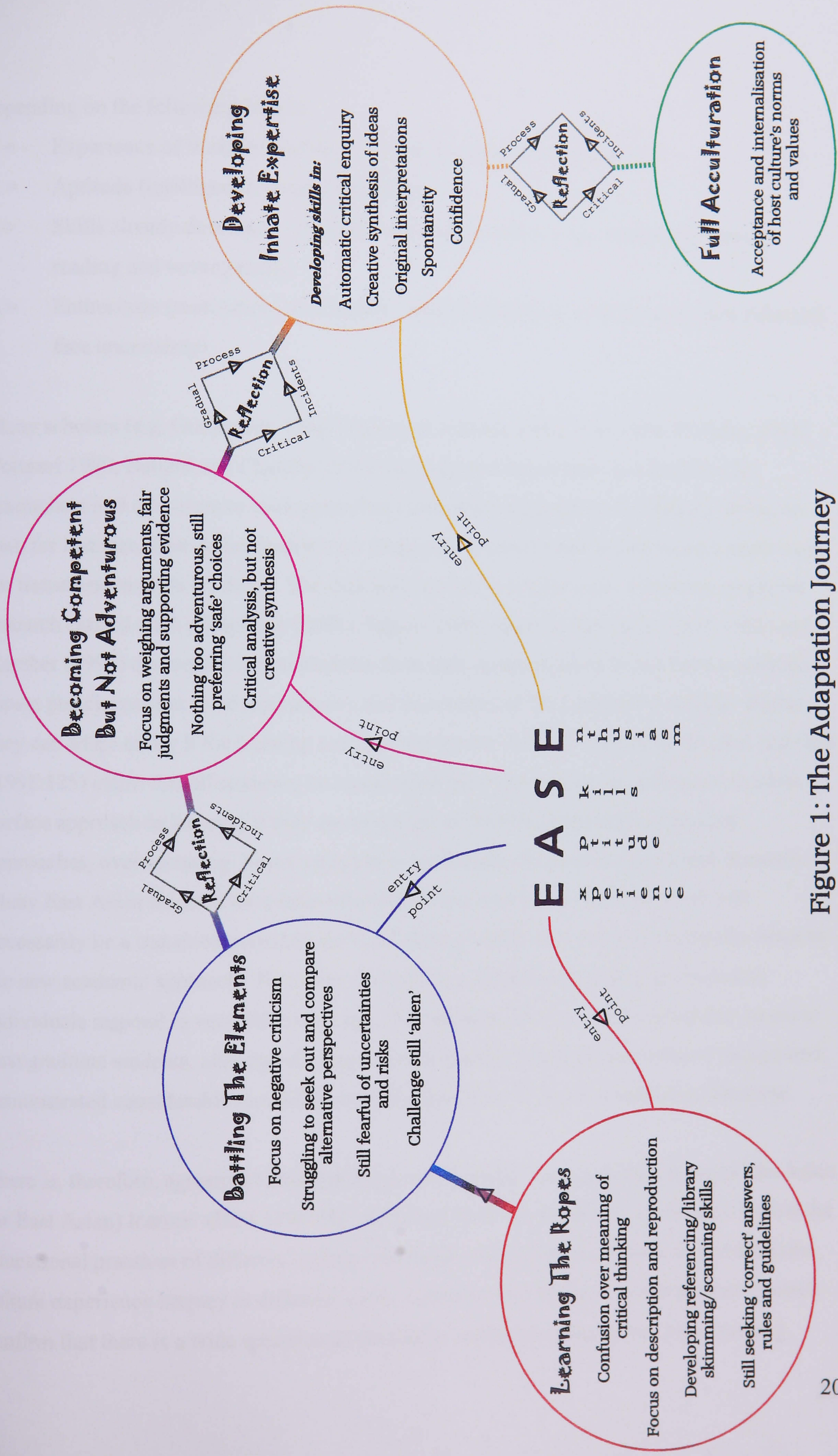


Figure 1: The Adaptation Journey

depending on the following factors:

- E** = Experience of Western teaching methodology and work experience
- A** = Aptitude (intelligence, mental flexibility)
- S** = Skills already developed (English competence, referencing, structuring essays, reading and writing skills)
- E** = Enthusiasm (motivation, teachability, open-mindedness, willingness to take risks and face uncertainty)

Many scholars (e.g. Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey & Nishida 1996, Hird 1996, Holliday 1994, Cortazzi 1990, Ballard and Clanchy 1991) have suggested that there is a tendency for researchers and educators to over-generalise cultural pre-dispositions in learning styles, so that, for instance, East Asian students are frequently characterised as exhibiting a *preference* for transmission-style teaching. The data indicate this is not the case. Likewise, empirical research carried out by Stapleton (2001), Biggs (1990), Kember and Gow (1990, 1991) and Kember (1996) demonstrates that students from East Asian cultures do not have a common, innate pre-disposition to be reproductive and descriptive in their academic writing. Rather, they can adapt easily if the learning environment allows them to. Similarly, Kember and Gow (1991:125) claim that all students, no matter what their culture, can be influenced to adopt a surface approach to learning if they are subjected to didactic, transmission teaching approaches, over-lecturing, heavy assignment workloads and surface assessment demands. Many East Asian students have been educated in this way and so for them there will necessarily be a transition period in the U.K., during which they will need to rapidly adapt to the new academic approach. However, even given a conducive learning environment, individuals respond in very different ways. For instance, Morita (2000) found that Japanese post graduate students, although sharing a similar gender, linguistic and cultural background, demonstrated considerable variability in their adjustment to Western academic discourse.

There is, therefore, agreement amongst these scholars that there is no such thing as 'the Asian (or East Asian) learner' (Hird 1996:35). Although there are 'dominant tendencies' within the educational practices of different cultures (Holliday 1994:133), individuals within the same culture experience literacy in different ways. Likewise, the findings of this current research confirm that there is a wide spectrum of individual students' experiences of the learning

journey, and that these experiences are determined both by the interaction of cultural background and the personal characteristics of each learner as an individual member of that culture. Kim, likewise, outlines various factors which can impede or facilitate the adaptation process, such as self image, interpersonal skills and positive attitude (2002: 267). The acronym EASE represents this individual variation.

Kim has argued that alongside individual variations, the 'Host Communication Competence' is a key element and 'serves as the engine of the adaptation process' (2002:268). For this study the host is the British university educational system and its communication competence relates to how well it gets its message across to the international students, and helps them to understand it. At each stage of the learning journey, certain 'helps' (teaching strategies) provide a positive learning environment, and during the discussion which follows these 'helps' will be explored alongside descriptions of the various stages. As indicated by the diamond shapes between stages 2 and 5 in Figure 1, a key element in the learning process is the student's own reflection on their experiences. Moreover, there may be a gradual advancement from one stage to the next, or it might be that critical incidents or events act as catalysts for change (see pages 183, 185, 192).

However, before embarking on analysing the various stages of the adaptation journey, the distinctiveness of the East Asian student's experience, compared with that of British students, must first be addressed. On page 137 it was highlighted how all but one of the interviewed British students felt confident and competent as regards their critical thinking skills. Even though this was a very small sample, the quantitative survey data supports this qualitative data, and suggests that 'critical thinking is within the British educational system' (A41:2 British. See page 137). However, the data also indicate that some British students demonstrate a lack of critical thinking skills (see pages 137/138). These findings are supported by research undertaken by Ballard (1995) and Kirach and Roach (1992) which suggest that some difficulties experienced by East Asian learners in adapting to a questioning, interpretive style of learning are also shared by some native speaking English students. Brown (1996, 1998:184) expresses concerns that the ideal of self realisation leading to personal autonomy encapsulated in the critical thinking movement are not being realised in U.K. schools, and he lays the blame for this on recent educational trends which have emphasised centralised control by government. As a result, many indigenous U.K. university entrants are not adequately

prepared in these skills.

What is not the same, however, are the cultural and second language influences on critical thinking development for East Asian students. The findings suggest that these students face unique cultural and linguistic challenges in acquiring and feeling comfortable with the Western approach to teaching and learning. This is not to say that there may not be parallels or similarities with the learning journey of some British students, especially minority ethnic British (A46:4, see page 138), although the journey stages and characteristics may differ significantly.

Stage 1: In the Harbour ('Learning the Ropes')

At this initial stage when students are first introduced to the Western academic norms and expectations, there are many new skills to master. Like a novice sailor, still in harbour, they need to familiarise themselves with the equipment, maps, compass and with the basic sailing skills, before venturing out of the harbour. They need to understand, for instance, the rationale behind the West's emphasis on referencing and wide reading. They need to acquire library skills quickly and understand the extent to which they are expected to read. At first they may mistakenly suppose that they need to read everything on the reading list (C5:12, Chinese. see page 162/3).

They also have to understand the need for developing critical reading skills, as well as for improving their scanning and skimming skills in English. Skimming articles was seen by the interviewees as one of the most important skills learned in the first term. English language competence determines how fast they can read, and whether they translate into mother tongue whilst reading and writing (A34:12; see page 167). Students may also engage in plagiarism, as paraphrasing may prove too difficult without a good level of English (A29:116, see page 171). The importance of the students having good levels of English is confirmed by Tanaka (2002), who explored the problems facing East Asian postgraduate students in the U.S.A. She identified ten academic activities where these students may experience difficulties due to their English language competence: understanding lectures, taking lecture notes, making oral presentations, asking questions during class periods, participating in class/group discussions, critically analysing reading materials, reading with comprehension, keeping up with reading assignments, preparing for writing papers, and writing academic papers. Tanaka found that

the English language learners' background of many East Asian students had not provided them with language skills that were sufficient to cope with the academic demands of their graduate programmes. These skills, however, are essential as a foundation if the higher order cognitive skills of critical thinking are to be developed and mastered. This, of course, has implications for recruitment criteria for language competence for East Asian students, and for pre-sessional or in-sessional language and study skills support programmes.

It needs to be pointed out, however, that although English language competence plays an important role in the 'easing-in' process, one cannot assume that because a East Asian student has near-native fluency they will automatically enter the journey at an advanced stage, or that when they do enter, their progress in critical thinking will necessarily be rapid, because of their fluency in English. Zhang (2002:12) elucidates on this as he explains that the greatest miscommunication can occur when a second language speaker has near-native fluency, because less allowance is then made by native speakers. He found that cultural presuppositions of Chinese students language competence led to miscommunication and misunderstanding, even when the students had near-native fluency. Gumperz and Tannen (1979:315), too, point out that when fluent speakers from different cultures assume that they understand each other they are less likely to question interpretations, and this can cause real difficulties as students engage in the academic activities outlined by Tanaka (2002).

In this early stage, East Asian students also need to get accustomed to critical debate and be prepared to contribute in class discussions. These activities may appear alien at first, and many may choose to remain silent, preferring to listen, for fear of making mistakes, looking unintelligent, or offending others – all of which might cause loss of face (B3:95, see page 175). At this stage ('Learning the Ropes') they may still be seeking the 'correct' answer to every assignment question, and be fearful of veering 'outside the box' (A40:36, page 131/132).

As with learning any new skill, the essential techniques must be mastered before creativity can flourish. It may appear to the students that what is required is to learn a new set of rules, and they will be anxious to discover what these are and to conform to them. Similarly, learning how to structure essays, and reference from wide reading may consume most of the students' energies in the first term of the masters course, so that they 'don't have time to challenge articles and always be asking 'why?' (A39:17, see page 162). This inevitably restricts

creativity.

In this early stage the students will require the greatest guidance and support. Some students will expect more support, in terms of caring and guidance, than is either deemed necessary by U.K. lecturers, or is available. Because of their previous notions about lecturers' roles and responsibilities, this difference in expectations can lead to confusion (C11:14, see page 142). Many will view lecturers as the ultimate authority on 'truth', and will not engage in questioning, disagreeing or challenging the lecturers' views. For others it will be more a case of not sensing the personal freedom to ask questions or challenge the ideas of superiors, even if they disagree with them (A33:74, page 186/7).

The data indicate that one of the main learning supports at the beginning of the course is for East Asian students to be presented with models: models of critical thinking in class debates, as well as exemplar assignments (A39:19, see page 156). However, in the early weeks of a masters course students may be expecting and looking for a 'set' route and clear instructions and guidelines, and such model answers may confirm their notion that there is a set style of writing and structure which is acceptable (C14:4, British Lecturer, see page 157). Lecturers need to be aware of this and to stress that there is a range of acceptable answers to any assignment question. Lecturers and Western students who engage in critical thinking and debate with a constructive, fair-minded, and open approach also provide role models for East Asian students to observe, 'prompting them to think even more critically' (C20:1, Chinese, see page 177).

Pre-masters and in-session study skills courses help introduce students to these expectations and are viewed by many of the interviewees as essential preparation for their masters course (A36:4). Also helpful are group tasks which require critical thinking where, in a small group, the student can safely experiment with risk taking. An older Korean student, for instance, told of how her traditional attitude towards age changed dramatically during the masters course (A51:5). Relationships in East Asian countries are hierarchical, with older people expecting and often demanding superior status. So when a young Thai girl volunteered to be the group leader, this Korean student and another older Japanese student felt this was improper and were uncomfortable with the arrangement at first. However, as they saw how competently she managed the group and the Western students' acceptance of her leadership,

despite her younger age, their attitude changed: 'I don't think about age any more'. Other students told how helpful it was to be able to observe Western students in a small group engaging in the critical evaluation process (C8:48, Taiwanese, see page 179). Recent quantitative research by Quitadamo (2002) and Daodee (2002) has produced supporting evidence that collaborative group-work enhances the development of critical thinking skills.

Most importantly, however, East Asian students must feel safe enough in an open and accepting classroom to risk being vulnerable and making mistakes. Moreover, the student's own motivation for studying in the West obviously affects their commitment, teachability and willingness to face the unknown. For instance, one Japanese girl recounted how, in her company back home, she had worked alongside another Japanese employee who had studied abroad, and how she had noticed, with admiration, that this girl was able to think critically and that her boss had welcomed her initiative and challenging ideas. This experience fuelled her desire to study abroad and to make every effort to acquire critical skills herself (A54:3, Japanese).

Stage 2: Leaving the Harbour ('Battling the Elements')

In this stage students may still hold misconceptions about what critical evaluation means. At first, they may see it in a purely negative sense, and seek to find fault in all that they read, believing they are expected to find 'something wrong with an author's theory or definition' (C6:9, see page 128). This, of course, is very difficult, if not impossible to do for some theories, and so students struggle. Metaphorically speaking, the sea tends to be viewed as 'the enemy'; the sailor has not yet learned to work with the elements.

So critical thinking may still be seen only in a negative light, as culturally inappropriate argumentativeness. However, as students progress through this stage they gradually move away from the idea of negative confrontation, towards a search for which argument is more convincing in its evidence. A Japanese student, for instance, began the masters course believing that she needed to negate each author's viewpoint. After a few months she realised that she could focus instead on comparing and contrasting the strengths, as well as on the weaknesses of the various viewpoints, rather than just presenting a negative critique. This she found 'more comfortable, because arguing is not Japanese' (C11:20 Japanese).

What the data suggest is that even a few weeks into the masters course, and once the students begin to write assignments, there is still a tendency to seek out and agree with the lecturers' viewpoints, even though the students have been told that this is not the expectation of U.K. lecturers. There continues a sense of uncertainty and risk, even though they may observe in classroom discussions critical thinking being modelled by lecturers and Western students. Many of the East Asian students are keenly aware of their own weaknesses and lack of skills, and may fear the uncertainties and risks involved in sailing (independent thinking and evaluation). They 'don't know which way is right, what to believe' and 'which direction to go' (B5:60, Chinese, see page 152). The result of all this is that they are guarded in what they say, 'mindful when talking', and always checking themselves to see whether their ideas 'are too naïve' (C10:36, Chinese, see page 180/181). They may also be offended and embarrassed when Westerners interrupt or 'jump into' a discussion 'stopping you in the middle with disagreement' (B4:42, Chinese).

As they progress through this second stage, however, the students begin to understand that lecturers are facilitators, not gurus who know everything and who are beyond challenge, and that learner responsibility and autonomy are norms in Western higher education. They begin to understand that they can be more self-directed in their decisions during the masters course. They can have freedom to select their own destination, modes of travel and itinerary, rather than these being imposed rigidly from above. However, this brings its own risks and dangers. Important destinations or landmarks may be missed; there's even a risk of complete derailment. Hence, the interviewees suggested a 'Middle Way', combining Eastern and Western approaches; a road map and a clear, explicit guide, alongside a measure of freedom and autonomy. Certainly, at the beginning this would provide a stepping-stone to the Western ideal of independent learning.

During this stage the students also gain more confidence in paraphrasing, depending on their English language skills. Nevertheless, most of their time and energy are focused on reading and note-taking, processing information, referencing correctly, and trying to discover alternative viewpoints from their reading. They may still have little or no confidence in their own opinions and thinking abilities: "We'd rather believe in somebody else than believe ourselves" (B3:123, Chinese, see page 129). It also appears from the data that many students experience inner conflict when engaging in this novel dialectical debate, and challenging

scholars' ideas may feel alien and against their cultural sensitivities:

It is very hard to confront with ourselves, it is a struggle to write. Thinking in English is like arguing with another person. I am not allowed to confront or to conflict with myself in Chinese. (A10:495, Taiwanese, see page 132)

Lecturers need to be sensitive to all these fears and uncertainties, and give lots of encouragement and opportunity for them to speak out in class (A36:23-25, Taiwanese, see page 182). In addition, two other successful teaching strategies emerged from the data. In the U.K. case studies, students' understanding of critical evaluation was facilitated by lecturers actively encouraging them to critically apply theories to their own work and cultural experiences (C2:36, Chinese, see page 135). Moreover, if Western students are made aware of cultural differences e.g. by including an element of inter-cultural communication theory into their masters course, as happens in Southern England university, then they will be far more sensitive to these issues (A42:19-21, British, see page 193/194).

Stage 3: Skirting the Coastline ('Becoming Competent but not Adventurous')

In this stage the sailor has ventured out of the safety of the harbour, is on the open sea, but is keeping to the relative safety of the coastline. Nothing too adventurous is attempted, but confidence grows as the journey proceeds. Students are skimming and scanning material more confidently and reading more critically, but again, competence in this skill is dependent on their English language skills. Moreover, they are becoming competent in using link words and phrases in their writing to provide cohesive, explicit and linear logic to their arguments. As they reflect on the differences in cross cultural literary styles, so they begin to understand the different emphasis on inference or explicitness in high or low context cultures (C8:18, Chinese, see page 164).

The students are now engaging competently in comparing and contrasting views. They critically analyse the various viewpoints and weigh up conflicting evidence and arguments to reach a reasoned opinion or conclusion. Critical thinking is becoming more 'natural' now (A54:1, Japanese). Because of extensive reading around subjects, the student is realising that 'published authors differ a lot in their thinking and opinions and everything needs analysing' (A54:1, Japanese). At this stage they are replacing 'their belief that written texts are unalterable with one that sees them as contestable' (Hird 1996:36) and they see that existing articles and known knowledge must first be analysed before personal opinions can be reached.

Thus they have acquired all the basic techniques and are practised in questioning viewpoints and perspectives. Providing examples of well argued, critical articles can be another way in which lecturers can help students develop these skills: “When I read them I catch how they evaluate some theory and how they compare” (A38: 48, Korean, page 157). This same student, six months on, realised how much her critical thinking had developed when she read some Korean articles on a subject she was researching, and found them by contrast to be uncritical. At first she found herself reverting to her old way of passive acceptance, but because she was very interested in the subject she ‘couldn’t help’ herself from ‘asking critical questions whilst reading the one-sided view which was presented in the article’ (A51:1, Korean).

However, although they are being more reflective at this stage, the students are not yet creatively synthesising the various views and there is no originality or evidence of risk-taking in their own judgements and opinions. Indeed, some students feel that Western norms for structuring an argument prevent freedom of thought and creativity (A32:109, Chinese, see page 136). They are, however, learning to question the text and they begin to feel that they have a ‘right to make mistakes’ (A36:11, Taiwanese, see page 145) as they observe that neither their peers nor the lecturers ‘care if they are wrong’. So gradually they become more relaxed about contributing their opinions. They also begin to focus on what interests them, rather than believing they must read everything in depth. There is a growing appreciation of the value of open debate and interactive discussion, realising that through students’ contributions ‘the quality’ of classroom debates can be ‘raised’ (A37:16, Japanese; see page 149). In this way, they grow in confidence that they, as students, have something to say.

Hird presents an interesting insight into this transition. He describes two phases in the transition journey into the Western academic community. In the first phase students become adept at taking the objective stance of the critical spectator, where they ‘need to filter themselves almost completely out of the analysis, as they learn to master the conventions of academic impersonality’ (1997:33). Thus self is ‘separate’ at this stage and internal, or intuitive knowledge is not relevant (Belenky, Clinchy, Godberger & Tarule 1986). Students then move into a second phase of acquiring academic discourse skills, which involves a re-emergence of the personal presence of the student: ‘the student is now encouraged to express a subjectivity within the discipline of the objectivity developed during the earlier apprenticeship

phase' (Hird 1997:33). Having learned the rules of the academic community, and the ability to apply them appropriately, the student must go beyond this to insert their own interpretation into the process. Their presence and personal opinions/interpretations are now made explicit, rather than being 'camouflaged' (Hamp-Lyons 1991:99), and the right of personal authority begins to be established. The first of Hird's phases can therefore be described as imitative, detached and impersonal, and relate to stages 1 and 2 in the critical learning journey model. The second of his phases can be described as 'inventive', when the students have found their own voice and are learning to assert themselves, and relates to stages three and four of the model.

Stage 4: The Open Seas ('Developing Innate Expertise')

This stage involves original and creative critical evaluation of concepts, which gains students the highest marks in their assignments, and which needs to be achieved for success at the dissertation stage. It equates with Paul's 'strong critical thinking' which emphasises fair and open mindedness. At this stage, self reflection is evident i.e. the ability to evaluate one's own thinking (Paul 1993:18), as well as 'skilled scepticism' (Siegal 1988:13), and a willingness to challenge and question one's deepest beliefs and assumptions. Critical evaluation is becoming innate and they find they are automatically and spontaneously questioning whilst processing information, as opposed to asking questions only after first thoroughly processing the information (A54:5, Japanese). This applies to both critical reading and class debates. They engage in creative synthesis and combining of ideas, are confident, more relaxed and even begin to enjoy this approach (A26:28, Chinese, see page 183).

People learn by experience and by trial and error, but what gets them from experience to understanding is reflection. Reflection helps raise awareness of ourselves as learners and helps us to see that we can direct and change our learning (Hinett 2003). Reflective thinking is a transformational process (Biggs 1999) which promotes autonomous and deep learning through critical enquiry (Moon 1999). The data suggest that reflection (represented in the diamond shapes in Figure 1 on page 202) is increasingly in evidence after stage 2 of the adaptation journey. This is in line with the views of other researchers who have offered hierarchical taxonomies of learning where only the later stages involve reflection (Perry 1970, Biggs and Collis 1982, Bloom 1956).

Reflexivity can be aided by open discussion of an individual's adaptation journey, for example in tutorials. Likewise, written feedback on assignments from lecturers can alert students to gaps in their awareness and understanding. The data findings highlight some instances where East Asian students have believed that they were already operating adequate critical thinking skills, when in fact they were still in the early stages of development. In these cases lecturers can help move the students from 'unconscious incompetence', to 'conscious incompetence', where they see how they could develop, and finally through to 'conscious competence' (Race 2003).

One Chinese student who had engaged in a good deal of self reflection, and had consciously worked through these cultural differences in thinking and self expression, claimed that her 'journey' had been accelerated greatly by mixing socially with Westerners and being influenced by their readiness to 'think outside the box, and challenge existing thinking' (A53:6, Chinese). In this way, critical evaluation in everyday life as well in academic pursuits was becoming 'more natural' to her. Zhang (2002) also found that 'real-life interaction with native students is most helpful, if not essential, in developing what Hymes (1972, 1974, 1981) has coined 'communicative competence'. This competency in communicating meaningfully stresses the social and cultural phenomenon acquired and learned through social interaction (Firth & Wagner 1997). This suggests that as East Asian students engage in social interaction with native speakers outside of the classroom, so this will facilitate their transition through the various stages of the critical learning journey.

Alongside reflection, critical incidents (also represented in the diamond shapes in Figure 1 are instrumental in the transition process from one stage to the next. For example, a Chinese student reached a crisis point towards the end of her first term, when she actively decided to 'put ego, self esteem and face aside' (A40:6, see page 185), all of which had been restricting her free expression. From that point onwards she made significant progress in her assignment writing and classroom participation. Critical incidents, however, can be negative and result in a serious setback, or even stoppage, in the adaptation journey. Another Chinese student, for example, 'shut down' and progressed no further in the critical journey because of negative comments from her own cultural in-group, who 'black-mouthed' her for launching out and experimenting in the new environment. She, unfortunately, allowed herself to be inhibited by peer pressure and disapproval so that her risk-taking tendencies were finally curtailed (A32:3

Chinese, see page 192).

In this stage ('Developing Innate Expertise') the dinghy sailor is working with the elements. S/he can pick up the wind easily and spontaneously (identifying and questioning alternative perspectives), and has acquired an innateness about her skills. The work is increasingly challenging, the further from the coast she sails, but also more rewarding as uncertainties and risks are faced and overcome. The sailor thus becomes confident in his/her own judgements and decisions. After three months into the masters course, the majority of the East Asian students interviewed had not acquired this level of critical thinking, and were not able to produce comprehensive, spontaneous definitions of what academic critical thinking means, as could the British students (see page 137). There were, however, a few who did reach this level of critical evaluation by the end of term one (C10:24, Chinese; A39:13 Chinese).

The data indicate that by the end of the course a minority of the interviewed students reflected that they had been developing critical thinking skills before coming to the U.K. for their masters, but had not been allowed the opportunity to use or develop them to their full potential back home. One Japanese girl, for instance, thought that although the concept was not entirely new to her, she had never been asked 'why?' in her work, but had been trained to accept, remember and never question. For her it was more like a 'waking up' transitional process (A54:4, Japanese). Another Chinese student thought that the main difference lay in access to resources (C22:1, Chinese).

In contrast, many claimed that they had been exposed to an entirely different way of thinking. Others reported that although they had believed at the start of the masters course that they were already skilled in critical evaluation, they realised towards the end of the course that they had not been so skilled (C21:1 Chinese). All those interviewed, however, agreed that good feedback from lecturers on their critical analysis encouraged them to be more self-reflective about their personal development of these skills.

Stage 5: Acculturation ('Total Adaptation')

If the sailor reaches this stage then s/he has acquired native expertise and can fully operate in the host environment without influence from his own cultural norms and values; they have

completely accepted and internalised the new cultural habits. According to White's 1976:18) cross cultural adaptation model, the East Asian students would be enculturised through their childhood socialization into their home cultures. On settling in a foreign culture, they would go through simultaneous processes of becoming 'deculturised' as they lost or unlearned their old cultural habits, and 'acculturised' as they became resocialized and gained/learned new cultural traits. They would finally become assimilated into the foreign host culture through acceptance and internalization of that culture. However, none of the East Asian students involved in this thesis saw themselves as attaining, or indeed wanting to attain stage five. The reasons for this are explained further on pages 219/220/224/225.

To summarise this chapter, the data findings have been interpreted by using the metaphor of canal travel to describe the East Asian educational systems and their traditional norms of learning and teaching styles. Similarly, Western academic norms and expectations are represented by the metaphor of dinghy sailing. Although different, neither approach is superior to the other, and the common symbol of water travel appears in both metaphors, representing the underlying common elements in human learning.

The various stages that East Asian students appear to go through in acquiring Western skills in critical argumentation have also been discussed, as illustrated in Figure 1. There are a number of theoretical principles that emerge from this discussion. Firstly, students moving from one set of norms to the other will need to acquire a new set of skills, and the 'EASE' with which they move across depends on their previous experience, aptitude, skills and enthusiasm or motivation. Five theoretical stages in the critical learning experience are proposed, represented by the five circles in Figure 1, starting from the safety and low-risk environment of the harbour, and moving out eventually to the challenges and uncertainties of the open seas. The point was made that these stages are not necessarily linear, but back and forth movement may occur, depending on the demands of the learning task. Students may enter at any point, although the data suggest that the majority of East Asian students enter at stages 1 or 2. Western students may also follow similar stages, but East Asian students are subject to distinctive cultural and language influences, which have significant effects on the acquisition or application of critical thinking skills

Similarly, students can leave the adaptation journey at any point and not necessarily progress

onto the next stage. Some go no further than stage 2 before they exit; others exit at stages 3 or 4; and indeed none of the interviewed students in this research proceeded to stage 5. One of the keys to a student's success in adapting is the extent to which they reflect on their own learning experience (represented by the diamond icons between stages 2 and 5 in Figure 1). Early on, students are so concerned with learning the basic elements of critical thinking and argumentation as they move from stage 1 to stage 2, that there is little mental energy or time left for reflecting on the process. A more in-depth discussion follows in the next chapter concerning the different points of exit, the implications of exiting early in the process, and associated with this, the extent to which the critical skills acquired in the West might be retained once the student returns home.

Chapter 8: Exiting the Adaptation Journey

This chapter develops the conceptual model further by discussing the different points of exit, the implications of exiting early in the process, and associated with this, the extent to which the critical skills acquired in the West might be retained once the student returns home. It goes on to introduce the concept of a 'Middle Way' approach to critical thinking, which the findings suggest may be more acceptable to East Asian students. This synthesises 'conciliatory dialogue' and 'wrestling debate' (see Figure 3). The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research and some final thoughts on the researcher's personal learning journey throughout this thesis.

Some students may consciously decide to exit the journey before they complete their masters degree. Examples of this were discussed on pages 191/192. Others, and this includes the majority of the students interviewed for this thesis, only terminate the adaptation journey when they need to return home. In both instances the exit point could be any one of the five stages depicted in Figure 2 (see page 218). Should the student return home having only reached stage 2 of the adaptation journey, then the data suggest that his/her Western style critical skills will only just be developing, and the student him/herself will not fully appreciate the benefits of the Western approach. They will be likely, therefore, to view the new skills as mere academic tools that are necessary for completing the masters course, but which are of no further relevance to their lives back home. Students returning home, having attained stage 3 of the journey, may feel that their critical thinking skills are not fully developed and that more time and practice is needed before they become habitual and fully internalised. Thus, students at this stage think that some of their newly acquired skills may be lost, or 'fade', when away from a Western environment (C21:3, Chinese).

In contrast, a Taiwanese student felt it was 'like learning to ride a bicycle' (A52:5, Taiwanese). She believed that she would never forget her learning experience in the U.K., but she was also aware that any active use of critical thinking would be very limited for her on return home, because of the strength of traditional values. Towards the end of her masters course, however, whilst still in the U.K., she expressed her desire to retain and use her newly acquired skills as much as possible on return home. Another student thought that for most East Asian students, critical thinking cannot fully develop during the first two terms of a taught masters course which are lecture and seminar based. She thought that more in-depth

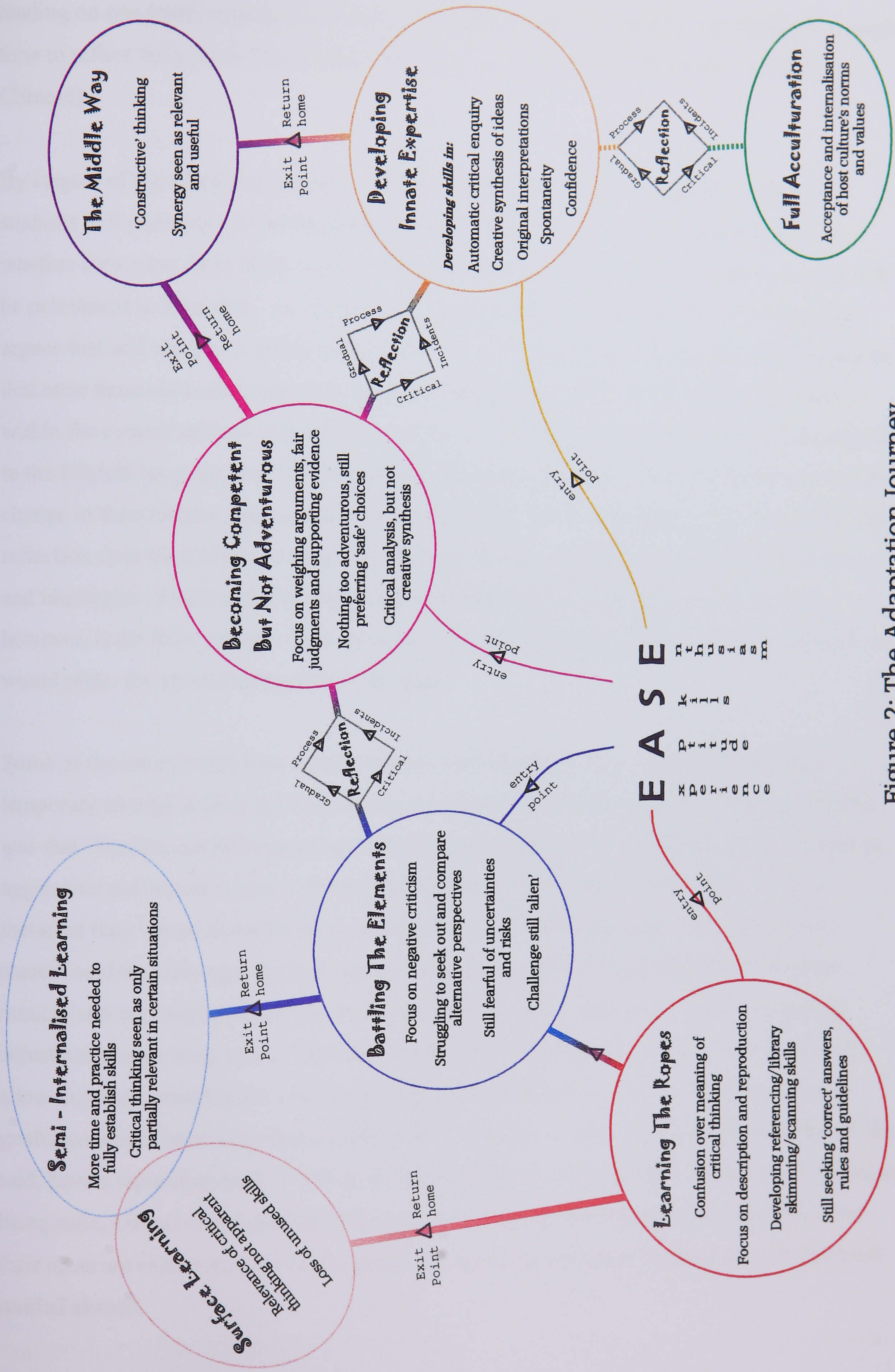


Figure 2: The Adaptation Journey

reading on one topic, such as is possible for the dissertation, is needed to give students enough time to reflect fully, or in Paul's terms, to engage in 'strong critical thinking' (A50:1, Chinese).

By stage 4 of the adaptation journey, critical skills are becoming internalised, so that the students will probably carry them back when they return home. This depends, though, on whether they view these skills as relevant in their home contexts. Whether these changes will be permanent is debatable. As discussed on pages 82-85, Street (1994:142), among others, argues that self identity is inextricably linked with language and discourse practices. It may be that once these students return home and start operating in their mother tongue again and within the context of their own culture, that they will find these supposed changes were linked to the English language and Western cultural environment of their study year, and not to some change in their identity. In contrast, Habermas (1984, 1987) claims that if one engages in self reflection then the self can be freed from its own culture - from its imposed roles, prejudices and ideologies. Whether this is happening in practice with East Asian masters students, however, is far from certain. This question lies outside the scope of this research, although it would make for an interesting follow up study.

Some of the interviewed East Asian students were clear that they would only tolerate a temporary change in their thinking during the period of their study abroad. Their perception was that Western outspokenness and individualistic behaviour and attitudes would be seen as aggressive and would be met with strong disapproval from family and friends, and that therefore they would abandon them on return home (C2:48, Chinese). A Korean female student said that although she had enjoyed the experience of having freedom in decision making and expressing herself openly in the U.K., she knew she would have to make big adjustments once back home. Her age (32) and privileged status at work, however, would allow her some potential for employing critical thinking skills at work, whereas younger graduates would have to conform more (A51:3, Korean). Those who have studied abroad, she said, have a reputation back in Korea of 'being difficult to work with'. They are often seen as being rude, offensive and disrespectful, and older colleagues feel personally insulted when their ideas are challenged or when improvements are suggested by younger people who have studied abroad.

Thus, students who are not prepared to face confrontation or misunderstanding when they return home may decide that the change in thinking required by their Western masters course should only be temporary (Miedama & Wardekker 1999:79). The interviewees claimed that many returning home do not want to appear different or strange, and therefore they try to adjust back again (W6:30 Chinese; A53:1 Chinese). However, it may be more difficult to change back entirely as returnees are 'no longer what they used to be, even though they try hard to adjust themselves' (C10:96, Chinese).

Interviewees also claimed that East Asian students who have become acculturated into Western styles of critical thinking and argumentation/debate, on return home are viewed by some in a positive light and by others in a negative light. Two derogatory terms in China are used for returnees: 'bananas' for people who are 'Chinese on the outside but foreign on the inside'; and 'eggs' for those who are 'foreign on the outside but Chinese on the inside' (B13:1, 7, Chinese). One student was called 'foreign devil' by his friends and family because he had changed in his behaviour since learning English and being exposed to Western teaching methodology (B13:1, Chinese). However, returnees are viewed positively by many, especially by the young: "Chinese who have studied abroad are different. You can see it in their faces, their eyes sparkle. They are more relaxed; they are popular and welcomed by people. Chinese companies prefer to employ them for trade because they understand both cultures" (B13:8, Chinese). One Chinese lecturer said that studying abroad had made her more confident and that she found she used hand and facial gestures more when communicating with others.

On the other hand, the skills acquired whilst studying abroad are not always valued by the educational authorities back home. University supervisors may not approve of, or allow, critical thinking, and returning teachers may have difficulties in implementing new ideas, either because they are 'not given the chance to use' what they learned abroad (B10:40, Chinese lecturer), or because of the demands of the official textbook and exams (B9:13 Chinese).

The above discussion indicates that awareness in advance of the negative repercussions and consequences of using critical thinking on return home might cause some students to withdraw from experimenting with it. This, in turn, may prevent them from developing into proficient users of those skills. On the other hand, the data suggest that many students reaching stages 3

or 4 choose a pragmatic third alternative to either fully embracing the Western approach, or to rejecting it as incompatible with their own culture. This third way was frequently described as 'the Middle Way' by the interviewees, which synergises Western and Eastern approaches to critical thinking. The next section explores what this synergy looks like, and how it attempts to merge what the students perceive as the best elements of Eastern and Western traditions of critical argumentation. From this are developed theoretical ideas to explain why students prefer this approach. Whether there is a permanent internal transformation of the traveller's mindset is also explored i.e. how s/he perceives knowledge and learning, and whether any change in behaviour is merely external, or reflects an internal mindset change. Metaphorically speaking, on return home, can the sailing skills and experience on the open sea be left behind, like travelling gear, or even forgotten, having no further influence or impact on life and thinking? Or are the sailing skills internalised to the extent that they remain even in a very different environment?

To continue with the metaphor, once back in the 'land of canals', the dinghy sailor will need to re-adapt to a culture where Western-style overt use of critical thinking skills may not be acceptable or relevant. Certainly one cannot 'tack' from side to side on a canal, and the strength and direction of the wind is no longer relevant. Students may wish to 'culturalise' their new skills by integrating them into their lives within the context of their own culture, so that they are not lost or remain unused. This merging describes the 'Middle Way'. At this point the metaphor breaks down, however, as it is hard to imagine integrating dinghy sailing skills into canal boat sailing. Nevertheless, to keep with the metaphor, one can imagine returnees choosing to explore river journeys, perhaps creating a hybrid type of boat, which enables some wind-powered travel alongside engine-powered movement. This might be coined 'situational sailing' i.e. an adaptation of open sea sailing which is more appropriate to this particular situation. Rivers can be very wide and deep, and often contain the unexpected, such as rapids or even lakes, that require different sailing skills from those used on canal routes. It could be that the 'Middle Way' approach is such a hybrid notion, allowing the most appropriate and useful elements of both Eastern-style conciliatory, and Western-style 'wrestling' debate to be combined. This synergised form would then be acceptable, and yet at the same time innovative, within the cultural contexts of the students' home countries. Figure 3, on page 222, outlines how the 'Middle Way' synergises the polarised approaches (Figure 3 is the expansion of 'The Middle Way' exit route on Figure 2, page 218). The model

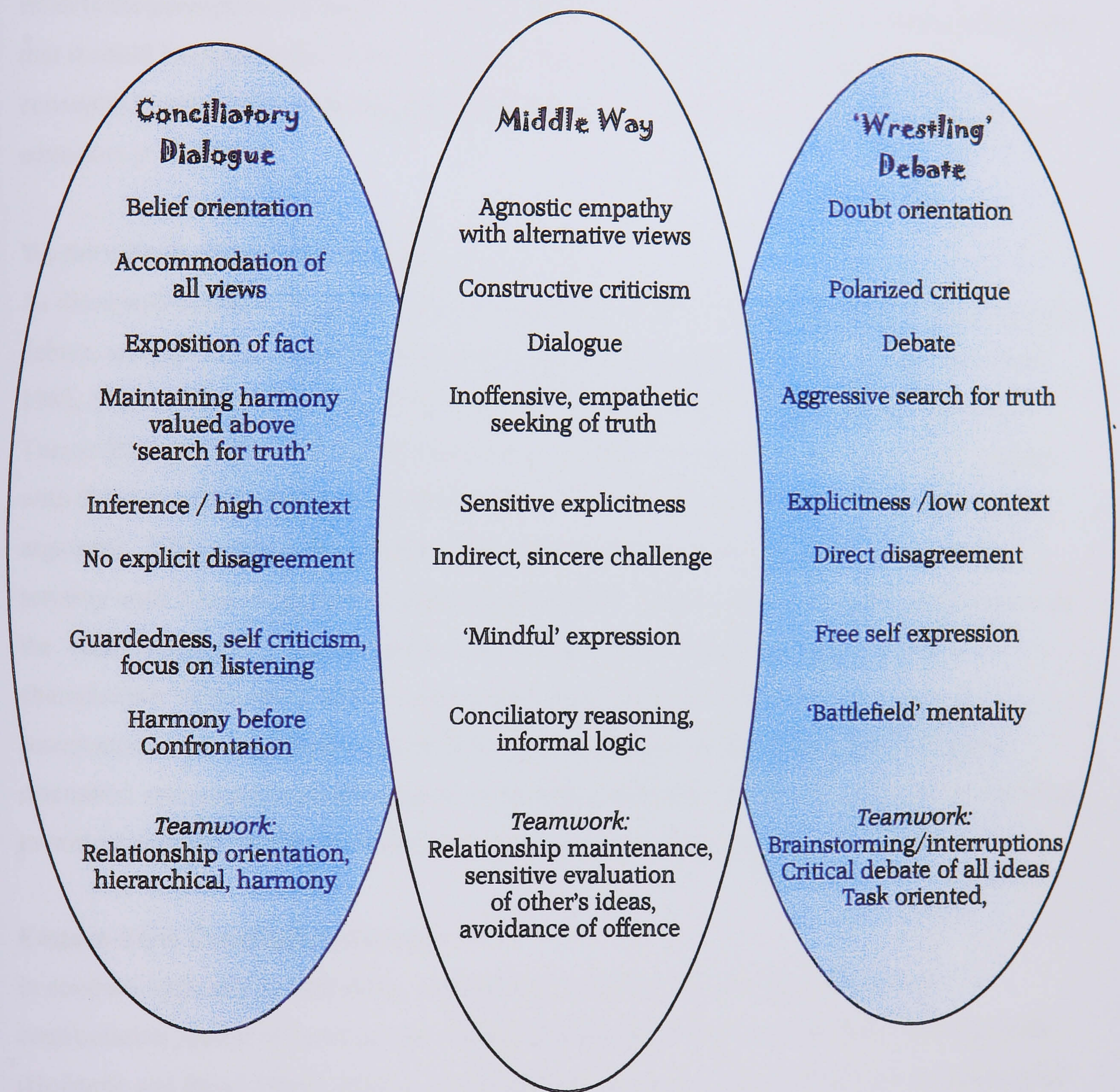


Figure 3: The Middle Way

represents probabilistic theory (see page 92), which has been inductively derived from the empirical data collected over the four years of the research. There is no claim that it is representative of all masters students in the U.K. – whether British or East Asian - but that it reflects the perceptions of those involved in the thesis research, across the three case sites, and that it could be transferable to other cases. There follows a brief explanation of this conceptual model (Figure 3, see page 222), followed by a discussion of the implications for educators in the West.

Western-Style ‘Wrestling’ Debate

As discussed on pages 56-61, Western-style academic critical argumentation involves rigorous debate, an aggressive search for truth and a discerning of error, bias and contradiction (Paul 1982, 1993, 1994; Ennis 1962, 1984, 1987, 1996; Siegel 1988). This has been described by Thayer-Bacon (1992, 1993) as ‘the battlefield mentality’ which results in polarized critiques, with theories and ideas rejected or accepted on the basis of supporting evidence and logical argument. It is based on the premise that evidence should be held in doubt and subject to scrutiny until it can be proved legitimate and truthful. Indeed, this is reflected in the notion of the ‘Null Hypothesis’ of quantitative data analysis. A need for explicitness is one characteristic of the low context communication of Western culture, together with an acceptance of free expression and of direct, public disagreement. Teamwork and open discussion encourage brainstorming of ideas with a readiness to reject any that do not stand up to critical analysis. It can therefore be described as ‘wrestling’ debate.

Eastern-Style Conciliatory Dialogue

In contrast, typically in East Asia, maintaining harmony and avoiding offence or confrontation appear to be of greater value and importance than the search for absolute truth (Hofstede and Bond 1984). Hence, any evaluation of ideas would be based on the premise of first accepting all contributions with a view to conciliatory accommodation. In these high context cultures, inference rather than explicitness is preferred. Also, in East Asian academic discourse there is an emphasis on listening to others, exposition of accepted fact, and restraint in expressing personal opinions, especially when these are contrary to the common consensus. Likewise, relationships among team members are more important than task completion, and critical evaluation of team members’ ideas to achieve the best solution carries less weight than maintaining harmony.

The Middle Way

The 'Middle Way' combines these two quite different approaches. Although characterised by constructive dialogue (Thayer-Bacon 1993) which is inoffensive and which involves empathetic listening to the other's viewpoint, the Middle Way nevertheless does allow some challenge. This, however, is indirect and the focus is on reasoning which aims to bring together, rather than separate. Participants are therefore very 'mindful' (Ting-Toomey 1999) of their use of language and are sensitive and circumspect in their use of explicitness in positing an idea. The aim is not to battle between two polarized positions, as in the Western adversarial approach to debate, but to sustain a more conciliatory approach which allows ample space for diversity of opinions. In this 'gentler' approach to critical debate, one of the top priorities is to maintain relationships and preserve the dignity and integrity of all participants. The Middle Way thus begins the search for truth with an 'agnostic empathy' towards all views presented. The term 'empathy' here, is used in line with Thayer Bacon's (1993) definition of it (see page 68-71), to describe a sensitive 'openness' to another's viewpoint, a determination to listen fair-mindedly and delay judgement and critical evaluation until the other's position is fully understood and 'entered into' in a sympathetic fashion.

The evidence from this thesis suggests that the majority of East Asian postgraduate students ultimately reject full acculturation. That is, they do not fully accept and internalise the academic norms and values of the U.K., regarding critical thinking and argumentation. On the contrary, all the students in the research who had reached stage 4 (and some, stage 3) opted for the 'Middle Way' in preference to going on to stage 5 (full acculturation). To them, Western critique is perceived as too insensitive and unnecessarily offensive, not only in the Western academic sphere, but also in the Western media and in society generally. They feel uncomfortable when they see critical thinking and debate degenerate into hurtful cynicism. This is in agreement with Tannen's argument that 'the scale is off balance, with conflict and opposition over-weighted' in Western debate (1998:6).

So, having begun to develop innate skills in stage 4 of the adaptation journey, they then use these very skills to evaluate, and in part reject, Western critique as being unattractive in light of their own cultural values. However, they do appreciate some aspects of critical thinking, and strive to combine the best elements of this approach with their own traditional values. What they appear to be rejecting is the confrontational, battlefield approach, which is doubt

orientated, and which emphasises an aggressive search for truth. Instead, they favour the more empathetic, 'constructive' thinking advocated by Thayer-Bacon (1993), and the conciliatory reasoning which values maintenance of relationship above the need to push forward one's own opinion on others (Orr 1989). As East Asian cultures score higher than Western cultures on Hofstede's femininity dimension, this more nurturing, less aggressive approach may be more appealing to East Asian students.

The Middle Way also synergises the U.K.'s stress on low context explicitness with East Asia's preference for high-context inference, resulting in what I am terming 'sensitive explicitness' (see Figure 3). This kind of sensitivity towards others' feelings and face, merges with a search for truth in the Middle Way, so that one can be true to oneself and honest, without being offensive. This would also mean a moving away from having to always infer, or guess at what people are really thinking which, as one Chinese student admitted, can be very tiring and difficult.

Most of the students were under no illusion, however, that it would be easy to transfer these skills to the workplace back home. For many of them, they face a hostile environment where expressing personal opinions and challenging the ideas of others, especially superiors or elders, is culturally unacceptable. The majority are determined not to lose what they have gained during their study in the West, however, and are insistent that they would not want to revert to their traditional ways of thinking if at all possible. It may be, for instance, that the rapidly growing media industry in China, where creativity is of the essence might be more welcoming and appreciative of Western style critical thinking than the more traditional companies where employers are still looking for employees who are 'smart enough to know when not to ask questions'.

Moving across from the East Asian mindset to this Middle Way may well involve a change in self identity (Hird 1999). Western-style public disagreement, for instance, assumes a separation of a person's ideas from the person themselves, knowledge from the knower. As has been discussed on pages 72, Siegel (1988:41) argues that strong critical thinkers are 'capable of distinguishing between having faulty beliefs and having a faulty character', and are able therefore to be 'emotionally secure' in their response to personal academic criticism. By this is meant that Western debate assumes that another's view can be refuted and critiqued

without involving psychological and emotional implications. Critical thinking is seen as detached, impersonal and transcending social interactions. As previously discussed, this is a very 'masculine' and individualistic perspective towards enquiry. The West tends not to view academic enquiry as a social activity but instead elevates isolation, separateness from others and individualistic speculation 'at the expense of the collective wisdom of the community' (Hird 1999:39).

In contrast to this, an inter-dependent relationship is developed between speaker and listener in collectivist cultures, and the reactions of each party are closely monitored by the other. In oral debates East Asian students will tend to empathise with the other participants, and to reject or challenge ideas is to risk a personal insult to the originators of these ideas. The notion of adopting an identity of individualism is 'quite foreign to his/her notion of a collective, relational sense of self-identity, and involves a reversal of acceptance, 'face' and politeness behaviour' (Hird 1999:33). As Doi writes, students from collectivist cultures tend to demonstrate 'a reluctance to carry rationalism to the point where it will make the individual too aware of his separateness in relation to people and things about him' (1981:9). Similarly, Matsumoto also writing of his own culture, thinks that the Japanese tend to demonstrate 'an unwillingness to be cast into a world of objective reality' if that world isolates them from the collective consensus and mind (1988:407). This may result, therefore, in difficulties with self identity.

Even though this thesis proposes the above theoretical ideas, it may be that further research may find that some students do, in fact, progress to the full acculturation stage, and consequently do not choose the alternative Middle Way. Park (2002), for instance, who is of Chinese origin, in his recent doctoral case study research based in the U.S.A., makes the radical claim that the graduate East Asian students in his study experienced a transformation in their identities during their postgraduate course. He concludes that their exposure to, and involvement in, Western-style critical thinking caused them to self-reflect on their cultural assumptions to such an extent that this led to a transformation in their world view. This 'transformative learning' (Mezirow 1991), he claims, resulted in 'the building of a new self image, characterised by openness, self confidence, changed values and new ways of thinking and life' (2002:v). In other words, he claims that the participants in his study so appropriated the mindset of stage five in the adjustment process ('full acculturation') that they rejected a

Middle Way altogether, and did not attempt to retain their native cultural values and identity. If this were generally true, then it would be worrying, as it would suggest that students are rejecting their own culture in favour of a culture which they may perceive as superior (although this rejection might only be for the duration of their stay in the West). It is of interest that Park comments that the visible outcome of this transformation was that students 'began to focus more on self' and become more self centred (2002:iv). This must be one of the least desirable characteristics of individualism. However, Park does not explore whether these changes are temporary, adopted as a means to an end, or permanent, although he seems to suggest that they are deep rather than surface changes: 'They reinterpret and transform their long held worldviews' (2002: 4). He does comment, however, that a few of his interviewees did not choose full acculturation, but rejected certain aspects of American culture, such as materialism and assertive individualism, whilst assimilating into others.

The findings from this thesis do not support these observations of Park's. Most of the East Asian participants in this thesis who had attained stages 3 or 4 concluded that the Middle Way was more culturally appealing to them. Moreover, very few of the interviewed East Asian students, when reflecting on their learning journey towards the end of their masters course, believed they had undergone an identity change. Indeed one student felt strongly that any change in self identity would amount to unacceptable 'brainwashing' by the host culture (C22:5, Chinese). Park's findings may have been partly due to the fact that the students were at the time fully immersed in the new academic culture and had had insufficient time to reflect sufficiently on any internal changes in their attitudes and world views. It may be that they would only recognise any such identity changes once back in their home culture, when the contrasts would be more obvious. The difference in findings may also be due to the fact that Park's research was carried out in the U.S.A., where a masters course is two years rather than one in the U.K. Moreover, of the twenty seven postgraduates Park interviewed, half of them had been domiciled in America for five or more years, and therefore had more time potentially to acculturate.

Instead of talking about identity changes, the interviewees more frequently spoke of changes in their thinking in terms of being more academically and intellectually adventurous in considering and critiquing alternative viewpoints. Others, however, talked of gaining self confidence and a belief in the worth of their own ideas. One needs to ask, however, whether

these changes amount to a real or perceived identity change, which could be defined as a transformation in an individual's perception of who they are in relation to the society they live in (Woodward 2002:2). This would make for an area of study for future research, where postgraduate East Asian students could be interviewed a year or more after their return home. Their self perceptions of any identity changes, as a direct result of studying abroad, could be explored, as well as whether these changes prove to be permanent or temporary. Such research would be useful for both East Asian and British/Western educational contexts and relevant professions.

Although, as has already been discussed, there has been relatively little research into cross cultural educational adaptation of East Asian students into British higher education, there is a body of research into non-educational cultural adaptation. For example, in 1976 White proposed a cross cultural adaptation model which outlined the process from enculturation (childhood socialization into one's home culture), through to assimilation (acceptance and internalisation of host culture by the individual). In his model, deculturalization is the losing or unlearning of old cultural habits, and this takes place simultaneously with acculturation, which is the re-socialization or gaining of new cultural traits. Similarly Van Oudenhoven & Eisses (1998) conclude that as interplay of acculturation and deculturation continues, internal transformation happens, until finally assimilation is achieved. This seems to be the model in use in Park's research. Another traditional adaptation model was proposed by Turner (1974), who described three stages in anthropological transitions. First, there is a 'death' or loss of the old ways, where thought, behavioural habits and identity are de-structured. There then follows a period of ambiguity, flux and disorientation, when people are launched into the unknown and unfamiliar. Finally, they enter a stage of 're-birth' and the reconstruction of an entirely new mindset and identity. On a similar line, Kim and Ruben (1988:314) propose that an individual's 'old' person is shattered during cultural adaptation, and a new, more holistic person is built. Kim (2001:59) suggests a transitional process in which intense stress, due to the push/pull dilemma of enculturation and deculturation, results in the necessary adaptation to resolve this tension. This adaptation, she argues, then leads to personal growth whereby a person can eventually become 'intercultural'. At this stage people have become, in a sense, acultural in that they are *above* culture, much as the critical thinking theorists describe the true critical thinker as *above* culture, able to emancipate themselves from their cultural boundaries. In other words, they can move in and out of cultures with ease, able to negotiate their

relationship in any new context – rather like a multicultural chameleon, able to relate to and empathise with whatever cultural group they associate with. Gudykunst and Kim (2003: 384) refer to this as a ‘third culture’ perspective.

These models may hold true for long-term sojourners such as immigrant communities who choose to integrate into the host society for survival and/or personal benefits. However, the masters students in this thesis were not motivated to transform themselves in this way, indeed they seemed to make a conscious decision during the masters course not to assimilate. The findings indicate that any losing or unlearning of the students’ cultural habits would appear to be, in the most part, temporary, for pragmatic purposes. In other words, they may lay these aside for their sojourn in order to comply with Western norms, but very rarely do they reject them or ‘unlearn’ them permanently.

The existing adaptation models, therefore, do not adequately explain the adaptation journey of East Asian masters students in the U.K. This thesis, therefore, contributes a more sensitive conceptual model which is able to accommodate the complexities and subtleties of the process.

To summarise the argument so far, future research may show that some East Asian masters students in the U.K. do proceed to stage 5 (‘Full Acculturation’), but in this thesis none were found to do so (hence the use of the dotted line leading to stage 5 in Figures 1 and 2). Even as full acculturation was incomplete, so full deculturation did not occur with these students. By the end of the course many of them had rejected aspects of Western style debate, and they had no desire to leave aside their encultured ways so as to embrace a new mindset. Another possible reason for not moving towards stage 5 is that it involves great risk and the students might have drawn back believing that, pragmatically, there was no long-term purpose in putting themselves through this final pioneering stage. Or they may have made the conscious decision that, as they were only transient and would be returning to fit back into their own culture, it would be a futile, and even detrimental exercise. They may, on the other hand, have recognised that they did not have the time in one year to fully adapt, and that further experimentation would not further their main goal of achieving the degree award. As stressed throughout this thesis, individuals within a culture differ, and different students will have had different reasons for their choices.

However, the findings indicate that many choose the Middle Way as a means of retaining those elements of the new mindset which they accept, and believe can be accommodated with relative ease within their traditional cultural boundaries, and which pose less risk and uncertainty on return home. Traditional basic values, such as maintaining harmony are apparently retained, basically in tact, and are not deconstructed at all. Synthesized into them, however, are aspects of the Western mindset which expand or complement these values. For many students, it would appear that the adaptations can be detached, if and when necessary, and do not constitute an inward transformation of self-perception and identity. Other students may wish to go further in the adaptation process, but in this thesis only one student consciously rejected some aspects of his culture in favour of the new. The majority seemed to reach a point in the journey when they decided 'Thus far and no further'. At that point they exited. The extent of adaptation depends on many factors: how far students are willing and able to engage in reflexivity; their attitude to the host culture and their social mixing with host nationals; their competence in the host language; and the amount of support they receive from lecturers and fellow students. Unlike previous models, there is no inevitability about the tendency towards acculturation. Students act autonomously and exercise their individual right to terminate the journey when they feel they have gained what they personally want from it.

It may be helpful at this point to see how recent research in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) in China has advocated a similar Middle Way or combination of Western and traditional approaches to teaching and learning as the only way forward. Rao (1999), Yang (2001) and Chen Si-Qing (1988), all Chinese, have argued that the practice of importing Western EFL methodologies to China over the past two decades has not been successful. The different learning styles, educational practices and assessment modes and restraints in China have forced language teachers into recognising the benefits of a combination approach. This incorporates what they perceive as the best elements of Western approaches without rejecting, neglecting or undermining the cultural values and preferred learning styles of the students (Melton 1990). Although a marrying of the two approaches seems to work in this area of language teaching inside China, it has to be recognised that U.K. universities are in a different position in that Western academia, especially at postgraduate level, is committed philosophically to free expression and open, critical debate. This reflects, as Tannen (1998) expresses it, the 'Argument Culture' of the West and it could be argued, as indeed it was by some British lecturers who were interviewed for this research, that it is unreasonable to change

the Western approach to teaching and learning, when many East Asian students appear to choose to study specifically in the U.K in order to experience the Western cultural and educational approach.

It is interesting, however, that the above Chinese researchers have also found that when the purpose and aims underpinning the Western communicative approach to language learning are explicitly explained to students, then their heightened awareness and understanding of these aims encourage an acceptance of the new methodology. In a similar fashion, this thesis has highlighted the need for both East Asian students and U.K. lecturers to be made aware of the differences in what Cortazzi and Jin (1997:83) term 'cultures of learning'. With this shared understanding, all parties can negotiate meanings and 'cultural synergy' can occur (Jin and Cortazzi 1995). Then students will move towards British academic ways without losing their own, and 'tutors do not need to surrender their own academic ways, but can only gain by understanding others' ways' (1995:89). This does imply, however, that some adjustment, or at least mindfulness on the part of tutors, also is necessary for this synergy to take place.

Various strategies could be employed by individual lecturers and by universities to aid student adaptation. These include appropriate teaching methodology, raising the cultural awareness of lecturers and students, and ensuring appropriate recruitment criteria for English language competence (see Appendix XXV for an outline of these strategies).

Is this Middle Way then, as Tannen (1998) and Thayer-Bacon (1993) would suggest, a more creative and caring, more ennobling and humane way of managing opposition and disagreement? Or does it go too far in attempting to avoid conflict and in emphasising harmony and conciliatory dialogue, for Western educational goals? The purpose of classical Greek dialectic and sixteenth century protestantism in the West purported to be a high-minded search for truth. Tannen (1998:12) argues that truth is often 'a crystal of many sides', a complex, overlapping of different perspectives, all of which are legitimate and are to be respected. The reforming founders of Western democracy, on the other hand, claimed that there are absolutes to the truth and that it cannot, and should not, accommodate all perspectives. If indecisive and unacceptable compromise is to be avoided, they argue, then conflict and polarisation of views is inevitable. The question arises, then, as to whether this Middle Way approach can work in practice and whether it could have a place in Western higher education. Is it possible, appropriate, or even desirable for universities in the West to

adopt such a constructivist approach to critical thinking and debate?

The evidence from this research suggests that lecturers in the West could develop their own 'Middle Way' which does not lose what Luther, the Reformers, and many others throughout the history of the West, struggled so hard to achieve i.e. the quest for truth, even if it results in polarized viewpoints, and even offence to some. This new 'Middle Way' could, however, also integrate the caring, more holistic and empathetic emphasis of East Asian cultures. This would soften the masculine, linear logic of the Socratic dialectic tradition, and bring more conciliatory reasoning into the often cynical scepticism of post modernist thinking in the West. This need not lead to what I call 'agnostic empathy', however, where no firm convictions or convincing evidence underpin and drive an argument, and where direct challenge is avoided. This 'Middle Way' for lecturers would therefore be a merging of the best of both conciliatory dialogue and 'wrestling' debate, whilst leaning more on the heritage of the West - even as the 'Middle Way' of East Asian students' leans more towards East Asian traditions and belief systems. In this way, U.K. lecturers and East Asian students could move closer together in their expectations and thinking, without either group abnegating their unique cultural identities and beliefs.

This line of research could go even further, however, in an attempt to find a 'Middle Way' for educators in the U.K. The thesis has explored how, in East Asian and Western traditions, the different ways of thinking and reasoning, and consequently the literature and educational systems, have been based on assumptions and principles laid down in their historical past e.g. by Socrates, in the West, in the fifth century B.C. and Confucius, in the East, in the sixth century B.C. There is, however, a far older culture - the Hebraic culture - with its own tradition of critical thinking, and which has one of the oldest and most thoroughly documented literary heritages. The Jewish scriptures, written from 1500 B.C onwards and complemented by the New Testament texts, all of which were written by Jews, provide a wealth of information about the place of argumentation and debate in their culture. Throughout these writings can be seen a celebration of active enquiry, reflectivity and a questioning mind. The Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks (2003) points out that in the ancient Jewish scriptures many of the great prophets and heroes of faith asked difficult questions of God, for instance, Abraham, Moses, Jeremiah and Job. This, he claims is a characteristic of Jewish thinking: "Asking a question is itself a profound expression of faith in the intelligibility of the universe and the

meaningfulness of human life. To ask is to believe that somewhere there is an answer” (2003:106). And so, Sacks argues ‘Judaism is a religion of questions’ and the highest compliment from a teacher is that a student raises ‘a good objection’ (2003:105). He also points out, however, that the condition for asking questions is a genuine seeking to learn the truth, and not just an attitude of doubt, ridicule or rejection.

The value placed on debate is seen clearly in *Bereshit Rabbah*, a rabbinic midrash on the book of Genesis. Rabbi Singer (2004:2) describes how God Himself engages in a passionate debate on the reasons for and against creating humanity: ‘God first solicits advice on what to do from different sources. Then God listens to each side of the argument. Finally, God makes a more informed decision, knowing full well the ramifications of that decision’.

Modern Israeli culture is also very expressive, valuing ‘uninhibited emotional expression’, whether the feelings are good or bad (Wierzbicka 1991). Compared with cultures of English-speaking societies, Israeli culture is generally more direct (Blum-Kulka, Danet & Gherson 1985). What makes this long tradition of learning and seeking truth through questioning quite different from Western critical thinking, however, is that it is embedded in the social context. It is interesting that on Hofstede’s dimension for individualism /collectivism, Israel scored 54 and is positioned half way between the U.K. score of 89 and the score of East Asian countries such as Taiwan (score 17), Korea (score 18) and Thailand (score 20). Jewish critical thinking is more of a social rather than an individual activity, as it tends to be in the U.K. (Modan 1994, Schiffrin 1984). In Talmudic culture, the preferred mode of instruction is debate and argumentation, where every statement had to be defended against challenges (Segal 2003:12). However, it is also important to respect and honour one’s opponents in debate. It was common practice in the ancient Talmudic school of Rabbi Akiva to pair students so that ‘through the natural process of debate and challenge, the partners can refine their arguments and arrive at truth’ (Scherman 2001, online, 3). The students, however, were to think of themselves as partners rather than individuals. They combined their striving for improving and growth as individuals with a striving for unity and a concern for others: ‘When people are searching for the truth, they will dispute one another strenuously, but when they arrive at a correct conclusion, they will embrace and kiss figuratively, if not literally, the intellectual opponents who helped them find it. The enmity was not real; the love was’ (Scherman 2001:3).

Does ancient Hebraic thinking, then, provide a further ‘Middle Way’, mid-way between the East Asian ‘Middle Way’ and the Western critical thinking approach? It appears to combine collectivist social relationships with individualist seeking for truth through debate and critical thinking. Accommodation of views just for the sake of harmony is not tolerated, but neither is the ‘battlefield’ mentality which thrives on irreconcilable polarized viewpoints. Traditionally, in the Hebraic search for truth, although there is overt disagreement and a wrestling for truth, there is also a sensitivity and concern for debating opponents. This seems similar to the ‘constructive criticism’, although challenge is direct and sincere, not indirect as in the Middle Way of the East Asian students (see Figure 3). It would be interesting, therefore, as follow-up research to this thesis, to investigate the critical thinking heritage of the Hebraic culture. It may be that this ‘Middle’ East perspective and approach will prove to be the middle ground between Eastern and Western critical thinking traditions.

Apart from this avenue of investigation, there are a number of other ways in which this current research could be extended. For instance, the theoretical working hypotheses could be further tested if other case study researchers were to build on this work. Hammersley et al conclude that the most effective way of generalizing the causal relations uncovered in case study work is to involve larger numbers of case studies, which will ‘provide the necessary comparative leverage’ (2000:239). In practical terms this would require more U.K. universities being targeted, together with further research in the students’ home countries. There are a number of other avenues that future research could take, a few of which are outlined below.

A longitudinal study could be undertaken, whereby postgraduate students are tracked for a year or two on return home, and re-interviewed for changes in their attitude towards critical thinking and its appropriateness in today’s fast-changing world, as well as any perceived changes in self identity. It may be, as this present research suggests, that certain industries back home, such as the Media industry, are more open to Western approaches and this present thesis could be developed to explore how postgraduate students are able to utilise the skills they acquire in the West.

Another avenue for investigation could be a type of reversal of this study, looking at how British students adapt to the norms and expectations of university study in a East Asian country. Exchange students or language students from the U.K. could be targeted, and their

learning journeys tracked. Do they, in a similar manner to East Asian students studying in the U.K., settle on a 'Middle Way' learning approach, which synergizes the best of both Eastern and Western educational approaches? Recent research in America (Williams 2002:10) indicates that intercultural sensitivity increases through study abroad programmes, and that as this sensitivity increases so does flexibility to adapt to cultural differences. These findings suggest that students not only develop skills which are directly related to living in another country – a new language, culture and pedagogies – but also develop personal skills. These include 'patience, empathy and flexibility', qualities which, it is argued, prepare them for careers in a global economy. As a result, study abroad research has gained a new academic significance.

Finally, this thesis could be developed as an action research study which would identify and explore those teaching strategies, both institutional and individual, which East Asian students themselves perceive as being the most effective and culturally sensitive in helping them adjust to Western academic expectations. Some of these strategies have begun to emerge from the data, and are outlined in Appendix XXV.

In conclusion, this thesis contributes new insights into the academic adaptation journey of East Asian masters students in the U.K. It has provided an experiential voice for the students and furnished data to support the notion of 'The Middle Way'. It has argued that this Middle Way is not a compromise, but that students actively and critically evaluate which aspects of both academic cultures they wish to retain and merge. Many reject full acculturation into the British culture of critical thinking, and instead choose to exit the adaptation process at different points. The thesis also suggests that British lecturers need to evaluate their practices in critical argumentation and debate in the light of these findings.

Final Thoughts

Throughout the duration of this thesis I have found myself on a parallel learning journey with the students. I have experienced a cyclical process of deconstruction of my concepts as my awareness of the complexities grew. As Jeffcutt also describes (1996:189), I have had to 'let go' of the assumptions that structured my initial interpretation and re-enter into ambiguity and uncertainty until I was able to generate an interpretation which was 'more sympathetic and responsive to the complexity of the issues'. It was inevitable that I became more aware of the

issues as the research progressed, and indeed I only recognised my own journey half way through. This is the nature of research, however.

As I have reflected upon the tension of the approaches represented in Figure 3, and as my own sensitivity and awareness of the issues have increased, I have discovered that I too have evaluated my personal preference for different elements across the paradigm. I consider myself to be a ‘strong’ critical thinker and a ‘searcher of truth’. I appreciate clarity and explicitness and I enjoy friendly, but rigorous, dialectical argument and debate. However, I have come to recognise, during this research, that when writing academically my tendency is often for inference, partly because I consider it a more sophisticated tool for expressing opinion: assertive, very direct critical writing I find rather abrasive and blunt. In the case of this thesis, this may be due to the sensitive nature of the topic – I do not want to be labelled ethnocentric or patronising. It may be partly due to my personality, my gender or my increasing awareness of other cultures’ sensitivities towards overt confrontation. But I wonder whether I have not also been unconsciously influenced by my own experience of living in East Asia, and supporting East Asian students for many years. And so I have found myself, like the students, inwardly rejecting certain aspects of the ‘Wrestling’ approach, whilst accommodating to Western academic norms where necessary, for pragmatic reasons. I am, in fact, discovering my own, personal Middle Way which would appear closest to the Hebraic model discussed on pages 232/234.

As more U.K. lecturers enter into dialogue with each other, and with their students, regarding these issues, a way may be brokered for university educators to develop a new ‘Middle Way’ which does not lose the perceived strengths of traditional Western argumentation, but which accommodates more elements of conciliatory dialogue. This need not result in reducing the rigour of academic critical thinking; rather, one could argue that it would enhance it by making it more humane and holistic. Perhaps, however, some intellectual humility is required for this kind of mindshift, and this in itself requires a willingness to begin a journey of ongoing learning.

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Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) Categories of Human Problems to be Solved by all Societies:

1. What is the relationship of the individual to others? (relational orientation)
2. What is the temporal focus of human life? (time orientation)
3. What is the modality of human activity? (activity orientation)
4. What is a human being's relation to nature? (man-nature orientation)
5. What is the character of innate human nature? (human-nature orientation)

Kluckhohn, F. & Strodtbeck, F.L. (1961) *Variations in Value Orientations*. Greenwood Press, Connecticut.

Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (1980)

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) values

<i>Country</i>	<i>UAI score</i>	<i>Score Rank(out of 50 countries)</i>
Japan	92	7
South Korea	85	16/17
Taiwan	69	26
Thailand	64	30
Indonesia	48	41/42
Great Britain	35	47/48

Power Distance Index (PDI) values

<i>Country</i>	<i>PDI score</i>	<i>Score Rank (out of 50 countries)</i>
Indonesia	78	8/9
Thailand	64	21/23
South Korea	60	27/28
Taiwan	58	29/30
Japan	54	33
Great Britain	35	42/44

Individualism Index (IDV) values

<i>Country</i>	<i>UAI score</i>	<i>Score Rank (out of 50 countries)</i>
Great Britain	89	3
Japan	46	22/23
Thailand	20	39/41
South Korea	18	43
Taiwan	17	44
Indonesia	14	47/48

Femininity Index (IDV) values

<i>Country</i>	<i>score</i>	<i>Score Rank (out of 50 countries)</i>
Japan	95	1
Great Britain	66	9/10
Indonesia	46	30/31
Taiwan	45	32/33
South Korea	39	41
Thailand	34	44

Ennis' (1962) Twelve Aspects of Critical Thinking:

Judging whether:

1. There is ambiguity in a line of reasoning
2. Judging whether certain statements contradict each other
3. A conclusion follows necessarily
4. A statement is specific enough
5. A statement is actually the application of a certain principle
6. An observation is reliable
7. An inductive conclusion is warranted
8. The problem has been identified
9. Something is an assumption
10. A definition is adequate
11. A statement made by an alleged authority is acceptable
12. Grasping the meaning of a statement

Ennis, R.H. (1962:84) 'A Concept of Critical Thinking: A Proposed Basis for Research in the Teaching and Evaluation of Critical Thinking Ability'. *Harvard Educational Review*. 32 (1), 81-110.

The Research Process Tracked Over Four Years

Date	Reading	Data Collection	Data Analysis & Interpretation
May – Oct 2000	Initial literature review	Creation of initial Interview schedule	
Oct 2000 – Jul 2001	On-going	<i>Southern England University:</i> interviews of East Asian students and lecturers Adaptation of interview Schedule as year progresses	Analysis of interviews/coding of emerging themes
July 2001 – Sept 2001	On-going	Creation of matched pairs questionnaire, based on interview themes	
Oct 2001		Matched pairs questionnaire completed by 44 East Asian students	Analysis of matched pairs questionnaire Creation of vignette questionnaire
Jan 2002		Vignette questionnaire piloted at Southern England University	Analysis of vignette questionnaire Rejection of matched pairs questionnaire

Feb 2002 – March 2002	Intensive literature review		
April 2002			Further analysis of vignette questionnaires in light of recent literature review Translation of questionnaire into Chinese
May 2002		<i>China University:</i> Interviews with students and lecturers Vignette questionnaires completed by students	
June – August 2002	On-going	Re-drafting of questionnaire and interview schedule	Analysis of China interviews & questionnaire responses
Sept – Dec 2002	On-going	<i>Mid England University:</i> Interviews with East Asian students and lecturers	Analysis of interviews
Jan – Feb 2003	On-going	Questionnaires completed by students in Southern England University	Methodology chapter written
Mar – July 2003		Repeat interviews in two U.K. universities	Final analysis of qualitative and quantitative data Writing analysis chapters
August – November 2003			Writing interpretation and discussion chapters (Learning Journey & Middle Way)
December 2003	Submission of draft for supervisors to read		
January – March 2004			Re-drafting & final writing up

Interview Schedule for Lecturers

Preliminary background information:

length of service at Case Site; teaching on masters courses; teaching international students; work / teaching experience abroad

Interview questions:

1. What do you think are the greatest challenges for students from China, Taiwan, Japan and other Far Eastern countries?
2. What do you think are the greatest challenges for their teachers in Warwick?
3. How do you find these students respond in class discussions and debates in the first term / the first few weeks / the second term?
4. What proportion of East Asian students when they first arrive have an understanding of what critically evaluate means in practice? How do you think this compares with British students completing their third year undergraduate course?
5. What teaching strategies have you (and your colleagues) found helpful in developing critical thinking?
6. Have you observed any common pattern to their learning curve with critical thinking?
7. One big difference between east and west which often surfaces in my interviews is the emphasis placed on referencing and plagiarism. Has this been an issue here or not?
8. Some students claim that non-academic problems, e.g. with accommodation, have so distracted them in the first term that their studies have been seriously affected. Have you found something similar same here or not?
9. In an ideal world, how could the experiences of both the lecturers and the international students on masters courses be improved?
10. How effective in supporting students do you perceive the following:
pre-sessional courses ; trial assessments; personal tutors
11. Many students claim that their greatest challenge is skim reading and knowing which texts/portions of texts to select to read. Would you agree?
12. Some students also claim that they are very uncomfortable with uncertainty and taking risks academically. Would you agree?

(Lecturer)

1st coding: —

2nd coding: —

3rd coding: —

A = Interviewer

B = interviewee

A.1 Chinese People think differently from Westerners. Sometimes I can't understand my Western bosses. They give me an order. I say, 'OK I've got it.' Then I do it and they say, 'Oh no, no! That's not the way I want you to do it.' So I say, 'OK, I think I have misunderstood you.' So that's a long process for me to ^{learn} how you Westerners think about everything. It's so different from the Chinese way.

Different ways of expressing
What is right/wrong.

K.2 And the language can cause misunderstanding, can't it?

Foreign Ts + ss can appear rude (A29)
-31

A.3 Often it's the translation. It can be literally equal, but the feeling is not the same. For example in Chinese there is a word which when translated into English means, 'you are flattering me'. In Chinese it is a very nasty thing to say, but in English it is OK.

K.4 Could you explain the Chinese method of teaching reading (English) at the University?

A.5 We intend to give as much knowledge as possible within the class. We are not concerned with how much our students receive. The teachers are trying their best within the time of the class, to give what they know to the students. It is up to the students how much they receive. They can take notes and digest them afterwards, but the class time is a very condensed time to receive knowledge. Not like the Western way which tends to let students use the knowledge they have already mastered, to apply it. But the Chinese way is to just give you the knowledge and you try to apply it by yourself afterwards. That's the main difference. If I use the Chinese way I think I can give students a better base and a firm foundation. We are very strict in cultivating pronunciation and in giving a very full and prepared knowledge. But with the Western way, if you want students to apply knowledge then you can only give them a little to receive. That is a conflict. So I intend to use Chinese way in intensive reading and the Western way in oral English.

Transmission teaching = 'firm foundation'
application
Using another method without conviction => bored/dismissal as a waste of time
understanding philosophy

Transmission T v. learning how to learn
Returnees Ts use mixed method - do they understand underlying philosophy of T v learning in the West?

Western students may get bored if you use too much the Chinese way. Gradually they may lose their interest in studying the language. So you have to think of ways to encourage them, to cheer them up, to continue their study. But in oral lessons, if you keep on using the Western way the Chinese students will feel that you are wasting time. They came here for knowledge not for practising. Theoretically we can mix methods, but you have to treat different students differently.

Conflict between transmission + application of knowledge.

discussion = wasting time

Mixing east + West methods

K.6 What actually do you do in 'intensive reading'?

Chinese teachers = 'full buckets', role is to fill empty buckets of ss - ss then must learn how to water plants themselves

Western Ts: expect ss to ~~regain~~ fill most of bucket themselves (through reading or research), with guidance.

Role of T: to help ss apply knowledge

Repeat Interview Transcript: Southern England University
(A30:Chinese)

1st coding:
2nd coding:

K = Interviewer

C = interviewee

2nd analysis

1st analysis

K.1 Have your concepts of critical thinking changed since last September?

C.2 Yes. Two things are important: When you argue you need to have the exact reference to support what you think because in China we do not expect quotes. I presume that in Chinese academic journals they will use quotes, but in University assignments you do not need such detailed references. You just need a bibliography. The other thing is that we do not have two extreme, different sides of one topic. It is difficult for us to think how to develop two sides. When I learnt how to write assignments in middle school, we were taught to first write the definition, then the features, then the theory. There are six or seven phases for the assignment, but they do let you have a strong argument.

Cri. Th. Journeys
Process of developing crit th.
1 side only analysed
2 sides analysed
2 sides compared
argument structured

references not needed
- just a bibliography
No argument - just 1 sided descriptions

perceptions of critical thinking:
① references - support argom.
② differing viewpoints

Scenario 1

C.3 No.3. You argue, but not equally, but in the conclusion agree with the statement. The Chinese do not have the tradition to challenge authority. In China it is not usual to evaluate the teacher, so when the teacher gives you a title that means you need to go through what the teacher has said. Also, the living environment is important. When you live in the family in China, the parents have the power. When you study at school, the teacher always has the power. The society, our party, has lots of power. You cannot challenge them because you'll have trouble. This means you have less critical thinking. Because usually the party says, 'This is true.' So you're not allowed to argue, even a little. So students are used to go 'straight'. When the people have critical thinking, two sides, they will think more and I think the educational authorities are afraid to give more ability, give more trust to develop the students' ability in critical thinking, because they will have more ability to challenge the thoughts of the party. But nowadays I have read articles about why students want to go overseas to study because they can have critical thinking. They let students develop their own thoughts. I think the education authority in China know the problem, that students just obey the rules. For example, the exams in China are fill in the blank and choose the multiple choice and just have one assignment. But you can choose different words to fill in the blank, but there is a standard answer, 'use word 'A', that's correct.' If you use word 'B' that's wrong. There's always this kind of argument. Some experts have said this is not the way to educate, but even so the education authority are not changing very quickly.

Thought control

Critical th. is a threat to party control in China

Conformity rewards

(a) Agree with essay title - do not q. assumptions
(b) power distance goes
(c) deliberate play politically to discourage active thinking
Schooling used to train people in obedience & submission

permission to argue/challenge rules to restrict thinking

Is above contradiction daring to think differently / to look outside official line

K.4 What about you yourself?

IELTS and TOEFL scores (IELTS 2001: 20,22)

Abbreviations:

IELTS British Council International English Language Testing System
 TOEFL Princeton Test of English as a Foreign Language

Band 9 – Expert User	Has fully operational command of the language: appropriate, accurate and fluent with complete understanding.	Band 4 – Limited User	Basic competence is limited to familiar situations. Has frequent problems in understanding and expression. Is not able to use complex language.
Band 8 – Very Good User	Has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well.	Band 3 – Extremely Limited User	Conveys and understands only general meaning in very familiar situations. Frequent breakdowns in communication occur.
Band 7 – Good User	Has operational command of the language, though with occasional inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings in some situations. Generally handles complex language well and understands detailed reasoning.	Band 2 – Intermittent User	No real communication is possible except for the most basic information using isolated words or short formulae in familiar situations and to meet immediate needs. Has great difficulty in understanding spoken and written English.
Band 6 – Competent User	Has generally effective command of the language despite some inaccuracies, inappropriacies and misunderstandings. Can use and understand fairly complex language, particularly in familiar situations.	Band 1 – Non User	Essentially has no ability to use the language beyond possibly a few isolated words.
Band 5 – Modest User	Has partial command of the language, coping with overall meaning in most situations, though is likely to make many mistakes. Should be able to handle basic communication in own field.	Band 0 – Did not attempt the test	No assessable information provided.

Band	Linguistically demanding academic courses e.g. Medicine, Law, Linguistics, Journalism, Library Studies	Linguistically less demanding academic courses e.g. Agriculture, Pure Mathematics, Technology, Computer-based work, Telecommunications	Linguistically demanding training courses e.g. Air Traffic Control, Engineering, Pure Applied Sciences, Industrial Safety	Linguistically less demanding training courses e.g. Business Administration, Hotel Management, Tourism, Public Administration
9.0 - 7.5	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
7.0	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.5	English study needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable	Acceptable
6.0	English study needed	English study needed	Probably Acceptable	Acceptable
	English study needed	English study needed	English study needed	Probably Acceptable

Initial Student Interview Schedule for Southern England Univ.

1. Opening question

How have you found the last three months studying in Bournemouth?

2. Learning styles

- Is there a difference between the way you studied back home and how you have to study here?

Prompts:

<i>Private study</i>	<i>reading</i>	<i>journals</i>	<i>library</i>
<i>groupwork</i>	<i>presentations</i>	<i>listening</i>	
<i>Speaking in class</i>	<i>asking questions</i>	<i>thinking</i>	<i>time</i>
<i>Memorisation</i>	<i>application of theory</i>		

- In your opinion how would you describe a good student?
- How do you think your U.K. lecturers would describe a good student?
- Have you taken risks or experimented with something that you have never done before?

3. Problems

What do you think Asian students find the most difficult about studying in the U.K.?

Prompts:

<i>Understanding tutors' instructions</i>	<i>understanding lectures</i>
<i>Working in multicultural groups</i>	<i>reading</i>
<i>Using the library</i>	<i>critical evaluation</i>
<i>Understanding assignment questions</i>	<i>referencing/plagiarism</i>
<i>Class discussions</i>	<i>talking to tutors</i>

4. Teaching Styles

- What do you think most Asian students like about the British university system?
- What do they dislike about it?
- What would Asian students like tutors to do to help them more?
- What do you think makes a good tutor for Asian students studying in the U.K.?

5. Critical thinking

- In your opinion, is there a difference in the way East and West think critically?
- Why do you think it is difficult for most Asian students to critically evaluate different ideas in their essays?
- Have you changed at all in the last three months in the way you think?
- In your opinion will the new ways you are learning here be useful back home?
- Do you think you will change back again to the (Thai) way of thinking when you return home?

6. After three months here, what do you now think are the disadvantages and advantages for Asian students studying in the U.K.?

Student interview schedule for China University

A. Exploration of current learning/teaching experience in China / what expectations are of studying abroad:

- Relationship with lecturers
- Classroom learning styles (discussion, questioning, presentations, debate)
- Home study (reading, note-taking, hours, type of assignments)
- Referencing, plagiarism, use of library, library searches, use of journals
- Competition amongst students
- Creativity
- Workload

Possible questions:

Are you aware of any differences between China and the U.K., in e.g. student/lecturer relationships?

Do you think there is any difference in the way students have to write essays in China and the U.K.?

How would Chinese lecturers describe a good student?

How do you think U.K. lecturers would describe a good student?

Hearsay about studying in the U.K.

B. Motivation for studying abroad

- Challenge of new experience
- Preference of learning/teaching style
- Acquisition of western knowledge and expertise
- Prestige of U.K. masters qualification
- Other

C. Engaging in academic criticism/ debate

- U.K. lecturers often want students to critically evaluate a theory or idea. What do you think this means?
- Do you think it is useful to do this or not?
- How would you feel about disagreeing with - your tutor / a text book author?
- How do people disagree or criticise what someone thinks in China?
(Writing/speaking)

D. Risk-taking

Do you think you might 'lose face' in a British classroom? How? How would you handle it? Do you think you might have to take some risks in the classroom/ when writing assignments? What sort of risks?

Interview Schedule for Students at Mid England University

Preliminary questions:

(gender, IELTS on entry), time spent in U.K., attendance at pre-sessional, work experience, previous exposure/familiarity with foreign teaching methods

Interview questions:

1. How is the teaching and learning style in the U.K. different from what you were familiar with in (home country)?
2. Have you had any surprises with the teaching and learning styles here?
3. What have been your greatest challenges so far?
4. Do your lecturers frequently ask you to critically evaluate what you read? (if yes) What do you understand this to mean? (can you define it?)
5. What did you think 'critically evaluate' meant when you first arrived here?
6. What has most helped your understanding of what it means?
7. Do you think you completely understand it now?
8. Do you feel comfortable with this kind of approach? Is it an appropriate/the best way of learning for (Chinese) students?
9. Do you think 'face' influences students who study in the West?
10. What have teachers here done to help (Chinese) students to understand how to write good assignments?
11. Do you know if many students have difficulties with plagiarism? (what do you think about the West placing so much emphasis on accurate referencing and not plagiarising?)
12. If you could choose the perfect masters course in the West, what would it be like?

Initial open coding: Southern England University

1. Level of comprehension of western academic requirements /norms

- Understanding what is critical analysis
- Understanding the need for explicitness in writing essays v reader inference
- Understanding the reasons for referencing and avoidance of plagiarism

2. Paradigm shifts in thinking and attitudes - changes in self identity and self perception

- Risk taking/accepting challenges v holding on to known ways /dependency/ uncertainty avoidance
- Confrontation and 'truth' seeking v conciliation / preserving harmony
- Moving towards individualism v collectivism
- Hierarchical relationship with tutors v perception of equal status

Observable behaviours:

Contributing to class discussions; asking questions in class; doubting or criticising opinions of experts; disagreeing with lecturers / other students; asserting own opinions

Risks:

Losing face/ appearing 'stupid' to classmates and tutors; reprimand or disapproval from lecturers / from cultural group; loss of marks .

Variables:

Personality; gender; age; educational background (e.g. previous exposure to western teaching)

3. Cross cultural relevance of critical thinking and argumentation / implications for returning to home country

- Are any changes in thinking and attitude *deep* (assimilation) or *surface* (no real buying into the system, but rather playing the rules, as means to an end - the MA qualification)
- Are these changes permanent (transforming) or temporary (transient)?
- What is their motivation for studying in U.K.?

Observable behaviours:

- a. What is their motivation for studying in the U.K.? Is it:
 - curiosity / the challenge of a new experience?
 - to expand / enrich their thinking and to experience western education?
 - To increase their subject knowledge and expertise?
 - To get a Masters from abroad with the aim of getting a better job back home?
 - Other reasons?
- b. What will they do on returning home? Will they:
 - Reject western ways of thinking and behaving?
 - Attempt to use western ways but revert back if it becomes difficult?
 - Be different, even in the face of adversity

4. Perceptions of good teaching methodology

Stage 2 of Open Coding: Southern England University

1. **Far Eastern students' perceptions / understanding of Western academic requirements**
 - 0.1 Perceptions of cross cultural differences in academic essay styles (creativity)
 - 1.0 Perceptions of differences in the way cultural groups think critically, argue and debate
 - 1.1 Perceptions of what is western 'critical evaluation'
 - 1.2 Perceptions of the need for explicitness in writing western style essays v reader inferenc
 - 1.3 Perceptions of the reasons for supporting arguments with referencing, and for avoiding plagiarism
 - 1.4a Extent to which English language competence affects understanding of western cultural norms
 - 1.4b Extent to which English language competence affects learning
 - 1.5 Perceptions of western emphasis on questioning, evaluating, application and student autonomy, rather than on providing the 'correct' answer and on descriptively reproducing known knowledge.
 - 1.6 Extent to which personality affects learning / adaptation to change
 - 1.7a Development of academic literacy skills in English : critical reading skills
 - 1.7b Development of academic literacy skills in English : essay writing skills
 - 1.8 Successful / unsuccessful support mechanisms for learning
 - 1.8.1 Resources: student support infrastructure (including IT and library)
 - 1.8.2 Mix of student nationalities on the course
 - 1.8.3 Pre-Master's course
2. **Paradigm shift in thinking and attitudes - changes in self identity and self perception**
 - 2.1 Risk taking / accepting challenges to one's thinking v uncertainty avoidance / dependency on known ways of learning and behaving

2.1.1 'Losing Face' - fear of public humiliation; fear of disapproval; of appearing 'stupid' to classmates and tutors; fear of appearing to 'show off'; fear of wasting others' time.

2.1.1a Asking and answering questions in class

2.1.1b Contributing to class / group discussions – sense of incompetence due to English language levels

2.1.1c Contributing to class / group discussions – sense of incompetence due to lack of knowledge

2.1.1d Correlation between lecturer-students 'Power distance' and freedom to speak out in class

2.1.1e Correlation between personality and contributing in class

2.1.1f sensitivity to others' feelings; not wanting them to 'lose face'

2.1.2 Teacher guidance v independent learning

2.2 Confrontation and 'truth seeking' v conciliation / preservation of harmony

2.2.1 Doubting / criticising / disagreeing with the opinions of 'experts', tutors, other students / asserting own opinions

2.2.2 Successful / unsuccessful support mechanisms

2.3 Moving towards individualism v collectivism / rejection of individualism (*competitiveness, sharing resources*)

2.4 Hierarchical relationship with lecturers v perception of equal status

2.5 Language: shift from reliance on translation to thinking in English only when writing an assignment

3. Cross cultural relevance of critical thinking and argumentation - awareness of change ; implications for returning home

3.2 Permanent change v temporary change

Are any changes in thinking and attitude deep (assimilation/ transforming) or surface (transient; mere survival strategies and 'fitness' , with no real buying into the system; playing the rules, as the means to an end i.e. the M.A. qualification)

3.3 How any changes currently affect behaviour / values / self identity

3.4 Prediction of what will happen on return home

- *Reject western ways of thinking and behaving?*
- *Attempt to use western ways ?*
- *Determine to be different, even in the face of adversity?*

3.5 Motivation for studying in U.K.

- *Curiosity / the challenge of a new experience?*
- *To expand / enrich their thinking and to experience western education?*
- *To increase their subject knowledge and expertise?*
- *To obtain a Masters degree from abroad with the aim of getting a better job back home?*
- *Other reasons?*

3.6 What factors attract them to study at particular universities

4. Teaching Methodologies

- 4.1 Perceptions of differences between methodologies in U.K. and in home country
- 4.2 Perceptions of what makes a good / poor lecturer
- 4.3 Support strategies that lecturers can use
- 4.4 What Asian students like / dislike about U.K. methodology

5. What students perceive as their main difficulties

(learning styles, language, working in groups/multicultural groups, timetable, time management, overload of work etc.)

Emerging categories: Southern England University

Freedom of Expression

- Encouragement from lecturers (attitude, environment)
- Shame / Fear
- Resistance to change
- Language competence
- Previous experience
- Groupwork

Status and Role of Teachers

- Disagreeing with authorities
- Infallibility of teachers
- Caring / distant / hierarchical role
- Assessment role

Teaching Style

- Transmission v autonomy
- Access to resources, Creativity

Critical Thinking Journey

- Perceptions of what critical thinking means
- Uncertainty / inner turbulence
- Considering alternative views / Independent thinking
- Critical reading / writing

Referencing & Plagiarism

- Perceptions of what plagiarism is and why it is a serious offence
- Second language factor
- Cultural expectations
- Intellectual property rights

Library / Research Skills

- Familiarity with journals, Referencing,
- Notetaking, Reading Skills (extensive, intensive, skimming, scanning)
- Information retrieval / library access skills / IT Skills

Motivation for studying in U.K.

- Prior information about U.K. educational system, Pre-masters course preparation
- Personal ambitions (language, qualification etc.)
- Educational freedom

English Language Competence

- Translation strategies when reading / writing
- Listening / speaking abilities in class
- Recruitment issues

Emerging categories for China University

Freedom of Communication

- Disagreeing with authority figures
- 'Losing Face'
- Asking questions
- Fear of making mistakes/penalties
- Trust / distrust
- Taking risks

Status and Role of Teachers

- Facilitating v transmission
- Control / power distance
- Assessment role
- Intellectual challenge by students

Style of Teaching/learning

- Access to resources
- Reflective v reproductive learning
- Personal opinions / open discussions
- Critical thinking & debate
- Fear of failure
- Creativity

Critical Thinking Journey

- Rhetoric v reasoning
- Perception of critical thinking
- Explicitness v inference
- Uncertainty avoidance

Referencing & Plagiarism

- Second language factors
- Misunderstanding of what plagiarism means
- Intellectual property rights
- Cultural norms

Library / Research Skills

- Reading Skills (extensive, intensive, skimming, scanning)
- Referencing
- Information retrieval / library access skills. IT Skills

Motivation for studying abroad

- Seeking qualification / status
- Expectations of western education
- Seeking cross-cultural experience / knowledge/ exposure to new ways of thinking
- Social / extra-curricular

Shed at westerlies 'aging' in groupwork/publicity (21:257, 277, 281, 283, 284).
westerlies 'grab the power', clutter + control the discussion (27:35)

Indonesian

Misunderstanding of Crit. Thinking/reading/Thinking

- just copying (no personal opinion) 1: 259-66, 294, 300.
- purpose of Crit. reading & paraphrasing 30:150. X
- Creative, non referenced thoughts not allowed 24:61, 76
- U.K is 'closed' in terms of strict referencing 24:78
- just another set of rules/easy to learn 10:181-187
- S.S. course needed 21:325, 309, 7:72
- lang. sch. did not teach it 22:21, 24
- Samples helpful 21:419

Autonomous/independent learning/Thinking

- resents it 25:42
- temporary adaptation / will retreat back 25:32
- 'strange' 26:37

Critical Thinking Journey

No one 'correct' answer expected (Contrary thinking)

- Confidence gained after 1st few assignment marks 7:34, 4
- Confidence of T gives 'correct' answer to problem 7:445
- 'Correct' way expensively accepted 20:318
- Qs/problems have clear solution/no ambiguity 10:127
- Seen as waste of time (ambiguity/inconsistent) 10:146
- discouraged from asking Qs where no certain answer 10:365
- trained to believe texts 'Don't think about it' 10:171

Critical writing

descriptive writing expected 20:260

26:24, 26, 34
22:281

Giving Own opinions / Judgements

- not required 9:43 (4:48)
- no 'right to think' 7:77
- Cannot tolerate extreme criticism reading with give own opinion (1:3/4)
- Individualistic / different values 10:181
- trained to conform / difficult to change 10:148
- no confidence in own opinion 10:135
- easier to do in English: 'individualism allowed' 10:608

Alternate answers considered

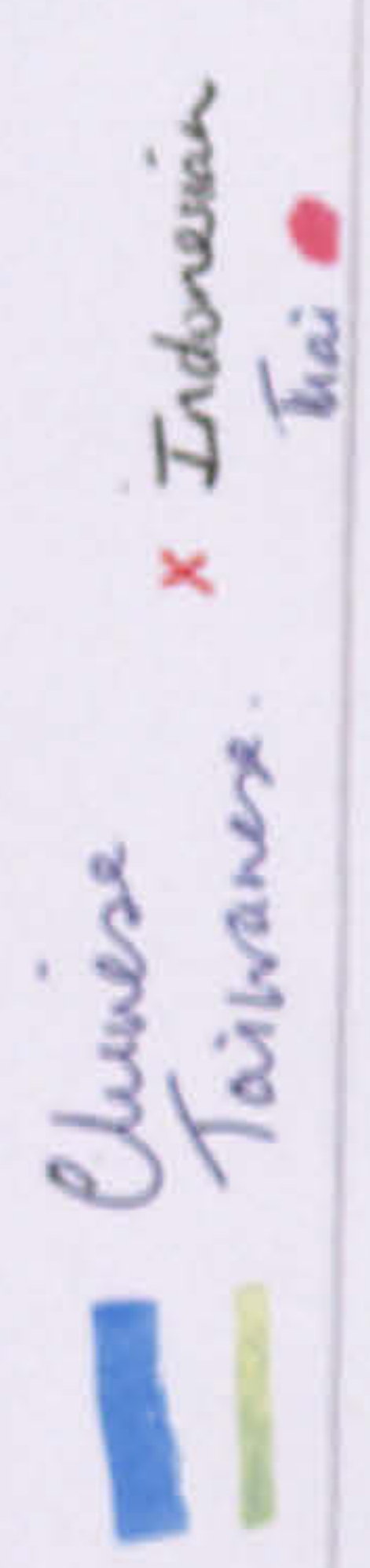
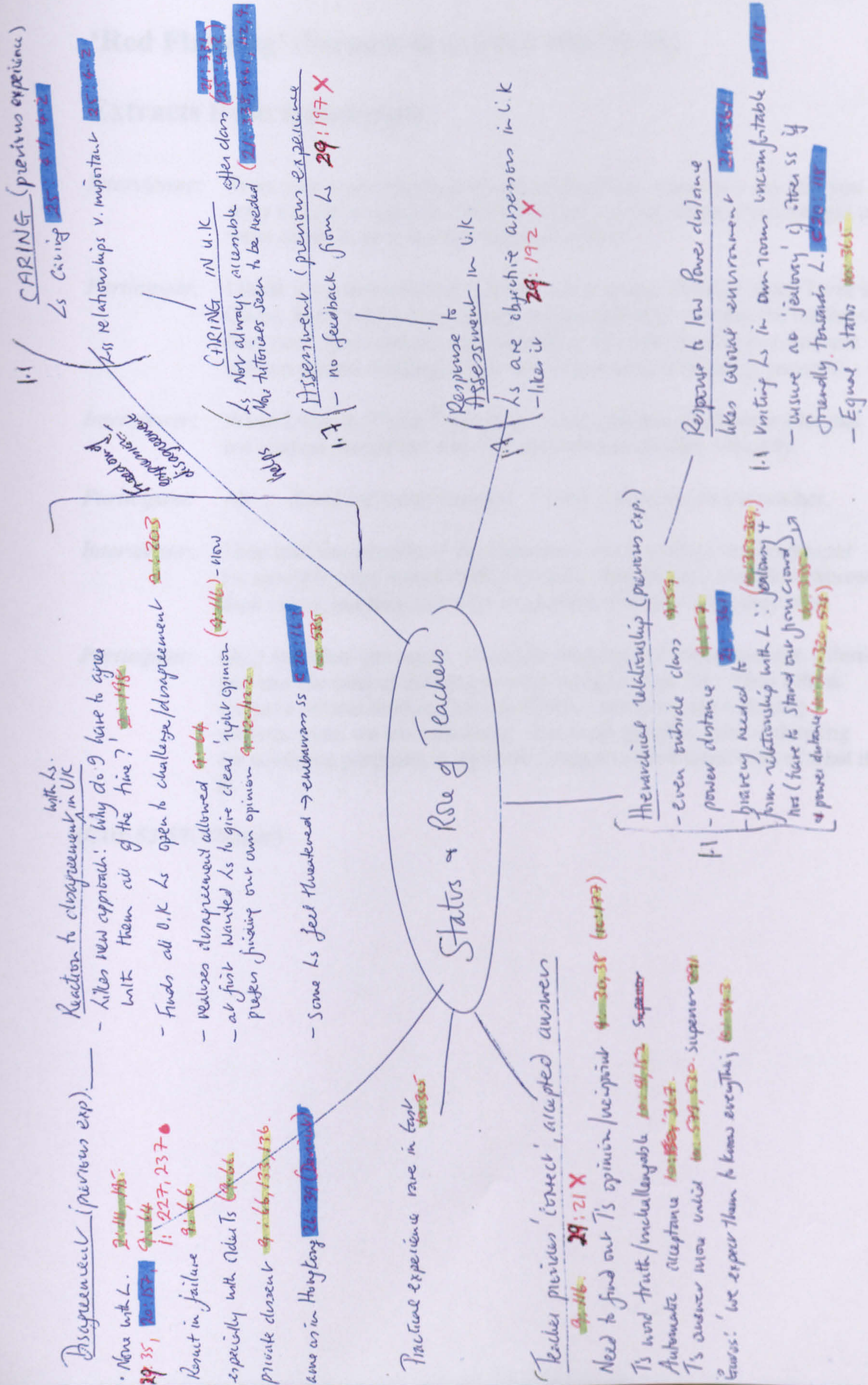
- failed 9:43 'highlight' 20:16
- only sided 9:47 (30:22-28)
- Can waste time looking in wrong direction 9:105
- develops own thinking 9:47
- No previous experience 1:253 (30:22-28) X
- sees no need to go beyond text bk 1:272, 286-288

Focus on depth not breadth.
SS don't like it 2:463, 485, 490.
21:123, 143

Freedom to make own decision as to what to study 2:36, 368

uncertainty / struggle / lower turbulence / opinion

• Thai
• Indonesian
• Taiwanese
• Chinese



‘Red Flagging’ (Strauss & Corbin 1990:75-95)

Extracts from transcripts

Interviewer: From your understanding of critical thinking, would you say that you were already doing it in China, but that you just weren't encouraged to write about it, or is it a new concept to you?

Participant: I think it's a new concept. I know this concept, literally, when I was in China, but it was not very much encouraged and, actually the teachers they don't have critical thinking either. It's hard to tell your students to have critical thinking if you don't have critical thinking yourself.

Interviewer: When I was in (China University) I met a couple of students who had not studied abroad but who said they always thought critically.

Participant: Ah Good for them! (laughs). I think it depends on the teacher.

Interviewer: They said that outside of the classroom, when reading the newspaper for example, they would think critically. Maybe they wouldn't express their views, but they still were evaluating critically what they read.

Participant: Oh, I see what you mean. If critical thinking is a broad concept, I think you can use critical thinking in everything in your life. Then I think we have critical thinking back in China – when we are watching movies, when we are socialising. But to be specific, critical thinking for academic purposes, it was here I began to have some idea of what it is.

(C10: 52-57: Chinese)

Durkin, K. (2003/4) 'Critical Learning Journey of Chinese Masters Students in the U.K. : Adapting to Western Norms of Academic Argumentation and Debate'. *International Journal of Learning*, Vol.10 (in print). Common Ground Publishing.

Durkin, K. (2004) 'Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology to explore the Critical Learning Journey of East Asian Masters Students in the U.K.'. In H. Savall, M. Bonnet & M. Peron (Eds.) *Crossing Frontiers in Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods Conference Papers*, Vol. 1, 159-177. ISEOR / First International Co-sponsored Conference, Research Methods Division, Academy of Management (USA), Lyons, France, March, 2004.

Durkin, K. (2004) ' 'The Middle Way' : Perceptions of Critical Thinking by East Asian Masters students in the U.K.'. *The Second International Conference on New Directions in the Humanities*, Tuscany, Italy, July 2004.

Matched Pairs questionnaire

Your answers on this questionnaire are completely anonymous. By filling it in as honestly as possible you will help me greatly in my research. I hope my research will later help other international students on masters courses. Thank you.

Instructions: Below there are 38 statements that are in pairs. Circle the statement in each pair that you are **most comfortable with**. There are no wrong answers. Make your choice as quickly as possible. When you have made your choice then mark how much you agree with it.

1. Students are free to agree or disagree with the lecturer's opinion
2. It is important to find out what the lecturer thinks, and to reproduce their ideas in assignments

3. Students are free to agree or disagree with an author's opinion
4. It is important to find out what recommended authors think, and to reproduce their ideas in assignments

5. Lecturers want students to show they have understood the lectures by repeating what the lecturer has taught in assignments
6. Lecturers want students to evaluate what experts say about the topic

7. When studying, memorising information is important
8. When studying, it is important to decide whether you agree with certain opinions and ideas.

9. Lecturers want you to ask questions in class if you do not understand something
10. If you do not understand something in class, lecturers want you to wait until after class and ask the lecturer privately

11. Lecturers do not want you to ask them difficult or challenging questions in class
12. Lecturers like students to ask difficult or challenging questions in class

13. Lecturers feel embarrassed if they cannot answer a question
14. Lecturers do not mind if they cannot answer a question

15. Students should try to answer questions even when they are not sure of the answer
16. Students should only answer questions if they are sure of the answer

17. Lecturers prefer if you do not make any mistakes in class
18. Lecturers prefer if you try to answer, even if you make mistakes

19. Lecturers want you to mention authors' names in your assignments
20. Lecturers are more interested in ideas, and do not want authors' names mentioned in your assignments.
21. I am willing to experiment with new ways of learning
22. I do not want to try new ways of learning in case I lose marks
23. I do not want to give my opinions in class in case no one else agrees with me
24. I want to express my opinions in class even if no one else agrees with me
25. I would prefer to be quiet in class and not make any mistakes in English
26. I would prefer to speak out, even if I speak English incorrectly
27. I would prefer to be quiet in class and not make any mistakes about the subject
28. I would prefer to speak out, even if my ideas are proved wrong
29. I believe my informed opinion about a subject is as important as the opinion of the lecturer of the subject, and I have a right to disagree with him
30. I believe my informed opinion is not as important as the opinion of the lecturer and that I should not disagree with him.
31. It is more important for me to gain high marks than to experiment with another way of learning.
32. It is most important for me to understand western ways of learning and working.
33. If I have something to say, I intend to speak out a lot in class
34. I intend to speak out very little in class, even if I have something to say
35. I think asking questions and speaking out in class might be judged negatively and I am afraid of losing marks.
36. I do not think speaking out in class will affect my assignment marks.
37. I intend to ask the lecturers if I do not understand the subject or the assignment.
38. I am worried about approaching the lecturers. It is not our custom to initiate a meeting with one of our lecturers and I do not feel comfortable doing it.

N.B. No data from this early questionnaire was used in the thesis

Some findings from the matched pairs questionnaire

Statements 5/6

5. Lecturers want students to show they have understood the lectures by repeating what the lecturer has taught in assignments.
6. Lecturers want students to evaluate what experts say about the topic

100% of the British students chose statement 6, whilst 50% of the East Asian students chose statement 6. This agrees with the interview data which revealed that East Asian students' undergraduate education back home had placed an emphasis on repetition and reproduction of lecturers' notes and a lack of practice in evaluating texts independently.

Statement 1/2

1. Students are free to agree or disagree with the lecturer's opinion
2. It is important to find out what the lecturer thinks, and to reproduce their ideas in assignments

94% of the British students chose statement 1 compared to 62% of the East Asian students. Many of the East Asian students were unaware that disagreement with lecturers is quite acceptable. This again agrees with the interview data and explains in part why East Asian students are anxious to know the opinions of the lecturers and believe they need to reproduce 'the right answer' in their assignments in order to pass.

Statement 19/20

19. Lecturers want you to mention authors' names in your assignments
20. Lecturers are more interested in ideas and do not want authors names mentioned in your assignments

83% of the British selected statement 19 compared to 54% of East Asian students. This question has obvious implications for referencing and plagiarism, and the results again support the interview data which repeatedly revealed how East Asian students arriving in the U.K. have a very different perspective on referencing and plagiarism.

Vignette questionnaire

Appendix XX

Nationality:

male/female

Please tick your answer for each of these situations:

Vignette 1

A lecturer gives a student the assignment title: 'The U.K. is in recession'. Discuss. What should the student do?

1. Discuss all the reasons and evidence for why the U.K. is in recession
2. Discuss all the reasons and evidence for why the U.K. may be in recession and also describe all the reasons and evidence why it may not be. However, make sure that the conclusion agrees with the essay title
3. Discuss equally both sides, and in the conclusion make an honest judgement about which side the student thinks is more convincing

WHY? _____

Vignette 2

Through her reading, a student discovers some new theories which contradict what the lecturer is teaching. These new theories seem far more convincing to her than the lecturer's. What should she do?

1. Ignore the new theories because if the lecturer disagrees with them, then they must be incorrect.
2. Ignore the new theories because she does not want to disagree with the lecturer.
3. Further explore the new theories, but not use them in her assignments for this lecturer.
4. Further explore the new theories and if she still finds them more convincing, then introduce them in her assignments and show how they are more convincing than the theories taught by the lecturer.

WHY? _____

Vignette 3

A lecturer is teaching about several different theories about effective management techniques in an organisation. Some of these theories oppose each other. To gain the highest marks in your assignment should you:

1. Find out which theory the lecturer thinks works best, and concentrate on that theory
2. Discuss all the theories, but make sure you give most attention and credit to the theory which the lecturer thinks works best
3. Discuss all the theories equally, but not give your own opinion about which one is best.
4. Discuss all theories equally and give your own honest opinion about which one works best, even if this disagrees with the lecturer's viewpoint

WHY? _____

Vignette 4

A student showed her assignment outline plan to her lecturer in a tutorial. He said the plan looked O.K. The student then wrote the whole essay and handed it in for marking. Later, the student discovered that the lecturer had failed the assignment. Do you think:

1. The lecturer had a duty to make sure the student passed the assignment, and that the lecturer should have spent more time helping her get it right.
2. The lecturer did not have the responsibility to make sure the student passed. It was ultimately the student's responsibility alone, and she had to achieve the pass herself.

WHY? _____

Vignette 5

In a seminar, the lecturer talks about an idea that he strongly believes in. A student has read a lot about this subject and does not agree with the lecturer's viewpoint. When asked to discuss the idea in a seminar, what should the student do?

1. truthfully express her own opinion, even though she knows the lecturer disagrees with her
2. not openly disagree with the lecturer in class, but after class discuss honestly with the lecturer why she disagrees with his ideas.
3. wait until other students disagree with the lecturers' ideas, and then join in with them.
4. take a middle road and balance both viewpoints without saying what her honest opinion is
5. not say anything

WHY? _____

Vignette 6

In a seminar a student speaks out and disagrees with an idea which is being taught by the lecturer. The student explains her reasons for not agreeing with it, based on her own experience and her reading. Do you think the lecturer will:

1. be embarrassed or angry that she disagrees with him publicly?
2. be pleased that she is evaluating the ideas he is lecturing on, but would prefer if she spoke to him after class.
3. be surprised that she disagrees with him, and will spend time in class trying to convince her to change her mind?
4. not mind her disagreeing in class, but will not want the whole class to debate it.
5. be pleased that she disagrees because it will provide the opportunity for discussion

WHY? _____

Appendix XXI

Rationale for rejecting one of the original vignettes

A lecturer instructs a student how to study in order to pass his exam. It is a very different way of preparing for exams from the method he has always used before. What should he do?

1. experiment with the new way, even if it results in losing marks
2. use the new way for most of his studying, but for the most important topics to study using the old method
3. to use half and half. To study in the old way and at the same time to combine it with studying in the new way.
4. to study mostly using his old method, but to spend a little time experimenting with the new method
5. not to experiment with the new way, because he is unfamiliar with it and it might lose him marks

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
British	11% (2)	6% (1)	17% (3)	67% (12)	0
Asian	4% (1)	26% (7)	52% (14)	19% (5)	0

The majority of British students (67%) chose statement 4, whereas 52% of the Asian students chose statement 3 and 26% chose statement 2. This might indicate a reversal of what one might expect in terms of risk avoidance and certainly seemed to be at odds with the results from the other six scenarios. Perhaps for British students there is a major difference between, on the one hand, taking risks in class debates and in written assignments, and on the other hand, for exams. The scenario specifically states, however, that the lecturer has given instructions as to the new ways of studying and the interview data shows that Asian students prefer to follow the explicit guidance of the lecturer, thereby reducing uncertainty. This fact might encourage Asian students to try the new technique, believing that it will gain them marks because it has been endorsed by the lecturer himself. One Taiwanese student responded 'the lecturer knows how to pass his exam more than I do'. British students, on the other hand, may feel they already know how to cope with exams in the U.K. and place less trust in the lecturer's advice. One British student commenting on why he chose statement 4, wrote on his questionnaire 'Security of past successful methods that work for the individual'.

Exam techniques were also commented on during some of the interviews, but as the questionnaires are primarily concerned with argumentation in assignments, and because the questionnaire results from the above scenario suggest that there are other factors at play, the researcher decided to omit this particular scenario from the questionnaire analysis.

Studying in the U.K.

情景 1 (请选出答案)

一位大学讲师给一名学生布置作业，题目是：请就“英国在衰退”这一说法展开讨论。该生应如何作答？

1. 写出为什么英国在衰退的所有原因。
2. 平等地给出支持及反对“英国在衰退”的原因，但在结论中同意所给论题英国是在衰退。
3. 平等地给出支持及反对“英国在衰退”的原因，在结论中给出你自己的判断及论点。

为什么？_____。

情景 5 (请选出答案)

在一次研讨课上，这位讲师谈到了他本人极力推崇的一种观点。有一位学生曾经阅读过大量与此有关的书籍。他并不同意老师的想法。如果这位学生被要求在课上发表自己的观点，他应该怎么做呢？

1. 尽管她知道老师会不同意她的看法，但也会就自己的观点实话实说。
2. 不在课上公开反对老师的观点，但课后会真诚地与该老师交换意见，并说明为何自己持不同的看法。
3. 等到其它同学提出反对意见时，再加入到他们的行列。
4. 走中间路线，平等对待这两种观点，不表露自己的真实想法。
5. 保持沉默。

为什么？_____。

情景 2 (请选出答案)

通过阅读，一位学生发现，有些新理论与课上老师所讲的内容相矛盾。而在她看来，这些新理论更具有说服力。这时，她该怎么办呢？

1. 回避这些新理论，原因是，既然老师的观点与此不同，那么这些理论肯定是错的。
2. 对这些新理论进行进一步探讨，但在上交的作业中不予涉及。
3. 进一步探讨这些新理论，在上交的作业中也不会提及，但会在私下里把自己的想法讲给老师听。
4. 进一步探讨这些新理论。如果发现这些理论仍然更具说服力，便会在作业中引用这些理论，并说明这些理论在哪些方面更具有说明力。

为什么？_____。

情景 6 (请选出答案)

在一次研讨课上，一位学生发言，表明自己不同意老师所讲的观点，并根据自己的经历和通过阅读获得的知识对此做出了解释。你认为老师会：

1. 对这位学生公开否定自己的观点感到尴尬、恼怒。
2. 对这位学生能针对老师的观点做出评价感到高兴，但更喜欢学生在课后和他讲。
3. 因为学生所持观点与自己的观点不同而感到吃惊，但会在课上花些时间试图说服该学生改变观点。
4. 对这位学生在课上否定老师的观点并不介意，但不想让全班同学就此进行辩论。
5. 对这位学生的不同观点感到特别高兴，原因是这样可以在班上展开一场有趣的辩论。

为什么？_____。

情景 7 (请选出答案)

一位讲师正在讲授有关最佳公司管理方式的几种不同理论。其中，有些理论相互排斥。要想使自己的作业得最高分，你应该：

1. 弄清楚老师认为哪种理论最好，然后集中探讨这一种理论。
2. 谈及所有理论，但一定把重点放在老师认为最好的那种理论上。
3. 公平地涉及所有理论，但不表明自己认为哪种最好。
4. 公平地涉及所有理论，并表明自己的真实想法，即使自己的观点和老师的观点不同。

为什么？_____。

情景 4 (请选出答案)

一位学生在辅导课上花了很多时间与老师讨论了自己的研究课题。她把自己的初步方案拿给老师看。老师看了后，回答说，结构大纲看起来不错。于是，这位学生就写完自己的文章，

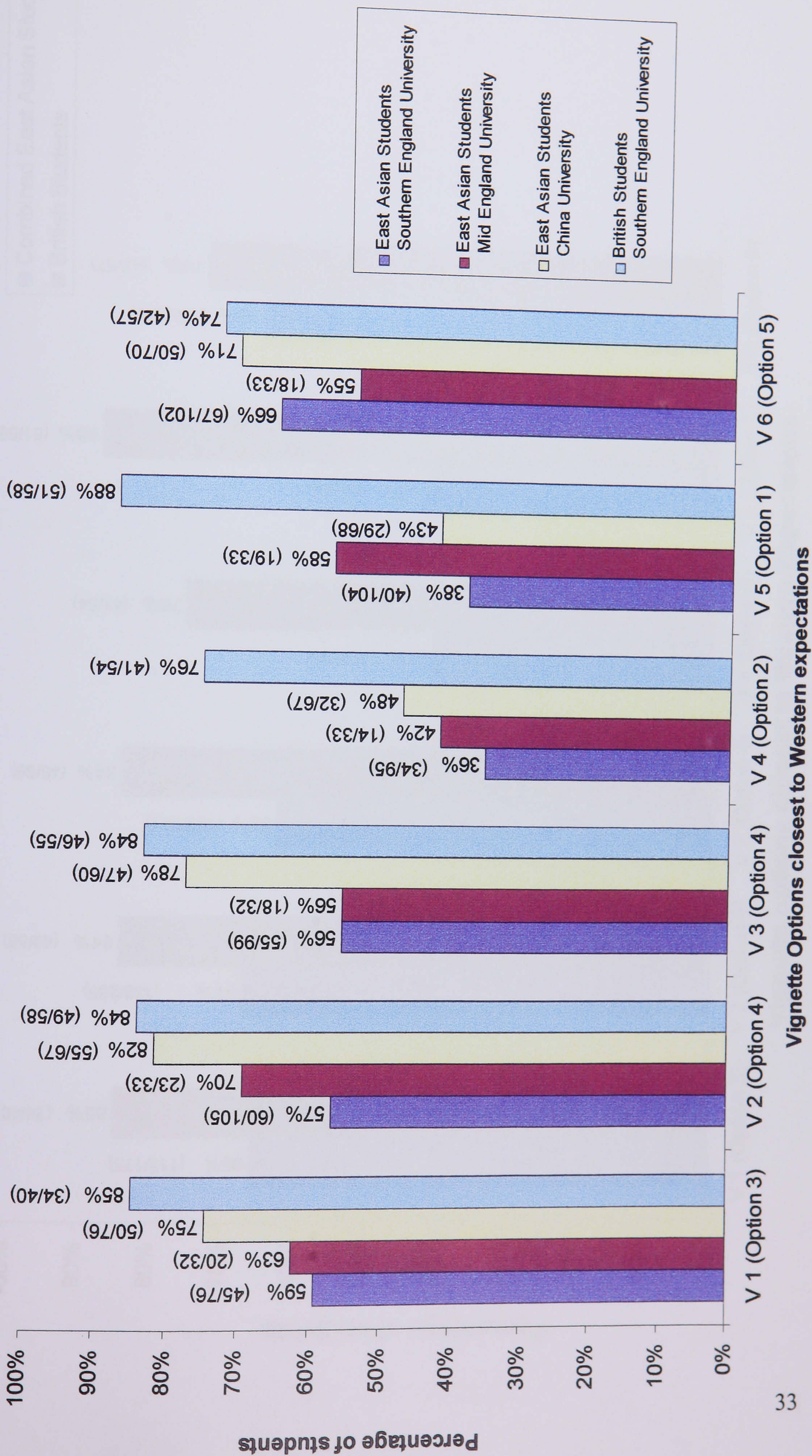
把它交给了老师。事后，她却发现老师给的分数是不及格。你认为：

1. 老师有责任确保让这位学生及格，并应该花更多的时间帮助她加以纠正。
2. 老师没有责任 ~~确保学生及格~~ 能否达到及格分数，责任全在学生身上。

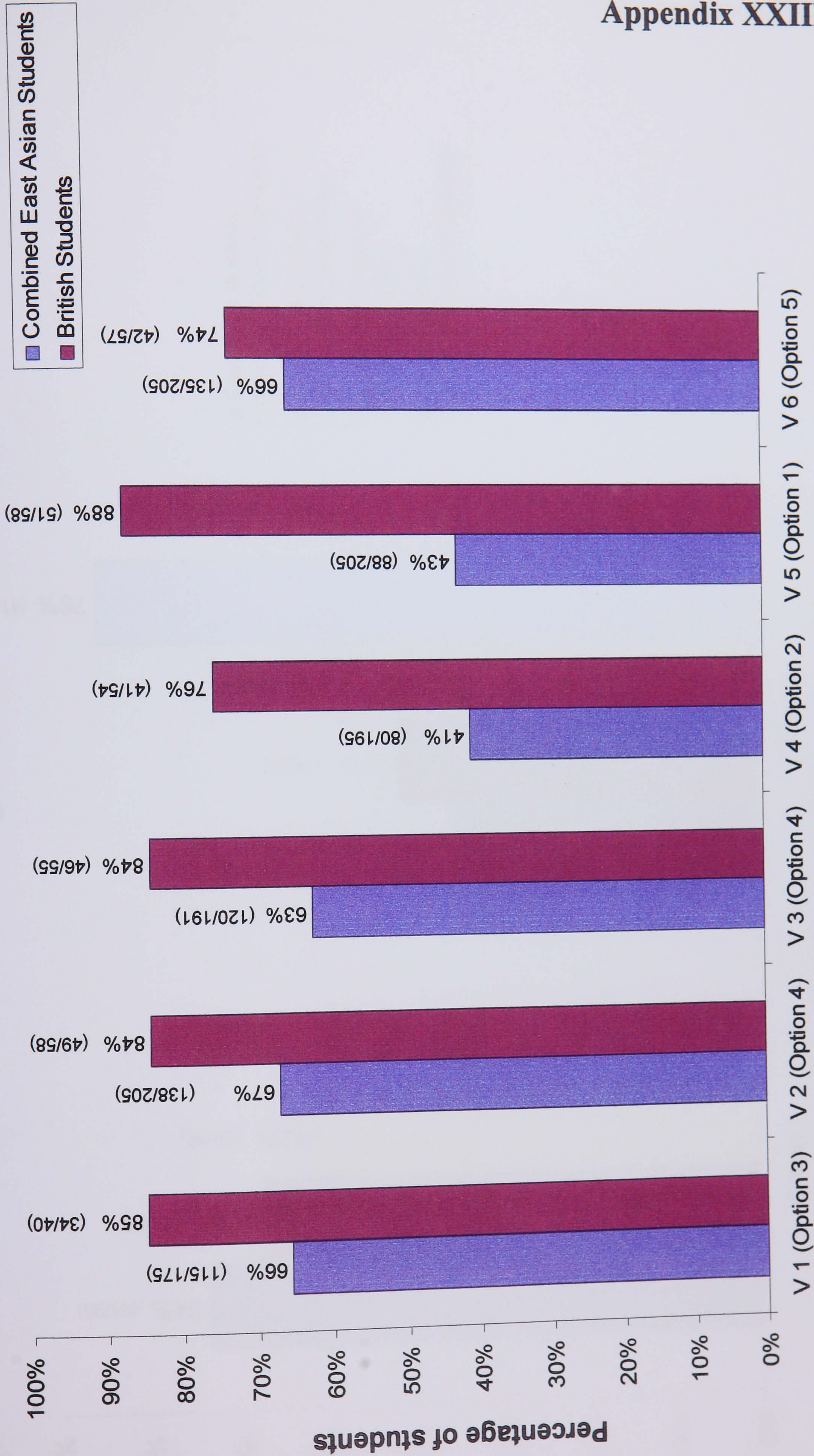
确保学生及格。

为什么？_____。

Comparison of East Asian Students (three case sites) and British Students

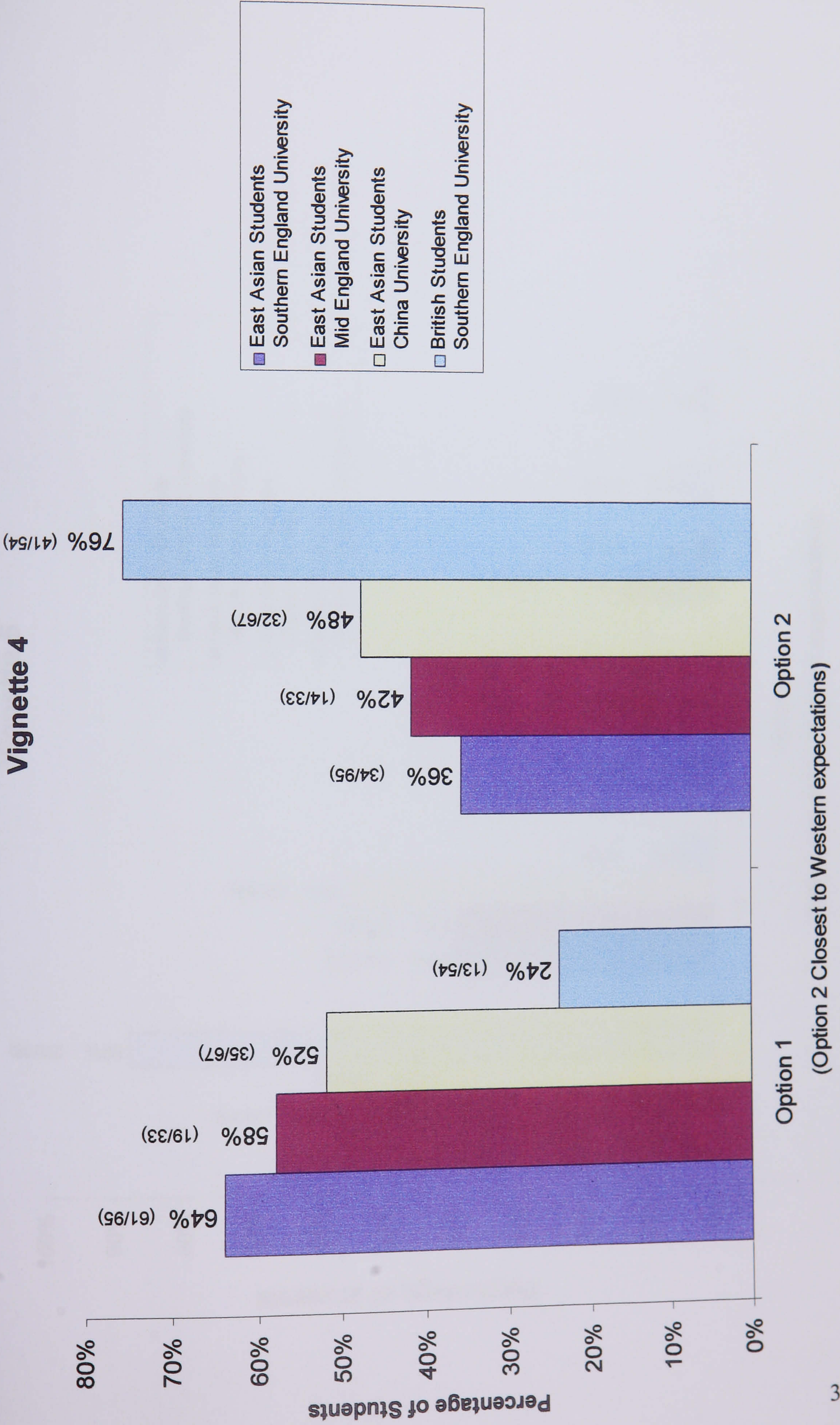


Comparison of Total East Asian Students and British Students

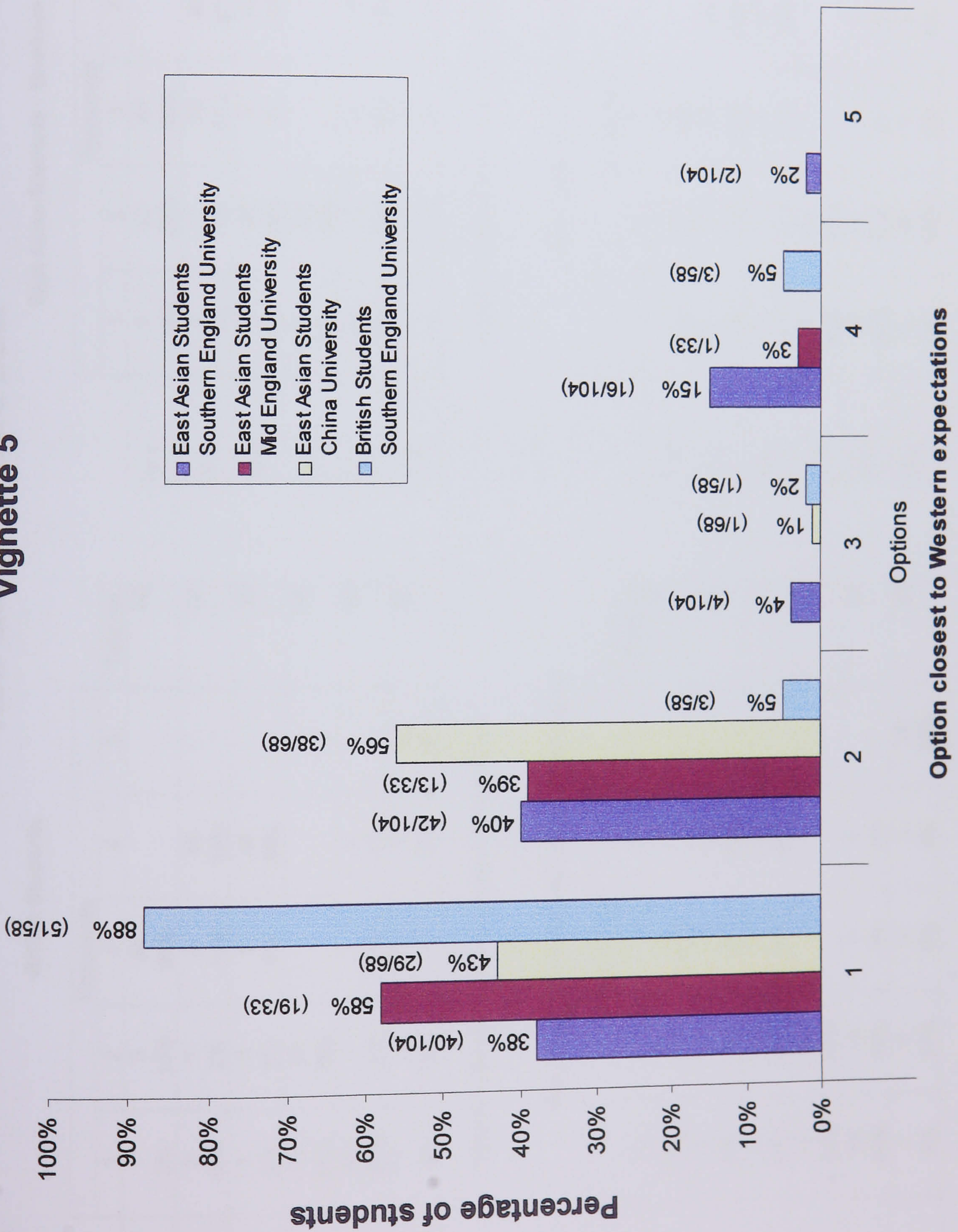


Vignette options closest to Western Expectations

Vignette 4



Vignette 5



Raw Questionnaire Data

British Students

	Responses					Total no.
	1	2	3	4	5	
V1	1 3%	5 13%	34 85%			40
V2	0 0%	1 2%	8 14%	49 84%		58
V3	1 2%	3 5%	5 9%	46 84%		55
V4	13 24%	41 76%				54
V5	51 88%	3 5%	1 2%	3 5%		58
V6	1 2%	3 5%	4 7%	7 12%	42 74%	57

Options in **BOLD** closest to Western Expectations

East Asian Students - Southern England University

	Responses					Total no.
	1	2	3	4	5	
V1	9 12%	22 29%	45 59%			76
V2	1 1%	1 1%	43 41%	60 57%		105
V3	8 8%	28 28%	8 8%	55 56%		99
V4	61 64%	34 36%				95
V5	40 38%	42 40%	4 4%	16 15%	2 2%	104
V6	1 1%	20 20%	7 7%	7 7%	67 66%	102

Options in **BOLD** closest to Western Expectations

East Asian Students - Mid England University

	Responses					Total no.
	1	2	3	4	5	
V1	4 13%	8 25%	20 63%			32
V2	0 0%	1 3%	8 24%	23 70%		33
V3	4 13%	6 19%	4 13%	18 56%		32
V4	19 58%	14 42%				33
V5	19 58%	13 39%	0 0%	1 3%		33
V6	1 3%	9 27%	2 6%	3 9%	18 55%	33

Options in **BOLD** closest to Western Expectations

East Asian Students - China University

	Responses					Total no.
	1	2	3	4	5	
V1	1 1%	16 24%	50 75%			67
V2	0 0%	0 0%	12 18%	55 82%		67
V3	4 7%	6 10%	3 5%	47 78%		60
V4	35 52%	32 48%				67
V5	29 43%	38 56%	1 1%	0 0%	0 0%	68
V6	0 0%	16 23%	1 1%	3 4%	50 71%	70


Options in **BOLD** closest to Western Expectations

Number and percentage of students who selected options closest to Western expectations (see graph, Appendix XXIIIb)

	Southern England university	Mid England university	China university	Total East Asian students	British students
Vignette 1: option 3	45/76 (59%)	20/32 (63%)	50/67 (75%)	115/175 = 66%	34/40 (85%)
Vignette 2: option 4	60/105 (57%)	23/33 (70%)	55/67 (82%)	138/205 = 67%	49/58 (84%)
Vignette 3: option 4	55/99 (56%)	18/32 (56%)	47/60 (78%)	120/191 = 63%	46/55 (84%)
Vignette 4: option 2	34/95 (36%)	14/33 (42%)	32/67 (48%)	80/195 = 41%	41/54 (76%)
Vignette 5: option 1	40/104 (38%)	19/33 (58%)	29/68 (43%)	88/205 = 43%	51/58 (88%)
Vignette 6: option 5	67/102 (66%)	18/33 (55%)	50/70 (71%)	135/205 = 66%	42/57 (74%)

Collapsed Questionnaire Data

	Options				
Vignette 1	1	2	3		
Vignette 2	1	2	3	4	
Vignette 3	1	2	3	4	
Vignette 4	1	2			
Vignette 5	1	2	3	4	
Vignette 6	1	2	3	4	5

 Collapsed Option Scores

For the χ^2 test some of the option scores (see Appendix XXIV a) were collapsed to ensure that the 'expected' count in the majority contingency table cells contained a number greater than five.

Probability Values

Appendix XXIVc

Vignette 1

	χ^2 Value	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Probability	ϕ Probability
British / Southern England university	8.024	1	0.005	0.005
British / Mid England university	4.800	1	0.028	0.028
British / China university	1.597	1	0.206	0.206

Vignette 2

	χ^2 Value	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Probability	ϕ Probability
British / Southern England university	12.606	1	0.0005	0.0005
British / Mid England university	2.0 49	1	0.152	0.152
British / China university	0.1 27	1	0.721	0.721

Vignette 3

	χ^2 Value	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Probability	ϕ Probability
British / Southern England university	15.814	2	0.0005	0.0005
British / Mid England university	9.517	2	0.009	0.009
British / China university	2.870	2	0.238	0.238

Vignette 4

	χ^2 Value	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Probability	ϕ Probability
British / Southern England university	22.186	1	0.0005	0.0005
British / Mid England university	9.887	1	0.002	0.002
British / China university	9.911	1	0.002	0.002

Vignette 5

	χ^2 Value	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Probability	ϕ Probability
British / Southern England university	37.558	2	0.0005	0.0005
British / Mid England university	17.101	2	0.0005	0.0005
British / China university	37.169	2	0.0005	0.0005

Vignette 6

	χ^2 Value	Degree of Freedom	χ^2 Probability	ϕ Probability
British / Southern England university	5.346	2	0.069	0.069
British / Mid England university	8.636	2	0.013	0.013
British / China university	9.936	2	0.007	0.007

Strategies to aid the adaptation process of East Asian students

The recommendations below emerged from the interview data and from the literature:

1. **Teaching strategies which encourage reflection and dialogic thinking/writing**

- Classroom debates to evaluate alternative perceptions of an issue, prior to writing on it.
- Text analysis for identification of discourse weaknesses in essays.
- Reducing polarisation of views by providing three or more perspectives on an issue, rather than only two (Tannen 1998:292-295).
- Allowing sufficient time for students to reflect on what they are reading and learning.
- Reducing the assignment weighting in the first term, with fewer texts to skim read, and with a greater emphasis on deep learning, rather than on competitive achievement.
- Peer learning groups which provide a substitute for the built-in support mechanisms in East Asian cultures (Biggs 1991).
- Lecturers to be active critical thinkers, and to provide an open environment in their classrooms which encourages students to make mistakes and test out emerging ideas without fear of humiliation or shame.
- Exemplars of assignments, demonstrating 'strong' and 'weak' critical thinking and evaluation, made available for students to read and analyse.
- East Asian students given the task of preparing presentations, rather than being expected to respond spontaneously in class. They could also be given the task of reporting to the whole class on their small group discussion. This would give them practice in speaking English publicly, whilst also being allowed the necessary time to prepare beforehand. Being nominated to say something in a large group discussion is more comfortable for many East Asian students than having to put themselves forward voluntarily.
- Recruitment criteria onto masters courses in the U.K. to include appropriate English language competency.

2. **Raising awareness of U.K. lecturers and masters students to cross-cultural issues**

- Sensitising lecturers and students to different cultural expectations in educational systems, resulting in mutual respect and appreciation of differences.
- Lecturers encouraged to become 'incarnate' role models (Ess 2003) of reflexivity and critical thinking for their students. Educators to submit their reasons to scrutiny and to the independent evaluation of their students.
- The theoretical models presented in this thesis, both of the learning journey and the middle way, could be used to clarify some of the issues.
- Pre-masters study skills courses and in-session study skills support provided to develop critical thinking skills through feedback on non-assessed writing tasks.
- An early 'trial' assignment, together with lecturer feedback on students' critical thinking/writing skills.
- All masters programmes to include a component on cross-cultural communication

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