Learning on Two Campuses: Students' Transition Experiences in a China-UK Articulation Programme

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Abstract

This thesis presents a longitudinal ethnographic research study of the intercultural transition experiences of 50 engineering students in a China-UK Articulation Programme. The aim is to explore the factors that have influenced their transition and the impact of their transition on the educational context on both campuses. The fieldwork was carried out over fifteen months in China and the UK. Data have been collected mainly through participant observations, document analysis and in-depth interviews with 16 Chinese programme students (3 rounds), 5 home students, 2 international students, 10 Chinese academic and administrative staff, 8 British academic and administrative staff and 2 parents. Data were analysed by using the data analysis principles advocated in grounded theory.

The findings indicate that Articulation Programme students' transition experience is an individual process, in which they construct their own third space in confronting changes in the new learning environment. The process of transition is influenced by personal factors, such as motivation for studying abroad, pre-departure preparation, language competence and autonomy, as well as situational factors, such as social support and formative assessment practices. Autonomy was identified as more crucial in transition than language competence. In students' different responses to the new learning environment, three broad categories representing key types of experience were identified: **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction**, and **Avoiding Interaction**. Meanwhile, lack of suitable interventions at the initial stage, the competition for insufficient resources, double-language barriers and different questioning behaviour led these students and the existing cohort (mainly home students) to self-categorize themselves into 'Us' and 'Them'. The separation has a negative impact on peer learning. This research suggests that integration in the class can be promoted through developing a low-stake learning environment, enhancing intercultural competence and developing a common In-group Identity as Engineering students on the same campus, in this case.

This research argues that international students' transition experience is a complex journey and tends to be oversimplified by existing models. Understanding transition experience from the perspectives of national cultural theory or culture of learning theory is more likely to fall into the trap of stereotyping. Therefore, it is suggested that a microscopic perspective focusing on individual factors together with a contextual perspective focusing on situational factors can make a better understanding of intercultural transition. This research contributes to the understanding of students' transition experiences in a Transnational Articulation Programme which is an under-researched area due to the complexity of the new phenomenon in these programmes. The research also advances the understanding of international students' transition experience by extending the scope of perspectives from solely international students to include other stakeholders in the process providing a more holistic picture of the phenomenon. These insights into the Articulation Programme students' transition experience on two campuses provide opportunities for academics and policy-makers at both universities to improve the quality of their cooperation to enhance learning for all students.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved by the School Ethics Committee.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Recent changes in China owing to economic reforms have been dramatic (Guthrie, 2009). Since the 'open-door policy' started in 1978, the Chinese economy has achieved a growth rate of around 9.5 per cent per year (Chow, 2007) and in 2008 China was the second largest economy in the world in terms of Gross Domestic Product at Purchasing Power Parity (World Bank, 2009). The accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 marked an acceleration in China's integration with the globalised economy. This has not only enabled the access to international markets and capital, but also to technology, requiring China to put more emphasis on improvements in productivity and technology (Stiglitz, 2006). As a result, the Chinese government is engaging in a process of reform to its entire education system to prepare its 1.3 billion people for the knowledge economy which has become crucial in China's sustainable development.

In response to globalisation, higher education is experiencing internationalisation. Cooperation between Chinese educational institutions and those from other countries delivering foreign awards to Chinese citizens started in the 1990s and has developed considerably over the past two decades. These education joint ventures have become a major part of China's higher education system (Zhou, 2006). In order to encourage and also to standardise this kind of transnational cooperation, the State Council of the Chinese Government enacted the *Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools* in 2003, and in 2004 the Ministry of Education (MOE) issued the *Implementation Measures for Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools*. The enactment of the Regulations aims to make China's education system globally competitive by converting the government's WTO commitments into solid domestic

legislation following the three basic principles of WTO: non-discrimination, transparency and fair completion (Zhou, 2006, p.271).

These regulations state that high-quality cooperation in the field of higher education and vocational education is an undertaking beneficial to public interest. Britain, as one of the countries which enjoys a good reputation for the quality of its higher education, has become a preferred partner for Chinese institutions. Articulation programmes at undergraduate level are one of the most common forms of collaboration between China and the UK, both for recruitment and educational reasons. These are programmes whereby Chinese students recruited through the National Higher Education Entrance Examination study in a Chinese partner institution for one to three years, then progress to the UK to complete their studies.

Institutions in the UK increasingly recognise the value of building partnerships with Chinese institutions (Oxford, 2008). In 2005-2006, there were approximately 11,000 Chinese students studying in China for a UK higher education award, 3,000 of whom were on articulation programmes that would involve their transferring from a Chinese institution in order to complete their studies with a UK partner (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2006). The overall numbers of students taking part in articulation programmes are still low, but growing. This can be evidenced by the increasing number of China-UK cooperative institutions and programmes, which has increased from 40 in 2002 (MOE, 2004a) to 114 in 2010 (MOE, 2010a and 2010b).

The Chinese Government is reluctant to see this type of cooperation simply becoming a recruitment tool for overseas institutions, and emphasises that the essence of the cooperation should be for the Chinese institutions to introduce and absorb high-quality educational resources through which their own education system could be improved (MOE, 2007). To achieve this purpose, the Government has set up a quality audit system. In the latter half of 2009, the Chinese Ministry of Education conducted an experimental audit on cooperation, including articulation programmes, in three provinces (Liaoning, Jiangsu and Henan) and one municipality directly under the

Central Government (Tianjin). In the audit, student satisfaction is given importance and there have been calls for specific research on Chinese students' intercultural learning experience in articulation programmes. However, whilst there is a great deal of research on international students overall, research focusing on their experiences in undergraduate articulation programmes is rare, perhaps due to the complexity involved in scrutinising educational activities in two countries.

As Chinese educators who have been involved in this kind of cooperative programmes, my colleagues and I are eager to know how to prepare our students for learning abroad. How will the Articulation Programme students cope with their study abroad? Are our preparations facilitating their transition? In which ways? What more could be done before their leaving for the UK? What will our English counterparts think of our students' performance? How are their teaching practices different from ours? How do the differences affect students' learning approaches? Are there better ways to bridge the two stages of teaching and learning, which will help the students have a more positive experience? In 2006, I had the chance to come to the UK to pursue my Masters degree in Education Studies. During that year, I met many other overseas Chinese students, including students coming through the articulation programmes. We became good friends. In the summer of 2007, I became a visiting lecturer in the School of Health, Community and Education Studies, teaching Articulation Programme students from China. My dual role as an international student and a part-time lecturer provide me with a valuable chance to find out about students' learning experience on the programme. Through our discussions, I found the Articulation Programme students' transition process is significant in their education and the success of the programme. This is an under-researched area, therefore, a relevant topic area for my PhD research project.

1.2 Research Aim and Question
The main research question of this study is:

> How do Chinese Articulation Programme students experience
> their transitional stage from China to the UK?

This study aims to explore transnational Articulation Programme students' transition experience between the educational context in China and the UK, with the objective to investigate the factors that have influenced students' transition and the impact of students' transition on the educational context in both Chinese and UK higher education institutions.

1.3 Project Route Map

This thesis is presented in seven chapters:

Chapter One: introduces the whole project with a brief description of the general background followed by the rationale, the derivation of the research question, and the aim of the project.

Chapter Two: contextualises the transnational articulation programme studied in this research in the context of the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. The rationale of current cooperation is explored through the discussion on the motivations of host country (the UK) and the sender country (China). The chapter also provides an analysis of the current situation of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) and examines the necessity of quality assurance in relation to this kind of transnational education cooperation, which further emphasises the importance of this research project.

Chapter Three: provides a critical review of the literature in relation to intercultural transition. It first reviews the existing models and theories, including cultural shock theory, U-shaped curve theory, stress-adaptation-growth model, and developmental models, which leads to the conclusion that international students' transition experience is a complex journey and cannot be oversimplified by any of the existing models. This chapter then discusses national cultural theory and culture of learning theory, which argues that understanding individuals' intercultural transition experience from the perspectives of these theories are not suitable and will lead to the danger of stereotyping. This chapter then tries to understand the transition from both a microscopic perspective, focusing on individual factors, as well as a contextual perspective focusing on situational factors. Due to the unique feature of the articulation programme, students will study abroad as a group

while coming into contact with another group of students, primarily home students, in the host university. The participants' intercultural transition experience will unavoidably be influenced by the interaction experience between these two groups. Therefore, this chapter examines the social interactions between members of the host community and sojourners, and interprets the intergroup relations via social identity theories. Possible ways to reduce intergroup bias are explored at the end.

Chapter Four: first presents my philosophical assumptions, which consist of ontological orientation, my epistemological consideration, and my attempt to be an inside learner with a balance to be an outsider expert in understanding my participants' social world. It then moves on to a discussion of the rationale of my choice of a qualitative research strategy: ethnography. My data collection methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis, are described and followed by an explanation of the data analysis process. My ethical concerns and critical reflexivity on the research process are also discussed.

Chapter Five: focuses on the individual transition experience across two universities. Although the students in the programme came from the same 'culture' and had the same educational experience, there were a lot of other factors which made individuals' experiences of transition and their response to those experiences very different. We should not over-generalize about students based on their nationality and so-called 'culture of learning'. However there were some significant patterns. I identified three broad response categories that represent the key types of experience found within the group, which encompass different motivations for studying abroad and strategies and attitudes towards the pre-departure preparation which particularly influenced their interaction with the new learning environment and their outcomes of academic performances. Three patterns of interaction with the new learning environment are identified and presented in terms of **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction** and **Avoiding Interaction**. These patterns show how, in the new learning environment, many factors can be 'double-edged' in that they can have negative or positive impacts depending

upon the student's transition response. Examples are: '**internet**', '**privacy**' and '**peer support**'.

Chapter Six: focuses on the Articulation Programme students' interaction with the existing cohort of students and the impact of their participation on the learning environment. Participants' interaction experience with their flatmates is also explored. This blends the perspectives of home students, other international students and staff to provide a holistic view on the topic. The chapter first analyses how the home-based students and Chinese students in the same class become two social and psychological groups, Us & Them. Then, it moves on to investigate how their own shared group membership influence their social relations and behaviour in the class. Finally, the current structured intervention to improve students' integration is explored at the university, school, and staff level.

Chapter Seven: consists of two parts. The first part provides a critical discussion on the findings presented in the previous two chapters by relating them with the existing literatures. It first explores the connection of personal factors---motivation, pre-departure preparation, language competence, and autonomy--- with the transition process. The functions of social factors in transition are then discussed. The chapter then moves on to discuss their interaction as a group with the existing cohort in the class. Finally, the impact of their transition on the teaching and learning contexts at both universities is discussed. The second part of this chapter answers the research question by providing a conclusion from the evidence collected from the study. The contribution to knowledge is stated, followed by implications for practices and recommendations for stakeholders. An agenda for further research is suggested at the end.

Chapter 2 Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools--- Setting the Scene

2.1 Introduction

This chapter contextualises the transnational articulation programme studied in this research in the context of the globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. The rationale of current cooperation is explored through the discussion on the motivations of host country (the UK) and the sender country (China). The chapter also provides an analysis of the current situation of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) and examines the necessity of quality assurance in relation to this kind of transnational education cooperation, which further emphasises the importance of this research project.

2.2 Globalisation and Transnational Higher Education

The process of globalisation is pushing 21st century higher education toward greater international involvement (Altbach and Knight, 2007). In turn, this has turned higher education into 'a global business engaging in marketing strategies to sell their knowledge-based products, attract foreign students, and establish international branches' (Spring, 2009, p.100). Worldwide, there is a growing demand for access to higher education combined with increasing need for more diversified and flexible types of course delivery (van der Wende, 2003). International cooperation in higher education has become a developmental key in today's global market (Chan, 2004). Universities in different countries strike alliances to compete in the global and mass higher education market (*ibid.*). As Leask (2008) has argued, transnational education has become an agent of globalisation.

Transnational education is 'a term which encompasses any education delivered by an institution based in one country to students located in another' (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2007, p.1). Similarly, Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) is defined by UNESCO as being where 'the learners are

located in a country different from that where the awarding institution is based' (UNESCO-CEPES, 2000, see Huang, 2007, pp.421-422). Developed countries and larger EU countries are providing most of the services, while middle-income countries in Asia and Latin America have become the 'buying' partners (Altbach and Knight, 2007). In the English-speaking world, international operations have become the primary mode of development for certain institutions (Marginson and van der Wende, 2009). Transnational higher education is becoming a major format within international student mobility in the 21st century.

The providers in exporting higher education products and services often experience barriers to trade in education, such as national legislation which may prevent foreign providers from obtaining a license to operate in the country (van der Wende, 2003). Since the Uruguay Round (1986 to 1993), educational services have been integrated into the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). Western countries have since tried to reduce barriers and gain better access to foreign educational markets through the negotiations (van der Wende, 2003).

2.3 GATS and International Trade in Higher Education

One of the landmark achievements of the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations (1986-1993) is the creation of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) which was implemented in January 1995 (WTO, 2006). 'The GATS is a multilateral agreement through which WTO members commit to volunteer liberalisation of trade in services, including education' (Ziguras, 2003, p.89). It aims to 'establish a multilateral framework of principles and rules for trade in services with a view to the expansion of such trade under conditions of transparency and progressive liberalisation and as a means of promoting the economic growth of all trading partners and the development of developing countries' (WTO, 1995, p.285). The Agreement distinguishes between four modes of supplying services which are also applied to the international trade in education, as demonstrated in Table 2_1.

Table 2_1 Four Modes of Supply in GATS (Source: adapted from Altbach and Knight, 2007; WTO, 2006 and van der Wende, 2003)

Mode	Definition	International Trade in Education
Mode 1 Cross-border Trade	From the territory of one Member into the territory of any other Member	Eg. Distance education(e-learning), Franchise courses
Mode 2 Consumption Abroad	In the territory of one Member to the service consumer of any other Member	Eg. Student studying abroad
Mode 3 Commercial Presence	By a service supplier of one Member, through commercial presence in the territory of any other Member	Eg. Branch campuses, Joint ventures with local institutions
Mode 4 Presence of Natural Persons	By a service supplier of one Member, through the presence of natural persons of a Member in the territory of any other Member	Eg. Professors and researchers providing educational services in other countries

The main form of cross-border higher education is international student mobility in terms of its significance in numbers (Mode 2), while international mobility of programmes (Mode 3) becomes the second most common form and 'may mark the beginning of an in-depth transformation of higher education in the long term' (Vincent-Lancrin, 2009, p.68). The programme studied in this research belongs to Mode 3, which enables the education exporting countries to recruit students and deliver their education programmes in their home countries through setting up branch campuses or joint ventures with local institutions.

Through GATS or other bilateral free trade agreements, trade liberalisation has been realized in higher education (van der Wende, 2003). Transnational Higher Education has become a global phenomenon whose scale of activity has grown exponentially in recent years (Naidoo, 2009). The United Kingdom, together with other major English-speaking destination countries such as America, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, hosted 46 per cent of the foreign students in the world in 2004 (Gürüz, 2008, p.238). These countries become the prominent exporters of programme mobility, while China as well as Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and India are the top markets to import these programmes (Naidoo, 2009). Therefore, a further exploration on the higher education cooperation between the UK and China will add considerable insight into an understanding of Transnational Higher Education.

2.4 Chinese-British Cooperation in Transnational Higher Education

2.4.1 The UK Story

Current practices and activities in Transnational Higher Education in different universities and countries are quite complex and it is not easy to give a commonly agreed glossary of the types of programmes available. Table 2_2 lists the four main practices of Chinese-British Transnational Higher Education, including the terms that are commonly used by the British universities. The definitions were based on the explanation given by Naidoo (2009, p.315).

Table 2_2 Current Practices and Activities in Transnational Higher Education between China and the UK (Adapted from Naidoo, 2009, p.315)

Programmes	Modalities	Qualifications
Franchising	An institution in the UK (the franchiser) grants a Chinese university the right to deliver the franchiser's educational programmes in China or other countries. Students undertake the entire programme in China or a third country	Awarded by the franchiser in the UK
Twinning Degrees	An arrangement where an institution in the UK collaborates with another institution in China allowing students studying at the latter institution to transfer their course credits to the institution in the UK.	Awarded by the institution in the UK
Programme Articulations	Students undertake part of a British qualification in China and then transfer to the British institution with 'advanced standing' in terms of study credits and credit transfer to complete the qualification at the British institution in the UK	Awarded by the institution in the UK or joint/double degrees from both institutions.
Branch Campus	A subsidiary/satellite campus is established by a British education institution in China to deliver its own education programmes, via joint venture partnerships with local Chinese partners	Awarded by the institution in the UK. (graduation certificates are normally awarded by the joint venture)

Although the practices and activities of collaboration among higher education institutions between China and the UK are prosperous, the aims and purpose of carrying out the cooperation vary different.

In the UK, the overall level of public funding has become increasingly inadequate. The government has continuously cut public funding on higher education. Higher education export has been identified as a promising

economic activity and an important source of additional income (van der Wende, 2003, p.195). The British government aims to increase its share in the global market for international students to 25% (van der Wende, 2003), and the Prime Minister's Initiative (2006) has urged British universities to increase the number of international students by 100,000 by 2011 (Brown and Holloway, 2007). Universities are encouraged to generate international ventures and extend their market in developing and middle-income countries via branch campuses, franchised degree programs, and partnerships with local institutions (Altbach and Knight, 2007). In the early 1990s, the university-polytechnic binary divide was ended, and this promoted the development of competitive education and training markets (Bennell and Pearce, 2003). These new universities are more prepared to set up overseas validated courses than the older universities who are concerned that the collaboration with overseas institutions might tarnish their long-established reputation (*ibid.*).

Economic benefit has become a key motive for transnational projects in most of the universities (Altbach and Knight, 2007). There are also political and cultural benefits from hosting international students (Fernandes, 2006). To keep an influential position on the world stage, the UK needs the special links of international alumni:

> 'Maintaining a global network of people in power who have experience and understanding of the UK through its education system continues to be a way of facilitating continued global influence indirectly' (Fernandes, 2006, p.135)

These international alumni acting as ambassadors also benefit institutions by providing positive feedback to career advancement (*ibid.*). Other benefits for institutions listed by Olcott (2008) include internationalising curriculum, preparing students for a global society, collaborative research, and creating a multicultural campus. However, the above politically correct rhetoric cannot disguise the fact that economic benefit is the major motivation for British institutions to host international students (*ibid.*). Meanwhile, in comparison with recruiting international students onto courses individually, Transnational Higher Education, such as articulation programmes, can bring in more sustainable numbers of students with better preparation for the study abroad.

Therefore, considerable numbers of institutions in the UK have focused on these transnational programmes to enhance their revenue generation.

2.4.2 Chinese Story

China, with its huge potential market, has become a favourite source country for international students. Numbers of Chinese students have continued to rise; they have become the largest group represented amongst international students in the UK (British Council, 2004). The Chinese government is reluctant to accept the current role of the country being a sender in the transnational higher education. They define Transnational Higher Education as 'Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools' (CFCRS), which means:

> 'The cooperation between foreign educational institutions[1] and Chinese educational institutions in establishing educational institutions within the territory of China to provide education service mainly to Chinese citizens' (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2003, Article 2)

This cooperation can be taken in two formats: setting up institutions or, as in the current study educational programmes. The Chinese government takes it as 'a component of China's educational cause' and a benefit to the public interest (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2003, Article 3). The fundamental aim of CFCRS is to introduce high quality education resources from other countries to enhance the international competiveness of Chinese institutions (Zhou, 2006). The Chinese government strongly advocates that education should support the public interests (MOE, 2006). Some of the foreign partners may focus on the profits from the cooperation, and even reduce their standard of recruitment and degrees, which is not what the Chinese partners want (Ke, 2010). Therefore, the Chinese government might agree with Skelly's (2009) argument that higher education is not a commodity, but a service for public interest. In 2010, the Chinese government published the 'National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)', which shows that Chinese government will encourage its schools and institutions to conduct

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1. The cooperation of institutions in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao with the institutions in mainland China is also included in the CFCRS.

international communication and cooperation in various ways and successfully manage some examples of CFCRS in order to explore how to make use of the excellent education resources (Central People's Government of People's Republic of China, 2010). This shows that CFCRS has been considered as the 'experimental field' for an innovative mode of talent cultivation (Ke, 2010).

The rationale for the current prosperous situation in Transnational Higher Education in China can be explained in the following aspects:

First, the fast development of Chinese economy since 1978, especially through the accession to the World Trade Organisation in 2001, requires China not only to convert the pressure of its huge population into abundant human resources, but also to 'produce competent professionals at all levels, of all varieties, and ranging from the academically erudite to the practically skilled' (Zhou, 2006, p.281). Therefore, universities in China become key agents in economic and social development (Willis, 2006). Collaboration with developed countries in higher education has been greatly encouraged to obtain world-leading experience and to improve their research and innovation capacities. Through cooperative transnational higher education programmes, Chinese universities are expected to integrate urgently needed curricula and textbooks of advanced world levels and 'assimilate the strong points and successful governance expertise of foreign education institutions in light of China's actual conditions' (Zhou, 2006, p.273). Through the cooperation, Chinese universities can enhance their image, competitive position, and strengthen the academic exchange to be part of a global academic community (Willis, 2006).

Second, the high valuation of education in Chinese culture is the social driving force. Chinese families are ready to make sacrifices to provide the best possible educational opportunities for their children (Welch, 2009). This desire has been heightened by the high number of only children in China, born under the 'One-Child Family Policy' (Zhou, 2006). Meanwhile, the development of the economy has led to the generation of the middle class in the last 30 years. They are quickly expanding with an estimated population of

approximately 500 million by 2025 and have resources to pay tuition and other fees for admission (Altbach, 2009). Their demand to access higher education is diverse with respect to the places to go and subjects to take, in order to make a better living in fast-developing societies. Owing to the long-lasting influence of the high value of a western degree and the successful examples of professionals with overseas experiences, this group of people are trying to send their children to study abroad. 'Acquisition of Western higher education becomes the imagined gateway to upward social and economic mobility in an increasingly unequal global system' (Doherty and Singh, 2005, p.57). Transnational Higher Education gives them one option to send their children abroad. Considering that their children are too young to go abroad right after high school, some parents prefer the transnational programmes which will give their children a period of time to lay a foundation in a Chinese university before studying abroad. Both the parents and the students have taken the programmes as a kind of 'springboard' for future education abroad and as a key to a position with a large international company.

Third, the conflict between the strong domestic need for tertiary education and the limited supply of the Chinese universities has strengthened the development of Transnational Higher Education in China. In the late 1990s, China started to change its higher education from elite education to mass education. The gross enrolment rate for higher education has increased from 10.5% in 1999 to 23.3% in 2008 (MOE, 2009), and the Chinese government is going to raise the rate to 40% in 2020 (Central People's Government of People's Republic of China, 2010). China runs the largest higher education system in the world with 2,263 higher education institutions and 20,210,000 university students in 2008 (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). However, the resources in higher education are still limited to the school-aged populations. Places at a desirable university are very competitive. Students need to get a good result in the selective National Higher Education Entrance Examination in order to get into their preferred university. An increasing number of them choose to study abroad through participation in the Transnational Higher Education programmes, which are called CFCRS in

China. The following section provides an analysis of the current situation in this area.

2.5 Current Situation of Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS) at Undergraduate and Postgraduate Level

The Chinese government encourages Chinese institutions to cooperate with foreign educational institutions which are well-recognized in academic level and education quality, and to set up cooperation in emerging and urgently needed subjects for the Chinese market (MOE, 2004b). The cooperatively-run institutions or programmes can be made up of various types at various levels, but exclude the compulsory education service or special education services such as the military, police and political education services (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2003, Article 6). Furthermore, 'foreign religious organizations, religious institutions, religious colleges and universities or religious workers' are not allowed to engage in the cooperative activities in China (State Council of the People's Republic of China, 2003, Article 7). Higher education and vocational education are two fields that have been encouraged for the cooperation. By the end of 2003, 270 Chinese-foreign cooperative institutions and programmes (including cooperation with Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan) in higher education had been established (Zhou, 2006, p.270). By the 19th July, 2010, the number has increased to 511 according to the name lists published by MOE (2010a; 2010b) [1]. The principles and practices of CFCRS will be shown in the following examples.

The first feature of current CFCRS can be seen in Figure 2_1: the distribution of these education joint ventures is imbalanced. According to the statistics published in 2003, CFCRS institutions and programmes are mainly situated in the economically and culturally well-developed eastern coastal regions or large and medium-sized cities (MOE, 2003). In 2010, the general distribution has not been changed greatly; however, there are some small changes.

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1. On 19th July, 2010, the Chinese Ministry of Education published the name lists of 511 CFCRS at undergraduate and postgraduate level (See Figure 2_1 and 2_2 for details). Some of the institutions and programmes were set up before the Regulations took effect, but have been reviewed by the government. Due to the lack of data on non-degree courses, the following analysis is based on the degree courses of CFCRS.

Figure 2_1 CFCRS Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Programmes and Institutions by 19th July, 2010 (Adapted from MOE 2010a and 2010b)
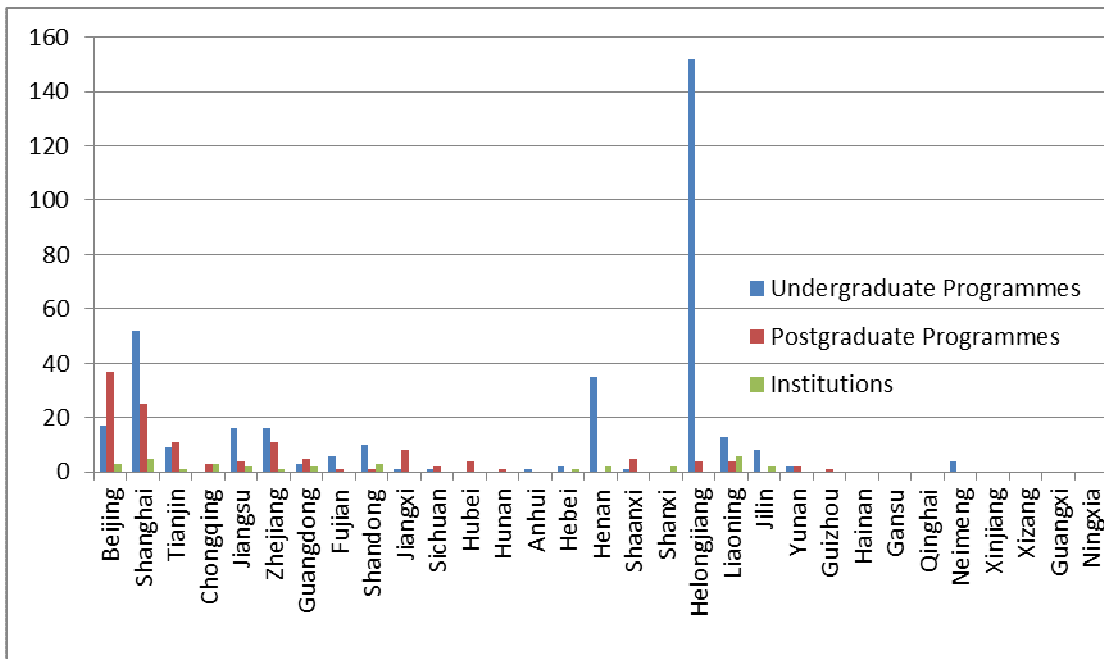
As shown in Figure 2_1, Heilongjiang, one of the three north-east provinces, is an exception. It is the biggest province with 152 undergraduate programmes and 4 postgraduate programmes. However, 74 of them are in cooperation with institutions in Russia. This is partly because of its location next to Russia, and partly due to its language foundation, as Russian is the second language in some of the middle schools. Henan, which is in the middle of China, is another exception. It has 35 undergraduate programmes and 2 institutions. This has benefited from the proactive policies encouraging its universities to cooperate with the world's top 500 universities. Shanghai ranked second in the total number of CFCRS. However, the partner universities are more diverse. It has 5 CFCRS institutions cooperating with universities in the USA, the UK, Germany, France and Belgium. Among 52 undergraduate programmes, the partner universities are from 13 countries or regions: the USA (15), the UK (7), Germany (7), France (5), Australia (4), Canada (3), Netherland (2), Italy (2), Japan (2), New Zealand (1), South Korea (1) and Hong Kong (1). The capital city, Beijing, has the biggest number in postgraduate programmes. The USA (12), Australia (12) and Hong Kong (7) are the three most favoured cooperative countries or regions.

Among the five autonomous regions, only Neimeng has 4 undergraduate programmes with institutions in Australia and Canada. The other four regions, Tibet, Xinjiang, Guangxi and Ningxia do not have any CFCRS degree courses. Although the government has encouraged more cooperation in the western and remote areas of China in 2004, the situation has not changed. The deficit in economic development has made these areas less attractive to foreign universities.

The second feature of the current CFCRS is that partner institutions are based in 21 economic developed countries or regions. As shown in Figure 2_2, the UK ranks the first with 114 programmes and institutions. The USA and Australia are both runners-up with 84 each. The other top 10 countries or regions are Russia (75), Canada (39), Hong Kong (30), Germany (24), France (18), South Korea (8) and Netherland (7). Ireland, New Zealand and Japan are the next on the league with 5 from each country. Other countries or regions, such as Belgium (3), Italy (2), Sweden (2), Singapore (2), Austria (1), Norway (1), South Africa (1) and Taiwan (1) have begun to expand their market in China. Britain is a leading provider of transnational education (McBurnie and Ziguras, 2009). However, its cooperative level needs to be extended in China. Most of the UK's cooperative programmes are at

Figure 2_2 Partner Countries and Regions in CFCRS by 19th July, 2010 (Adapted from MOE 2010a and 2010b)
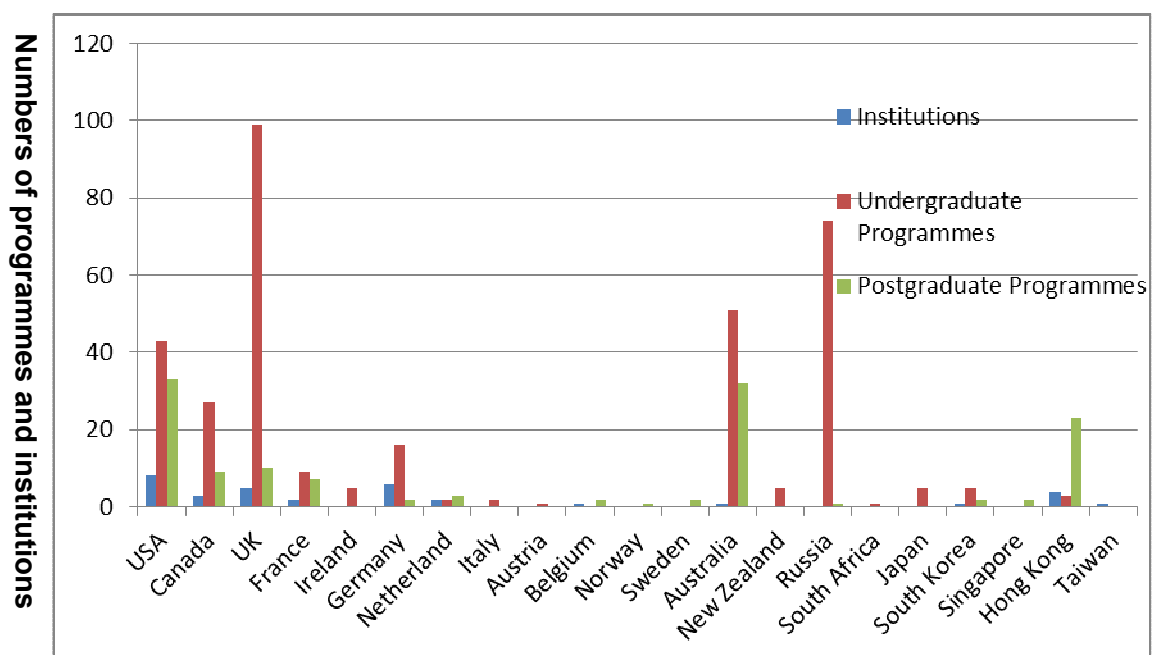
undergraduate levels. It has only 10 postgraduate programmes, while the USA has 33, the highest among the 21 countries and regions. Australia and HongKong came next with 32 and 23 respectively.

Most of these countries are English-speaking, due to 'the increasingly hegemonic role of English as a global language' (Bennell and Pearce, 2003). However, in some of the non-English-speaking nations, English is spreading as a medium of instruction to attract foreign students (Marginson and van der Wende, 2009). As shown in Figure 2_2, other developed European countries, such as Russia, Germany, France, Netherland, Belgium, Italy, Sweden and Austria are actively seeking partner institutions in China. As mentioned before, Russia has located its priority market in the north-east of China, especially Heilongjiang Province. Apart from one undergraduate programme with Henan University, all of the other 74 programmes are in Heilongjiang. Germany has set up 6 CFCRS institutions in Shanghai (1), Beijing (1), Shandong (2) and Shanxi (2). China-EU School of Law (CESL) in the China University of Political Science and Law is built on cooperation with the University of Hamburg in Germany to 'offer high-level legal education to law students and legal professionals, to conduct Sino-European legal research and consultancy activities and to substantially contribute to the advancement of the rule of law in China' (China-EU School of Law, 2010).

The third feature of the current CFCRS situation is that the prominent cooperative subjects focus on *Economy*, *Business Administration*, *Electrical Engineering and Computing Science*, and *Foreign Language Studies* (see Figure 2_3). The category of *Electrical Engineering and Computing Science* has a very significant number, second only to *Business Administration*. Based on 'the Higher Education Institution Undergraduate Subject Catalogue' published by MOE in 1998, the 349 undergraduate programmes can be grouped into 33 categories and 87 subjects. Among which, Computing Science and Technology ranks the first with 40 programmes. Seven countries have cooperation in this subject. The UK has set up 12 computing programmes, eight of which are in the Helongjiang province. Meanwhile, all of the eight Russian computing programmes are in the same province. This

kind of duplication of similar projects might cause severe competition and an unnecessary waste of resources.

Figure 2_3 Subjects of CFCRS Undergraduate Programmes by 19th July, 2010 (Adapted from MOE 2010a and 2010b)
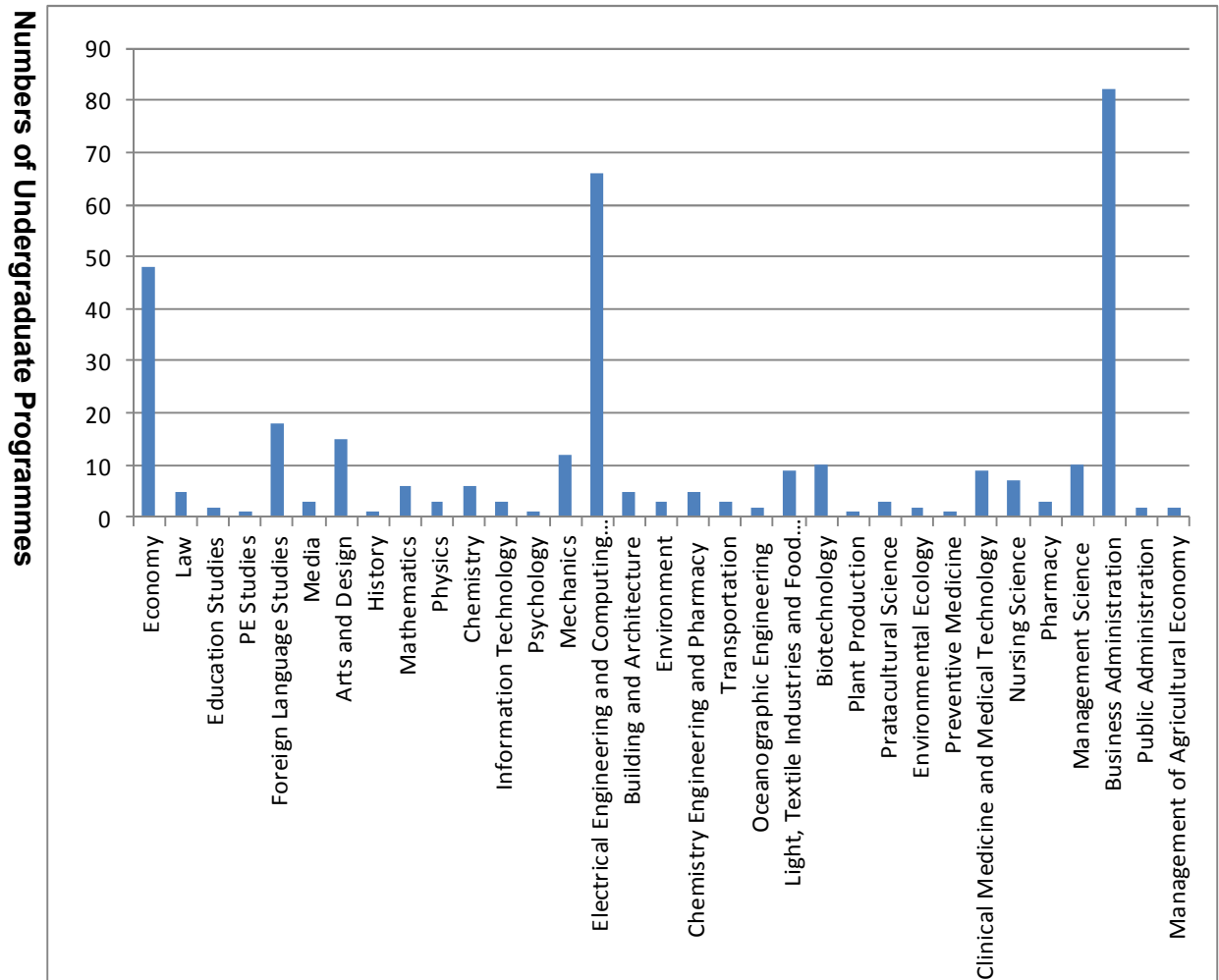
2.6 Quality Assurance in CFCRS

Chinese high-school leavers are recruited into CFCRS programmes or institutions through participation in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination (NHEEE). The Examination is very competitive and considered as the 'baton' of teaching and learning in senior middle school. What the teachers teach and what the students learn aim to pass the exam and get a place in a desired university. The enrolment standard for degree courses has three tiers and students need to get enough score to pass the relevant standard. For instance, two CFCRS institutions: the University of Nottingham

Ningbo, China, and Xi'an Jiaotong – Liverpool University, ask candidates to pass the first tier score. The intended recruitment number and score are required to be reported to the Ministry of Education before the Examination and cannot be changed casually. However, as discussed in the above section, some countries have set up similar projects in the same area, which has caused severe competition. Some universities lower their recruitment standard to attract more students. Some of the foreign degrees cannot be authenticated by the Chinese government. As van der Wende (2003) has pointed out the main problems in the cross border education services are related to the issue of quality assurance.

To protect the quality of the CFCRS, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued the document --- 'Suggestions for the Current Problems in CFCRS' in 2006 (MOE, 2006). It asks institutions to adhere to the principle of public interests in CFCRS and against irrational fees and unreasonably high tuition fees. The Chinese government stand strong against the commoditisation of education and restates that education services are not a commodity to trade. To prevent the reduction of enrolment standards, the government emphasises that the number of enrolments must be officially approved and listed in the national recruitment plan. If there are not enough students in the approved tier of National Higher Education Entrance Examination, institutions are not allowed to recruit students for the programme in the next tier. The teaching quality, standard of the curriculum and degrees awarded should be equivalent to those at the partner universities. For 'double campus' programmes, foreign university staff should deliver at least one third of the core modules and teaching hours. However, this is very hard to implement for some of the programmes.

Therefore, in 2007, the Chinese Ministry of Education issued another notice to regulate the CFCRS (MOE, 2007), in which it points out that some universities prefer to set up low cost programmes such as Commerce and Administration, Management, Computing and Information Technology. To be approved by the government, Chinese universities are encouraged to cooperate only with the well-known universities or subjects. Famous scholars in these institutions will also be considered as a criterion. A specialized

website is built to monitor the CFCRS[2]. Students and parents are able to check the legality of a programme or institution to help them make their decision.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Chinese Government emphasises that cooperation should benefit the quality enhancement of Chinese institutions and the whole education system (MOE, 2007). When the number of the programmes and institutions goes up, attention must be paid to the teaching and learning aspect. How to enhance the cooperation between two teams of staff, bridge the two stages of courses and facilitate students' transitions from China to the host universities deserve more attention. Owing to the complexity involved in scrutinising educational activities in two countries, research on transnational Articulation Programme students' transition experience is rare, which makes this research more necessary.

2.7 Conclusion

As has been discussed in this chapter, Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) is a very complex phenomenon. With the research focus moving from government policy level to teaching and learning practices with the students' learning experience at the heart, this complexity will intensify. Considering Britain as the leading partner country and Engineering as one of the top three subjects, the Chinese-British transnational programme in Engineering, studied in this research project, will provide some valuable first-hand data on students' learning experience and give some insights into the teaching and learning practices. This will help policy-makers and practitioners uncover the complexity and have a better understanding of the core essence of transnational higher education in China and the United Kingdom.

The analysis of Transnational Higher Education (TNHE) from the political perspective identifies that TNHE has developed quickly during the past two decades against the background of globalization and internationalization. However, the effective environment for learning has not received the same attention and has not developed at the same rate. How students experience

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2. http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index.php/default/index

their transition in the new learning environment is the foundation of a successful transnational cooperative programme. This thesis shows what is happening on the ground--- students' transition in the learning environment. The factors that could affect their transition, their coping strategies in interacting with the new learning environment, the outcomes of their journeys and the ways in which the two teams of staff could work together to facilitate students' transition are at the heart of this study. A literature review on the existing theories in the field of intercultural transition is necessary for understanding how my participants experience their transition from China to the UK.

Chapter 3 Intercultural Transition

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of the literature in relation to intercultural transition. This literature review was drafted after I finished an independent data analysis and generated a substantive theory in order to avoid importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on my work (Charmaz, 2006). It first reviews existing models and theories, including cultural shock theory, U-shaped curve theory, stress-adaptation-growth model, and developmental models, leading to the conclusion that international students' transition experience is a complex journey and cannot be oversimplified by any of the existing models. This chapter then discusses national cultural theory and culture of learning theory, which argues that understanding individuals' intercultural transition experience from the perspectives of these theories are not suitable and will lead to the danger of stereotyping. This chapter then tries to understand the transition from both a microscopic perspective, focusing on individual factors, as well as a contextual perspective focusing on situational factors. Due to the unique feature of the Articulation Programme, students will study abroad as a group and come into contact with another group of students, primarily home students, in the host university. My participants' intercultural transition experience will unavoidably be influenced by the interaction experience between these two groups. Therefore, this chapter examines the social interactions between members of the host community and sojourners, and interprets the intergroup relations by social identity theories. Possible ways to reduce intergroup bias are explored at the end.

3.2 Existing Models: towards Happy-ending?

3.2.1 Cultural Shock

Sojourners are those who voluntarily go abroad for a set period of time associated with a specific assignment, contact or study, and are most likely to return home after the completion of their 'job' (Ward, Bochner and

Furnham, 2001). As one of the main sojourner groups, international students stay overseas for the duration of their diplomas or degrees. The 'popular' idea of 'culture shock' is often used to describe the initial experience of their studying in a foreign country. It is said to be 'precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse' (Oberg, 1960, p.177). Oberg defines culture shock as an occupational disease. In the process of recovery, sojourners are expected to experience four stages of adjustment: the honeymoon stage followed by a crisis stage characterized by a hostile and aggressive attitude towards the host country, then move on to the recovery stage till the final stage of a complete adjustment (Oberg, 1960, pp.178-179). These four stages are similar to the U-shaped curve theory suggested by Lysgaard (1955, p.51). His study on 200 Norwegian academic professions reviews that:

> 'adjustment is felt to be easy and successful to begin with; then follows a 'crisis' in which one feels less well adjusted, somewhat lonely and unhappy; finally one begins to feel better adjusted again, becoming more integrated into the foreign community' *(ibid.)*.

These early theories became popular and triggered the tendency to stage the intercultural transition experience. For example, Smalley (1963, pp.53-54) proposed a similar four-stages of culture shock. Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) expanded the U-shaped curve theory into W-shaped curve theory when they concluded the re-adjustment process back home.

These perfect U-shaped models have been challenged by some of the researchers. Ward *et al.* (1998, p.277) conducted a longitudinal study of the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of 35 Japanese students in New Zealand. Their results show that neither psychological nor sociocultural measurements of adaptation demonstrated the U-curve of adjustment. They argue that adjustment problems were greatest at entry point and decreased over time. This was supported by the studies of Brown and Holloway (2007), as well as Ying (2005). Brown and Holloway (2007) conducted an ethnographic study of 13 international students' adjustment journey in England and proposed that, at this early stage, international students can be overwhelmed by negative symptoms largely related to culture shock. Ying (2005) argues that international students have various accesses to cross-

cultural information before their arrival, and thus are less likely to demonstrate an initial euphoria. On the contrary, the evidence supported a gradual linear decline of acculturative stressors over time.

These clinically-oriented theories imply that these sojourners who experience difficulties require therapy and counselling in adjusting themselves to a new culture (Furnham and Bochner, 1982). Adjusting a person to a new culture is associated with cultural chauvinism which implies that the sojourners should abandon their original culture to embrace the values and customs of the host society (*ibid.*). These medical models not only focused on the negative features of the transition experience, and viewed 'culture shock' as a medical problem, but also regarded sojourners as passive victims in need of outside help (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001, pp.36-45). In intercultural transition studies, there are requirements for new theoretical approaches which view sojourners as active respondents who are dealing with their problems in constructive ways (*ibid.*).

3.2.2 Stress-Adaptation-Growth Model

The term *shock* in the above models is negative and implies that only difficulties will result from culture contact (Berry, 2006). *Stress* has 'a theoretical basis in studies of how people deal with negative experiences (*stressors*) by engaging in various *coping* strategies, leading eventually to some form of *adaptation*' (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, cited in Berry, 2006, p.43). Therefore, as Berry has argued, acculturation experiences can be advantageous as well from a stress perspective.

Berry's argument that stress can promote adaptation in a positive way is showed in Kim's (2001) acculturation model: stress-adaptation-growth. Kim (2005, p.383) argues that stress is a kind of identity conflict essentially between the need for acculturation and the resistance to deculturation. It occurs when an individual's internal capabilities are not adequate to meet the demands of the environment (*ibid.*). Then, the creative forces of self-reflexivity of human mentation are triggered by each stressful experience and will help the individual to reorganize him/herself. Stress will be driven away when the individual works out new ways to handle problems and a 'leap

forward' will be realized. Therefore the dynamic psychological movement consists of a three-pronged process: stress-adaptation-growth (Kim, 2005, p.384). Stress is essential in the adaptation process and allows for self-(re)organization and self-renewal (*ibid.*). Kim (2001) also points out that the stress-adaptation-growth dynamic plays out in dialectic, cyclic, and continual 'draw-back-to-leap' pattern, rather than a smooth, steady, and linear progression.

3.2.3 Developmental Models

Burnett and Gardner (2006, pp.68-70) advocate that developmental models of acculturation are more appropriate to explain the process their participants' experienced. The two models they reviewed are the stage-models of Bennett (1986) and Yoshikawa (1988). Bennett (1986, pp.181-186) suggests a six-stage continuum of personal growth: *denial* (the parochial denial of difference), *defense* (the evaluative defense against difference), *minimization* (the universalist position of minimization of difference), *acceptance* (the acceptance of difference), *adaptation* (the adaptation to difference) and *integration* (the integration of difference into one's world view). This developmental continuum moves from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. Burnett and Gardner (2006) point out that this model put every stranger in a denial or defence position, presuming that they do not have any prior intercultural experience. This will lead to the danger of being judgemental in its view of those whom it assesses to be ethnocentric (*ibid.*).

Drawing on the philosophy of dialogue and Buddhistic perspectives on paradoxical relations, Yoshikawa (1987) constructs his double-swing model of intercultural communication, which is symbolized by the Möbius strip '∞'. Yoshikawa's argument presents a non-western perception on the idea of intercultural communication. Yoshikawa (1987, pp.326-327) explains that his model is neither monistic nor dualistic, but an 'identity-in-unity'. It emphasizes 'the act of meeting between two different beings without eliminating the otherness or uniqueness of each and without reducing the dynamic tension created as a result of meeting' (*ibid.*). One will neither be this side nor that side nor beyond both sides, but a dynamic, tension-laden 'between' in the balance of pull from the polarities of life. Later, Yoshikawa (1988) presents

his five-stage model of cross-cultural adaptation: *contact*, *disintegration*, *reintegration*, *autonomy*, and *double-swing*. These stages are similar to Adler (1975)'s transition experience model. Yoshikawa substitutes Adler's fifth stage 'Independence' with his pattern 'Double-Swing'. Adler's 'Independence' stage shows that the individual's 'attitude, emotions and behaviours are independent but not independent of cultural influence' and is able to 'accept and draw nourishment from both cultural similarities and differences' (Adler, 1975, p.144). His 'independent-interdependent' stage embraces a new identity---the 'identity-in-unity' or 'duality-in-unity' (Yoshikawa, 1988, p.142). However, this kind of in-betweenness (Double-swing or Integration) has not been confirmed by the research of Burnett and Gardner (2006, pp.88-89) on Chinese students' transition experience in UK universities. They argue that sojourners 'do internalise differences sufficiently so that they react as appropriate to the cultural context or situation in which they find themselves at any particular time'. They propose the end point of their acculturation model as 'Internalisation'.

3.3 National Cultures Perspective: a Suitable Way in Understanding Individuals?

3.3.1 National Cultural Theory and the Danger of Stereotyping Individuals

Collectivism versus individualism based on Hofstede's (1984) cultural theory is often considered as the main aspect in understanding Chinese students' transition experience in the UK. Hofstede (1984, p.21) defines culture as 'collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another'. The main argument of his theory is that:

> 'People carry "mental programs" which are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in schools and organization, and that these mental programs contain a component of national culture. They are most clearly expressed in the different values that predominate among people from different countries' (Hofstede, 1984, p.11).

He called these "mental programs" *software of the mind* (Hofstede, 1991, p.4). The social environments one was brought up in are the sources of one's mental programs (*ibid.*). Hofstede surveyed staff in a large

multinational business organization in 40 countries and identified four main dimensions along which dominant value systems in these countries can be ordered: Power Distance (from small to large), Uncertainty Avoidance (from weak to strong), Collectivism versus Individualism, and Femininity versus Masculinity (Hofstede, 1991, p.14; Hofstede, 1984, p.11). Bond and his Chinese colleagues in Hong Kong and Taiwan add a fifth dimension to Hofstede's 4-D framework: *long-term versus short-term orientation* (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005, p.31). These dimensions are believed to be able to affect human thinking, organization, and institutions in predictable ways (Hofstede, 1984, p.11).

Among these dimensions, Collectivism versus Individualism is always used as a main aspect in the comparison of the East and the West. Hofstede and Hofstede (2005, p.33) think this is the least controversial of their dimensions. Mainland China was not on the Individualism index tables, but two regions, Hong Kong and Taiwan rank the 37th and 44th respectively in the league. The USA, Australia, the UK, Canada and Netherlands rank 1st to 5th. According to Hofstede (1991, pp.58-61), people from collectivist culture are more likely to avoid direct confrontation with another person to maintain harmony, respect group opinions rather than give personal opinion, be less independent and worry about losing face (being humiliated), while people from individualist cultures tend to speak one's mind to show honesty, develop their own opinion, be more independent and gain self-respect. Therefore, at school, collectivist culture students will hesitate to speak up in larger groups unless a teacher addresses their names, especially when there are outgroup members (Hofstede, 1991, p.62). Due to the large power distance in their culture, education tends to be teacher-centred with little interaction (*ibid.*).

Hofstede's work has a massive impact on intercultural studies, but is controversial as well. Holliday (2010, p.260) criticizes the presentation of national culture as the basic unit to describe and predict cultural behaviour in Hofstede's work. Montgomery (2010, p.11) points out that suggesting a causal link between certain behaviours and particular nationalities is a kind of stereotype. Using the five dimensions of the framework to explain behaviour will create an essentialist picture and these pictures are inclined to cultural

chauvinism because 'behavioural traits such as cheating are easily traced to the prioritising of group behaviour over personal choice, family structures, religion, political hierarchies and so on, so that not just cheating but a whole cultural system may be demonised' (Holliday, 2010, p.260). This tendency is associated with Orientalism, which considers 'the long-standing Othering of the "exotic" East and the South as morally deficient' (*ibid.*).

Facing the increasing accusation of 'stereotyping', Hofstede's first feedback to the criticism is that nations are 'usually the only kinds of units available for comparison, and they are better than nothing' (Hofstede, 2001, p.73). In their latest version of 'Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind', Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010, p.40) notify that the association between personality and culture is not absolute, but statistical. Their support for the argument is via use of McCrae and Hofstede's self-scored personality test using the NEO Personality Inventory based on the Big Five (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) to explore the relationship between personality dimension scores and national culture dimension scores (*ibid.*). The results show that a wide range of different personalities exist in every country, but the way the individuals describe themselves in personality tests is partly influenced by their national culture, which shows that culture and personality are not independent (*ibid.*). They also state that national culture scores are about national societies, rather than individuals. The re-explanation of their main arguments about mental programming is that national culture is not a combination of properties of the 'average citizen', nor a 'modal personality; a set of likely reactions may not be shown by the same *individuals*, but only statistically more often in the same *society* (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010, p.191).

Therefore, both Hofstede and his critics have realized the danger of stereotyping individuals by their national cultures. In fact, as Montgomery (2010, pp.14-15) has pointed out, stereotypes act as a sort of selective filter through which people view others. 'Previously held beliefs relating to the culture and values of others are maintained by concentration on aspects of behaviour and interaction which support the stereotype, and evidence that contradicts the stereotype is ignored. Information that supports the

stereotype is hoarded and information to the contrary is dismissed' (*ibid.*).
Volet and Ang (1998) find that preconceived, negative, stereotyped views
separate international students and home students. Both parties failed to
benefit from learning from each other. The stereotypes in the learning
context also influence the understanding of international students'
intercultural transition which will be discussed in the following section.

3.3.2 Culture of Learning Theory and the Tendency to Stereotype Chinese Learners

Influenced by Hofstede's national culture theory on collectivism versus
individualism, Cortazzi and Jin (1997) have proposed culture of learning
theory to understand Chinese students' learning behaviours in the western
educational context. Their work is well referenced, but might be the most
contested in the literature on Chinese learning experience abroad. A culture
of learning is the 'cultural beliefs and values about teaching and learning,
expectations about classroom behaviour and what constitutes "good"
teaching work' (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997, p.76). The main arguments of the
theory are students who are involved in a multi-cultural higher education
environment will 'not only carry cultural behaviour and concepts into the
classroom but that they also use the specific framework of their cultures to
interpret and assess other people's words, actions and academic
performance' (Cortazzi and Jin, 1997, p.77). The contrasted features of
cultures of learning in the academic settings in China and the UK are listed in
Table 3_1, which has been widely criticized as a way having strengthened
the stereotypes of Chinese students.

Table 3_1 Different Emphases in Cultures of Learning: China & UK
(Source: Cortazzi and Jin, 1996a, p.74)

CHINA	UK
Knowledge from teachers & textbooks	Skills in communicating & learning
Collective consciousness co-ordination, group support, social & moral learning	Individual orientation personal needs, attention, talent, uniqueness
Teaching & learning as performance Pace, variety, presentation, virtuosity	Teaching & Learning as organization Pairs, groups, activities, tasks
Learning through practice & memorization towards mastery preparation, repetition, confidence building	Learning through interaction & construction Experience, activities, tasks, initial creativity
Contextualized communication Listener/reader responsibility	Verbal explicitness Speaker/writer responsibility for communication
Hierarchical relations Agreement, harmony, face, respect	Horizontal relations Discussion, argument, informality
Teacher as model Expert, authority, parent, friend, teacher-centred	Teacher as organizer Mentor, guide, helper, learner-centred

They also argue that in the classroom, British university staff and Chinese students' expectations might have the following academic culture gaps.

Table 3_2 Academic Culture Gaps between the Expectations of British University Staff and Those of Some Overseas Students
(Source: Cortazzi and Jin, 1997, p.78)

British academic expectations	Academic expectations held by Chinese and other groups
• Individual orientation	• Collective consciousness
• Horizontal relations	• Hierarchical relations
• Active involvement	• Passive participation
• Verbal explicitness	• Contextualised communication
• Speaker/writer responsibility	• Listener/reader responsibility
• Independence of mind	• Dependence on authority
• Creativity, originality	• Mastery, transmission
• Discussion, argument, challenge	• Agreement, harmony, face
• Seeking alternatives	• Single solution
• Critical evaluation	• Assumed acceptance

Cortazzi and Jin (1996a, p.74) hope that both sides will raise 'conscious awareness of differences in learning and teaching' thus leading them to a clear understanding of 'their expectations of each other' through 'explicit discussions'. However, this idealistic wish is conflicted with the findings of

empirical studies and has been criticized by many researchers. Among them, Stephens (1997), Kumaravadivelu (2003), Gieve and Clark (2005), Tian (2008) and Feng (2009) are very notable.

Stephens (1997) criticizes Jin and Cortazzi's view as oversimplified and confirms 'the view of "culture" as an area of contested discourse rather than a reified construct' (p.119). She points out the risk in overgeneralising about differences between the ways in which Chinese and British think.

> 'A broad brush view of the Chinese as collectively-oriented and the British as individualistic may say something about the historical development of ideology, but in relation to contemporary culture it may miss as much as it reveals' (Stephens, 1997, p.120).

She argues that Chinese attitudes towards academic study are different and ideas about Chinese culture should be understood in a historical context.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) argues that classroom behaviours 'are the result of a complex interface between several social, cultural, economic, educational, institutional, and individual factors'. Therefore, '[i]t is almost impossible to control a multitude of variables in order to isolate culture as the sole variable that can be empirically studied to determine its impact on classroom behavior'. The author has doubts about Cortazzi and Jin's (1996b) research methodology, thinking their research displays a 'lack of robust research design that can separate culture as a variable in order to investigate its causal connection to classroom behavior' and this kind of research 'predominantly through the cultural lens will result in nothing more than a one-dimensional caricature of these learners' (p.714). He used the findings of Cheng's (2002) research to show a different story of a group of 167 Chinese students, who:

> 'are more concerned with the process of learning than with the product; they have realized that the ultimate goal of language learning is skills rather than knowledge; they prefer a student-centred approach to a teacher-centred approach; and they are willing to participate in interactive and cooperative language learning activities' (Cheng, 2002, p.113, cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.715).

Cheng also finds that learner motivation and the importance they attached to their major subject shaped his subjects' expectations. This differs from Cortazzi and Jin's conclusion that the expectations and behaviour of Chinese

learners are formed by a specific culture and social environment into which they have been socialized from an early age (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p.715). Kumaravadivelu (2003) points out that one of the reasons why teachers persist with cultural stereotypes is that

> 'In our attempt to deal with the complexity of our task, we fall for simple, sometimes simplistic, solutions. We may be stereotyping our learners partly because it helps us reduce an unmanageable reality to a manageable label. ...So if our students fail to interact in class the way we expect them to, or if they fail to show that they engage their minds the way we want them to, we readily explain their behaviour in terms of culture and cultural stereotypes' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, pp.716-717)

Gieve and Clark (2005) suggest that personal identity should be considered in the understanding of the different cultures of learning. Their research on Chinese students self-directed learning suggests that 'given appropriate conditions, what are apparently culturally determined dispositions towards a certain approach to learning can turn out to be quite flexible' (p.261). Chinese participants respond well to forms of self-directed learning which are not only 'reactive and group-based', but also 'proactive and individual' (p.265). They warn us of 'the danger of characterising groups of learners with reductionist categories' and suggest that attention must be paid to 'the heterogeneity in supposedly homogeneous cultures of learning' (p.261).

Tian (2008) raises the issue that Jin and Cortazzi's work might not be freed from 'the accusation of homogenizing Chinese learners' and she supports Stephens's (1997) opinion that there is 'a tendency to dichotomize the West and the East' (p.33). She points out the danger of over-generalisation and the tendency to use cultural stereotypes (p.35). Tian, herself, adopts a qualitative multiple-cases study method to explore the experiences of 13 Chinese postgraduate students in a UK university. Her findings challenge 'essentialist conceptualisation which sees individual students from China as undifferential collective members marked by a unique and fixed set of cultural scripts' (p.iii).

Another researcher who argues against the findings of Jin and Cortazzi is Feng (2009). He referenced the findings of Littlewood's (2001) survey, which was conducted among 2,656 students in 8 CHC (Confucian Heritage Culture)

countries in Asia and 3 European countries, to 'suggest that difference in cultures of learning is perhaps an illusion as the students from different cultures seem to have the same perceptions and preferences as far as learning is concerned (Littlewood, 2001, cited in Feng, 2009, p.78). This suggests that the 'Confucian culture of learning, like any form of culture, is context dependent' and '"Essential features" may be found evident in certain situations but not in others' (Feng, 2009, p.78). In his view, 'contrastive studies do not seem to provide much valid insight into the dynamics of two cultures of learning in contact' and, in fact, questions 'whether the discussion on the notion makes any sense at all if little valid evidence of contrast or divergence is found between Confucian and Socratic cultures of learning, which have been traditionally believed to be vastly different' (p.78).

Feng (2009) points out that the dominant 'standard' view of culture in the research of intercultural studies is 'an essentialist or reductionist approach to theorising culture', which 'is limited to locating essential features of a particular social group, that is the shared values, established norms and patterned behaviours' (Fay, 1996; Holliday, 1999, 2005 and Keesing, 1998, cited in Feng, 2009, p.74). Instead, he proposes to adopt the third space theories in empirical studies to 'shed new light' on international students' learning experience abroad. Based on Bhabha's 'Third Space' theory, Feng (2009) argues that,

> 'the third space perspective not only challenges traditional views of the elusive notion of culture but more importantly problematises our 'normal', polarised or binary perceptions of the relationships between, for examples, the West and the East, intercultural and intracultural communication, education and training, and deep learning and surface learning...' (Feng, 2009, p.75).

He analyses the experience of a group of CHC students at a UK university using the third space concepts. The findings show that both the CHC students and the lecturers in the UK perceived the differences between two cultures of learning discussed above. 'The perceived norms of learning and teaching associated with the Confucian culture of learning, their preliminary schemata, are useful as both students and lecturers seem to depend on them to make sense of the realities they face and use them as the basis for negotiating their identities and mediating learning and pedagogical strategies.

During mediation, their preliminary schemata underwent a process of modification and transformation' (Feng, 2009, p.86). He finds that

> 'something new and something unrecognisable' did occur when the two cultures were in contact' . 'Some CHC students were exploring 'a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation' (Bhabha, 1990b: 211) in a third space constituting the 'discursive conditions of enunciation' (Feng, 2009, p.87).

Therefore, Feng (2009) argues that 'the concepts of third space is particularly insightful when we study the experience of international mobile students' with 'its strong proposition to contest binary or polar opposites such as Confucian and Socratic cultures of learning' (p.87). The notion of 'discursive conditions of enunciation' represented in third space allows researchers and theorists to investigate heterogeneity and ambivalence of culture and cultures in contact from different perspectives and from multidimentions' (p.87).

The traditional cross-cultural approach 'is limited by its tendency to conceptualize culture as a static reality, rather than a dynamic and multi-faceted phenomenon' (Wang, 2008, p.58). Contemporary China is demonstrating 'the fluidity and complexity of Chinese culture' due to the 'strange mix of socialist collectivism and market forces' evident under the trend of globalisation (Wang, 2008, pp.58-59). Moreover, the change of growing up in the family environment, education experience at school and living experience in society has added complexity to Chinese culture and certainly influenced the people inside it. Being the only child in the family, children receive more attention from parents and all four grandparents. Since 2001, the Ministry of Education launched a curriculum reform for basic education in China (Ho, 2006). The core of the curriculum reform was to cultivate "new, advanced cultures and concepts to spread in schools and the society at large' (Xinhua News Agency, 2005, cited in Ho, 2006, p.351). As discussed in the previous chapter, higher education institutions in China have gone through a fast changing period of internationalisation and cross border cooperation with partner universities all over the world. The province where the Southeast China University is situated is one of the leading and most rapidly developing areas in China. In 2007, the level of household

consumption expenditure ranked third at the provincial level in mainland China (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2008). Ninety per cent of my participants are from this province. They were born in the late 1980s, ten years after China implemented the policies of economic reform and opened up to the outside world; they have thus grown up during the process of China's globalisation. The occupations of their parents are managers, professors, doctors, civil servants, bankers or other professions with high income. These students either have a laptop or a computer and the internet is a normal part of their life. The environment these students grow up in might be largely different from those participants in Cortazzi and Jin's (1997) research. Via its over generalizing and stereotyping the differences between frozen snapshots of cultures, the traditional comparative approach will not be useful in understanding teaching and learning in transnational programs (Wang, 2008).

3.4 A Microscopic Perspective: Focusing on Individual Factors

Discussions in the above sections demonstrate that any macro perspective, understanding international students' transition experience through their national cultures or cultures of learning, will lead to the tendency of stereotyping individuals. The dichotomy of East and West cultures pushes people into two sides, exaggerating the possible differences they might have and burying the similarities they are definitely experiencing in this globalised society. If I take this essentialist approach to understand international students' transition experience, the only result I might get is a simplistic solution in terms of culture and cultural stereotypes for every unexplainable behaviour in my participants (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

To avoid stereotypes imposed by essentialist and culturist perspectives, the contextualized approach should take a 'small cultures' approach, as suggested by Holliday (1999). Holliday (1999, pp.237-241) has distinguished the 'small cultures' from 'large cultures' by pointing out that the character of the former is 'non-essentialist', 'non-culturist', and related to 'cohesive behaviour in activities within any social grouping', whereas the latter is 'essentialist', 'culturist', and refers to 'prescribed ethnic, national and

international entities'. Taking a 'small culture' perspective, the research orientation will be interpretive, focusing on process, rather than prescriptive, relying on the idea that specific ethnic, national or international groups have different cultures (Holliday, 1999, p.241).

Intercultural transition is a complex issue. The experiences vary across different individuals. The overgeneralisations of students' transition experience based on their nationalities and the cultural values behind them neglect the diversity of each student as an individual and their active agency in the transition process. Their personal identity, such as motivation, pre-departure knowledge, autonomy, and language competency, cannot be neglected. Meanwhile, successful transition needs a supportive environment. The support they get during the transition, such as social support and formative assessment, is crucial.

3.4.1 Motivation for Studying Abroad

Research has established a link between motivation and the outcome of the transition. For example, Chirkov *et al.* (2007, p.215) applied constructs from Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to study international students' motivation for studying abroad. The results generally support their hypothesis that international students who are self-determined in their decision to study abroad adapt more successfully to a new cultural environment in comparison to those who are driven by non-self-determined reasons.

Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory highlights the social and environmental factors that facilitate versus undermine intrinsic motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2009; Ryan and Deci, 2000). *Intrinsic motivation* refers to doing an activity as it is inherently interesting or enjoyable, which results in high-quality learning and creativity. It is correlated with positive coping, as tested in Ryan and Connell's (1989) research, which is the prototype of autonomous or self-determined behaviour (Ryan and Deci, 2002). *Extrinsic motivation* means doing something because it leads to a separable outcome, which varies in different types, as shown in Figure 3_1.

Figure 3_1 The Self-Determination Continuum, with Types of Motivation and Types of Regulation (Source: Ryan and Deci, 2002, p.16)

Type of Motivation	Amotivation	Extrinsic Motivation				Intrinsic Motivation
Type of Regulation	Non-Regulation	External Regulation	Introjected Regulation	Identified Regulation	Integrated Regulation	Intrinsic Regulation
Quality of Behavior	Nonself-determined					Self-determined

External regulation is the classic type of extrinsic motivation, such as students who 'perform extrinsically motivated actions with resentment, resistance, and disinterest', and is considered as a pale and impoverished motivation compared with intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.55). The behaviours are not representative of one's self, but are accompanied by the experience of pressure and control (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.65). This is the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Ryan and Connell (1989) find that it is related to poorer coping with failure and more anxiety. *Introjected regulation* is a type of extrinsic motivation which has only been partially internalized and has not been truly accepted as one's own (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Students' commitment toward an activity is based on feelings of guilt and compulsion (Koestner and Losier, 2002).

Identified regulation is a more self-determined form of extrinsic motivation in comparison with *introjected regulation* or *external regulation* (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Identification 'represents an important aspect of the process of transforming external regulation into true self-regulation' (Ryan and Deci, 2002, p.17). This kind of extrinsic motivation involves 'a conscious valuing of a behavioural goal or regulation, an acceptance of the behaviour as personally important' (*ibid.*). Students' commitment toward an activity is based on its perceived meaning in relation to one's goals, values and identity (Koestner and Losier, 2002). Therefore, it is associated with a high degree of

perceived autonomy (*ibid.*). However, some identification may not reflect the person's overarching values in a given situation (*ibid.*).

Integrated regulation is the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, which results in situations where 'identifications have been evaluated and brought into congruence with the personally endorsed values, goals, and needs that are already part of the self' (Ryan and Deci, 2002, p.18). Students 'perform extrinsically motivated actions with an attitude of willingness that reflects an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task', in which case 'the extrinsic goal is self-endorsed and thus adopted with a sense of volition' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.55). The behaviours stem from one's sense of self which are accompanied by the experience of freedom and autonomy (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.65). It is related to more positive coping styles compared with other forms of extrinsic motivation. Although integrated extrinsic motivation shares many qualities with intrinsic motivation, the behaviours are still carried out to attain personally important outcomes rather than for inherent interest and enjoyment (Ryan and Deci, 2002, p.18).

At the left end of the self-determination continuum shown in Figure 3_1 is *amotivation*, which is the state of lacking the intention to act (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Amotivated students either do not act at all or act passively (*ibid.*). The reasons for amotivated behaviours can be a lack of contingency or perceived competence or a lack of perceived value in the activity or outcomes (*ibid.*).

Therefore, apart from intrinsic motivation, internalization can be another innate growth tendency to explain students' vitality, development, and psychological adaptation (Koestner and Losier, 2002, p.101). Internalization refers to 'the natural tendency to strive to integrate (or take into one's self) socially-valued regulations that are initially perceived as being external' (*ibid.*). *Identification* and *introjection* are two processes of the internalization. The former describes 'the process wherein people accept the value of an activity as their own so that they can more easily assimilate it with their core sense of self (it becomes integrated with their values, beliefs, and personal goals)' (Koestner and Losier, 2002, p.102). This results in a sense of

personal endorsement of one's action (*ibid.*). The latter refers to 'a less successful internalization in which a value or regulatory process is taken in but not accepted as one's own', which is theorized to be quite controlling and associated with the feelings of pressure or compulsion (*ibid.*). Koestner and Losier (2002) conducted two separate longitudinal studies on transitions for high school students and college students. They argue that introjections placed students at risk when negotiating important developmental transition such as entering into or graduating from college. Their participants showed a pattern of heightened psychological distress when were pursuing their education through internal pressures related to guilt avoidance and self-esteem maintenance (*ibid.*). Intrinsic and identified regulation can generate 'positive outcomes such as active information processing, the experience of positive emotions, and successful adaptation to school transitions' (Koestner and Losier, 2002*,* p.113).

Ryan and Deci (2002) point out that to enhance successful internalization, the social environment should provide support for the three basic psychological needs of *relatedness*, *competence*, and *autonomy*. Their theory argues that through feelings related to the other person or the group, individuals will likely engage in a behaviour endorsing an action, thus promoting the process of internalization. For example, students who felt securely connected to and cared for, by their parents and teachers are more likely to fully internalize the regulation of positive school-related behaviours (Ryan, Stiller and Lynch, 1994, cited in Ryan and Deci, 2002). If students feel incompetent to perform a target behaviour, they are unlikely to internalize the regulation of the behaviour and will likely find an excuse not to do the behaviour at all (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Self-determination theory advocates that support for autonomy is the critical factor promoting integrated regulation, which has been evidenced by empirical research studies (Deci, Connell and Ryan, 1989; Gronick and Ryan, 1989; Deci, Nezlek and Sheinman, 1981).

> '…to integrate the regulation of a behaviour, people must grasp its meaning for themselves personally, and they must synthesize the meaning with other aspects of their psychic makeup. This type of engagement with the activity and with the process of internalization is most likely to occur when people experience a sense of choice, volition, and freedom from external demands.

> Accordingly, autonomy support is the basis for people's actively transforming a value and regulation into their own' (Ryan and Deci, 2002, p.20)

According to self-determination theory, students who are overly controlled by parents or teachers are likely to lose initiative and learn less well, especially in a complex and creative learning process, than those who are autonomy supported. In comparison with those who grow up in a controlling environment, autonomy supported students are found to exhibit more autonomous self-regulation, less unknown control, higher perceived competence, and higher achievement (Grolnick, Ryan and Deci, 1991, cited in Grolnick and Apostoleris, 2002). These two forms of extrinsic motivation, *passive and controlling* versus *active and volitional* have different impacts on my participants' transition experience which will be illustrated in Chapter 5.

3.4.2 Pre-departure Knowledge ---a Mutual Adaptation

Pre-departure knowledge of the new environment international students will live and study in is considered by Tsang (2001, pp.352-353) as a key background factor. His research supported Black's (1988) findings that this is important for sojourners' adjustment. Hall and Toll (1999, p.8) argue that pre-departure preparation should consider sojourners' prior experience and current knowledge, feelings and attitudes in order to influence what takes place during, and possibly after, the residence stage abroad (Hall and Toll, 1999, p.8). Well-designed activities can help students to contextualise and learn from their prior and future experiences, which will raise their intercultural awareness by offering students insights into the transition processes and being 'intercultural people' ultimately (Hall and Toll, 1999, p.8). This will enhance sojourners' readiness and their ability to be open and flexible in new learning environments (Alred, 2003, p.18). Zhou, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2009) have found evidence in their study that an introduction to UK teaching and learning for Chinese students before their arrival may help them to psychologically better prepare for and adapt to the UK educational system more quickly. Their participants identified that pre-departure preparations in their original countries are as important as post-arrival support from host countries in their transition experience. Their research supports Kennedy's (1999, cited in Zhou, Topping and Jindal-

Snape, 2009) suggestion that pre-departure expectations would be closely related to sojourners' post-arrival adaption experiences.

During the transition, people will face a huge amount of uncertainty and newness, and when they 'exceed their absorption threshold they begin to display signs of dysfunction: fatigue, emotional burnout, inefficiency, sickness, drug abuse' (Conner, 1998, p.12). Through increasing the predictability of the new situation and their anticipatory familiarity, such knowledge can reduce the uncertainty facing international students (Tsang, 2001, pp.352-353). Receiving universities are suggested to provide more detailed information about the institute and the country to facilitate anticipatory adjustment (Tsang, 2001, p.365). Meanwhile, the sending universities should encourage and prepare would-be sojourners to engage in their transition (Alred, 2003, p.18).

> 'Students are helped to appreciate the dimensions of their own cultural identity in order that they can understand how other belief systems and attitudes are encoded in other societies. The rationale is that the development of complex thinking about cultural difference through greater self-knowledge and awareness increases the self-confidences to be open to the challenges of living abroad' (Alred, 2003, p.19).

Educational transition is also a mutual adaptation which is experienced by all the stakeholders in the transition process. Petriwskyi *et al.* (2005, cited in Brooker, 2008) make this explicit in their definition of transition, which is considered as an ongoing process of mutual adaptations by students, families and educational institutions to facilitate students' moving from one setting to another. The transition period can be challenging for all the stakeholders, students and parents, as well as professionals (Jindal-Snape, 2010, p.2). 'Professionals working with these children, young people, and families have to learn to implement new strategies according to their varying needs and ways of dealing with transition' (*ibid.*). When we argue that students should be ready for school, the school should be ready for students as well (Pianta and Cox, 1999, cited in Mayer, Amendum and Vernon-Feagans, 2010, p.86). This readiness should be expanded to all the stakeholders involved in the transition.

Therefore, building a supportive environment needs cooperation from all stakeholders. For instance, the two educational institutions should exchange information at transfer, including more than just details of academic attainment (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010, p.24). In the next stage institutions should receive information about individuals who might be more vulnerable at the transition stage (p.24). Mayer, Amendum, and Vernon-Feagans (2010, p.98) also argue that teacher cooperation between two institutions could build a more seamless transition for students. By which, they mean teachers in both settings should communicate to align classroom expectations, procedures, and processes and students could experience similar settings before moving on the next stage. Once they get into the new school, the similarity across school cultures might facilitate an easier transition (*ibid.*). These two examples of earlier communication and preparation not only facilitate students' transition, but also the adaptation of staff as well. Thus, the transition process has become a shared experience for a variety of individuals, rather than an individual experience for the student him/herself (Dockett and Perry, 2001, cited in Mayer, Amendum and Vernon-Feagans, 2010, p.97).

Considering transition process as mutual adaption will expand the benefit limitation from students to all the stakeholders in the process. In this kind of adaptation, all stakeholders could work together in building a supportive environment for all. As Jindal-Snape and Miller (2010, p.27) illustrate:

> 'The internal attributes of the child or young person, a cohesive and supportive family, and an external support network in the form of nursery, school, or university, peers, and community all have a part to play in successful transition' (*ibid.*)

The implication for this research is that holistic understanding of students' transition experience should include all the stakeholders in the process, discuss how to create a supportive environment in these mutual adaptations and also discuss the mutual adaptations of all stakeholders.

3.4.3 Language Competency

International students' second language competency will influence their acculturation experience, which has been confirmed by many studies (Duru and Poyrazli, 2007; Lee, Koeske and Sales, 2004; Yeh and Inose, 2003;

Poyrazli *et al.*, 2002; Mori, 2000). The language barrier might be the most significant problem for most international students (Mori, 2000, p.137). Smalley (1963, p.49) considers language problems as the core of much culture shock, and the very task of language learning carries perils. Lack of fluency in English can negatively affect academic and psychosocial adjustment (Duru and Poyrazli, 2007, Yeh and Inose, 2003). Yeh and Inose (2003, p.23) report that lower levels of acculturative distress among international students is predicted by higher frequency of use, fluency level, and the degree to which the participants felt comfortable speaking English. This has been confirmed by the study of Duru and Poyrazli (2007, p.108) which shows that English competency is a significant predictor of acculturative stress. Students with high levels of English competency are more likely to ask for help, meet new people and participate in class discussions, which in turn will reduce the level of their acculturative stress. Li, Chen and Duanmu (2010) find that English writing ability is a significant predictor for international students' academic performance.

Linguistic competence is also crucial for intergroup contact and interpersonal relationship development (Kim, 2001). A shared language can activate intergroup cues and influence interpersonal relationship development and maintenance (e.g. Kudo and Simkin, 2003, cited in Imamura, Zhang and Harwood, 2011, p.108). In the research of Japanese sojourners' attitudes toward Americans, Imamura, Zhang and Harward (2011, p.114) found that participants' English competence, together with communication accommodation, positively predicted their relational solidarity with Americans. Mak and Tran (2001, p.197) found a significant effect of fluency in English on intercultural social self-efficacy.

Lack of linguistic competence will cause stress. Stress on the other hand will affect students' second language acquisition. MacIntyre (1995, p.92) argues that a demand to answer questions in a second language may cause a student to become anxious, which leads to worry and rumination. He uses the following figure to show the recursive relations among anxiety, cognition, and behaviour.

**Figure 3_2 Recursive Relations among Anxiety, Cognition, and Behaviour
(Source: MacIntyre, 1995, p.93)**
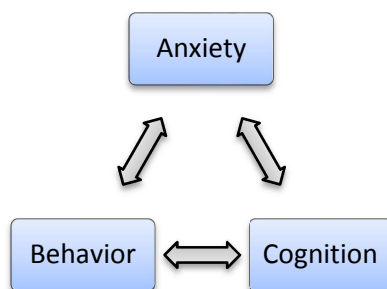
Anxiety can create a divided attention scenario for anxious students who are focused on both the task at hand and their reactions to it (MacIntyre, 1995, p.96). The divided attention in answering questions in a second language can reduce cognitive performance, leading to negative self-evaluations and more self-deprecating cognition, which will further impair performance (*ibid.*). Thus, the recursive and cyclical pattern of the variables is: aptitude can influence anxiety, anxiety can influence performance, and performance can influence anxiety (*ibid.*). Anxious students do not learn as quickly as relaxed students (MacIntyre, 1995, p.96). This is verified by Allen and Herron's (2003) research on international students in France, which shows that international students who experience more anxiety have more difficulties in learning the language.

3.4.4 Personal Factors Related to Autonomy

For students at transition in higher education, the academic and social demand of the new environment can be a stressor. The ways how students appraise and cope with these stressors might be different and will greatly influence their transition to the new environment. This theoretical framework has influenced the literature on transition. Coping is defined by Lazarus and Folkman (1984, p.141) as 'constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person'. It is 'the process through which the individual manages the demands of the person-environment relationship that are appraised as stressful and the emotions they generate' (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p.19). Reviewing the body of literature shows that many personal factors related to autonomy can

influence the coping strategies related to transition. These include *locus of control* (Ward and Kennedy, 1992 and 1993), *self-efficacy* (Li and Gasser, 2005; Mak and Tran, 2001; Tsang, 2001; Fan and Mak, 1998; Harrison, Chadwick and Scales,1996), *self-esteem* (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010; Brooker, 2008), *self-monitors* (Kosic, Mannetti and Sam, 2006; Harrison, Chadwick and Scales,1996), n*euroticism* (Poyrazli, Thukral and Duru, 2010; Duru and Poyrazli, 2007; Ward, Leong and Low, 2004), and *resilience* (Wang, 2009).

The concept of *locus of control* was developed from Rotter's (1954) social learning theory. Rotter (1966) makes distinction between internal and external locus of control. Individuals with a high internal locus of control perceive that the positive and negative consequence of events are caused by their own behaviour and are under personal control; while those with high external locus of control believe that the consequences of these events are determined by factors under the control of powerful others such as luck, fate or chance (Rotter, 1990). Ward and Kennedy (1992) find *locus of control* to be a salient variable in acculturation research. Their analysis revealed that external locus of control was associated with greater mood disturbance. Ward and Kennedy (1993) find that internal locus of control is positively related to positive psychosocial adjustment.

Self-efficacy is defined by Bandura (1997) as the level of confidence that individuals have in their ability to accomplish tasks and produce desirable outcomes. Harrison, Chadwick and Scales (1996) find that high general self-efficacy is significantly related to greater degrees of general, interaction, and work adjustment in the process of cross-cultural adjustment. Tsang (2001, p.364) also reports that self-efficacy is significant in the general adjustment of sojourners. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy has also been adapted to explore its significance in intercultural interaction (Li and Gasser, 2005; Mak and Tran, 2001; Fan and Mak, 1998). Intercultural social self-efficacy is strongly negatively associated with social avoidance among non-English speaking background migrant students (Fan and Mak, 1998). Mak and Tran (2001, p.193) argue that intercultural social confidence or self-efficacy is important for Vietnamese Australian students to be successful in their

university studies and future career. A significantly higher level of social self-efficacy in conational interactions was reported by these students. Li and Gasser (2005) argue that self-efficacy is especially important in the cross-cultural interaction. International students with high self-efficacy are confident that they can perform certain social functions successfully in another culture and achieve desirable outcomes (Li and Gasser, 2005, p.566). Their research finds that contact with the hosts partially mediated the effect of cross-cultural self-efficacy on sociocultural adjustment. Mak and Tran (2001, p.197) suggest that early intervention and intercultural training programs should address the development of intercultural social efficacy, the absence of which will hinder students' academic and occupational success.

Resilience is 'the ability to absorb high levels of change while displaying minimal dysfunctional behavior' (Conner, 1998, p.219). Five basic characteristics of resilience are positive, focused, flexible, organized and proactive (Conner, 1998, p.238). Wang (2009) considers transition as a change process and resilience characteristics are personal abilities to cope with change. Wang's (2009) study on the transition of international graduate students at U.S. universities found that *resilience* characteristics are highly negatively correlated with adjustment problems.

The successful transition is closely related to *self-esteem*, which is a personal characteristic of individuals (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010, p.12). In the process of transitions, students will experience various challenges. For students who have high self-esteem, these challenges might stimulate them to think of new strategies to enhance their abilities to cope with difficulties. This could lead to the claim made by Brooker (2008) that 'transitions are a trigger for development and learning' (p.7). However, for some students who are exposed to a new environment and required to make new responses and establish or lose significant relationships, the process of educational transition can significantly affect their self-esteem (Epstein, 1979, cited in Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010, p.15). In resilience literature, self-esteem is central to students' internal attributes, as pointed out by Jindal-Snape and Miller (2010, p.27). They agree with Mruk's opinion that transition is a period of 'challenge of living', where an individual's sense of worth and competence

are particularly vulnerable (p.15). This self-worth and self-competence are two dimensions of Mruk's model of self-esteem theory, which indicates that

> 'an individual's self-esteem is dependent upon two types of judgement: the extent to which one feels worthy of respect from others, and competent to face the challenges which lie ahead' (Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010, p.11).

Jindal-Snape and Miller argue that self-esteem is one of the internal protective factors in students' transition experience. When it is damaged, the external protective factors, such as positive relationships at home and school, are more crucial to walk students through the period of considerable uncertainty and potential stress (p.23). Newman and Blackburn (2002, cited in Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010, p.23) also assert that a protective environment together with adequate coping skills is indispensable in a successful transition. By protective environment they mean an environment which protects students against excessive demands, but also provides students with opportunities to learn and adapt by exposing them to reasonable levels of risk (*ibid.*). It is hard to make a judgement on how protective the environment should be. As Lucey and Reay (2000, cited in Jindal-Snape and Miller, 2010, p.23) have pointed out, the dilemma for students who are under educational transition is they need to be able and willing to give up some protection in order to gain a level of autonomy.

Harrison, Chadwick and Scales (1996) find that high *self-monitors* expressed greater degrees of general and interaction adjustment than low self-monitors. Kosic, Mannetti and Sam (2006) report that self-monitoring was positively related to sociocultural and psychological adaptation. 'Individuals high on self-monitoring are characterized by high sensibility and sensitivity towards social occurrence' (Kosic, Mannetti and Sam, 2006, p.143). They can learn new ways of reacting easily.

From the above review, consensus has emerged that in the process of transition, students who are 'convinced of their own efficacy at overcoming obstacles are more likely to appraise failures and stressors as challenges, to cope using problem-solving and strategizing, and to persevere and remain optimistic in the face of obstacles' (Skinner and Edge, 2002, pp.297-298). Meanwhile those 'who believe themselves to be incompetent tend to panic

and show confusion when faced with setbacks, to become pessimistic and doubting, to ruminate and lose concentration, to escape the stressor if possible, and to expect the worst about future stressful encounters (*ibid.*).

3.5 A Contextual Perspective: Focusing on Situational Factors

Understanding the process of transition to higher education requires an examination from a multidisciplinary perspective (Goldrick-Rab, Carter and Wagner, 2007, p.2470). Transition in higher education which involves academic and social integration into the university culture is a significant period for students' success all through their university life. Transition and retention are closely related (Yorke and Longden, 2007). Academic and social integration are vital to survival for new students (Billing, 1997, p.132). Support has been highlighted relating to positive transitions in the first year university context (Ramsay, Jones and Barker, 2007, p.248). Rather than identifying the difficulties and challenges students will come across, recent research in this area has focused on social and academic support to facilitate students' transition. As argued in the previous sections, transition is a complex issue. Experiences vary across different individuals and successful transition needs a supportive environment. From contextual perspective, situational factors such as social support and formative assessment have been linked closely to the development of supportive environments for students under transition.

3.5.1 Support from Conational, Host national and other National Groups

Social support has been related to a lower level of acculturative stress (Duru and Poyrazli, 2007; Lee, Koeske and Sales, 2004; Yeh and Inose, 2003). Adelman (1988) argues that social support can help sojourners to cope with uncertainty and enhance perceived mastery and control. Berry *et al.* (1987), Searle and Ward (1990, p.451) and Tsang (2001, p.365) consider social support as a buffer against acculturative stress. This has been verified by Lee, Koeske and Sales (2004, p.399) who report that students with high levels of social support were significantly less likely to report symptoms with increasing levels of acculturative stress. Ye (2006, p.12) also found that

international students who are more satisfied with their interpersonal support network are more likely to suffer less from acculturative stress.

Bochner has found that the peer group is important in the academic sojourn, and exerts a major influence on the cultural orientation of the students (Bochner 1973, cited in Bochner 1982, p.30). He and his colleges have conducted a series of studies to explore the social networks of international students' friendship patterns. They have identified three kinds of social networks that international students belong to. The primary conational network is *monoculture* and provides a place for international students to rehearse and express their ethnic and cultural values. The compatriot group was found to be the most important social network of sojourning overseas students. The secondary network of these students is *bicultural*, and consists of bonds with host nationals and will 'instrumentally facilitate the academic and professional aspirations of the sojourner' (Bochner, 1982, p.31). Academics, landlords, student advisers and government officials are also put into this category (Furnham and Bochner, 1982, p.173). The third network is the *multicultural* circle of friends and acquaintances of international students, which provides 'companionship for recreational, non-culture and non-task oriented activities' (*ibid.*). It is predicted that appropriate host culture friends will help sojourners learn the skills of host culture more easily than those whose friends are all compatriots (Furnham and Bochner, 1982, p.174). Ward and Kennedy (1994, p.333) examined Berry's four modes of acculturation in relation to the two adjustive outcomes of sojourners: psychological and sociocultural adaptations. The results revealed that sojourners with strong host national identification experienced less sociocultural adjustment difficulties, while those with strong co-national identification experienced less psychological adjustment problems. Separation was associated with the greatest level of social difficulty and integrated subjects experienced less depression than assimilated ones (*ibid.*). Kashima and Loh (2006, p.471) have verified that students with more international ties were better adjusted in general.

Support from the conational group, or the home network, has been identified by some researchers as the main effective source for international students

to gain academic, emotional and other support abroad. It has helped Gill's (2007) participants to overcome loneliness and the sense of loss and disorientation at the initial stage. Her research suggests that the home network was considered as the first place where students looked for information on British culture and for orientation and support on arriving in the UK. It has also become a source of academic, emotional and moral support for understanding and reassurance (Gill, 2007, p.174). Li, Chen and Duanmu (2010) find that social communication with compatriots is a significant predictor for international students' academic performance. However, Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001, p.87) argue that 'co-national relationships can be harmful or helpful, depending on the nature of individual supporters and their group's dynamics'. Poyrazli *et al.* (2004) found that students who primarily socialized with non-Americans and that students from Asian countries experienced more acculturative stress compared with other subgroups. Kosic *et al.* (2004) found that conational groups can limit the heritage worldviews of the individuals.

Furnham and Bochner (1986, cited in Searle and Ward, 1990, p.451) argue that relationships with host nationals are more effective for some forms of sojourner adjustment. Li and Gasser (2005, p.571) found that Asian students' contact with host nationals facilitated their sociocultural adjustment process because the contact with hosts enabled them to develop local networks, understand local cultures and acquire social skills. Kashima and Loh (2006, p.471) illustrated that having personal ties with locals alleviated international students' psychological adjustment. For example, the support from academic staff has been emphasized greatly to help international students overcome initial challenges (Elsey, 1990; Gill, 2007).

Ramsay, Jones and Barker (2007) identified that international students, compared with local students, are facing greater risk of reduced opportunities for social companionship support, which highlights the importance of orientation programs that facilitate cross-cultural adjustment. Universities are suggested to help international students to build up the bonds with members of the host culture to enable benefit for both of the networks (Tsang, 2001; Bochner, 1982). However, some take-for-granted methods may not be

effective. For example, some studies have found that internationally mixed accommodation can help students reduce prejudice in relation to other ethnic groups (eg. Pettigrew and Tropp, 2000). Murphy-Lejeune (2003, p.108) also argues that shared accommodation and shared activities with native people generate closer contacts. However, Bochner, Hutnik and Furnham (1985, p.690) argue that it might fail to be an ideal place for students to get to know each other and build long-standing cross-cultural friendships. They conducted research in England and found that only 17% of the friends of foreign students were English. The predominant friendship pattern of host students was for friendships with other English persons. Their results demonstrated that international houses are not overly successful in facilitating the creation of bonds between foreign students and host nationals.

From a pedagogic perspective, peer support networks are particularly important in the process of transition (Billing, 1997, p.132). Well-adjusted students reported higher levels of social companionship support than less adjusted groups (Ramsay, Jones and Barker, 2007, p.247). More opportunities for the development of supportive peer relationships should be considered. Failure in making compatible friendship networks may lead students to withdraw (Mackie, 2001). DeBerard, Spielmans and Julka (2004) found a significant relationship between perceived social support and academic achievement for first year students. Academic peer mentoring programmes have been identified as a positive way to support first-year students' academic transition. Studies conducted respectively by Loots (2009), Parkinson (2009), Longfellow *et al.* (2008) and Loke and Chow (2007) assigned senior students to a small group of mentees for different modules. Their results indicate that peer assisted learning support can greatly improve students' academic performance. Loke and Chow (2007) also found that both tutors and tutees benefit from the peer-tutoring process. Peer support is pivotal to student success and retention. Peer assisted learning support is a kind of formative assessment. Reviewing literature in this area has led to a tentative conclusion that formative assessment is a way to nurture students' transition in higher education.

3.5.2 Formative Assessment and Transition in Higher Education

Commonly people make the distinction between formative assessment and summative assessment on the basis that marks are awarded in summative assessment, but not awarded in formative assessment. However, the distinction should be based on whether the assessment enhances students' learning during the learning process. Formative assessment in this thesis refers to any assessment and feedback that will enhance students' learning. It is the process adopted by teachers in order to recognize and respond to student learning with the purpose of improving the learning in the process of learning (Cowie and Bell, 1999). Formative assessment can be part of individual research projects, self and peer assessment, oral presentations, group projects, poster presentations, simulated professional tasks, portfolios, profiles and so on, aims to use learning-oriented assessment strategies to enhance student learning 'as opposed to validating or certifying learning through summative assessment' (Keppell et.al, 2006, p.454).

McDowell (2001) asserts that innovative assessment methods will improve learning and change the culture of assessment because of the shift from the measurement approach to the educational approach. Several new features are essential to the process. The first is that the purpose of the assessment has changed from identifying and categorising intelligence, or ranking students and comparing them with their peers, to identifying and describing achievements against relevant criteria. The next is the change in assessment contents, where there has been a shift from the testing of 'discrete, de-contextualised elements of knowledge and skill' to the assessment of 'more holistic and complex activities' such as problem-based learning (p.2). The most vital change is the shift from

> 'highly standardised and controlled testing methods which result in quantitative scores and where assessment is strongly separated from teaching and learning to a more diverse range of assessment methods, resulting in qualitative descriptions or judgements and where assessment is often integrated with teaching and learning and may involve students as active participants' (p.3).

The transfer from quantitative scores to qualitative descriptions shows the feedback is more meaningful to students. Hattie (1999) affirms that the most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement is feedback. In

practice, the use of feedback is encouraged to foster students' capabilities of 'evaluating, judging and improving their own performance' which are the core of 'autonomous learning and of the graduate qualities valued by employers and in professional practice' (McDowell *et al.*, 2006, p.3).The provision of timely and diagnostic feedback is necessary for students making transition to higher education (McInnis, James and McNaught, 1995). In education, feedback is about 'the current level of performance in relation to the optimum level of performance, including advice on how to bridge the gap between the two', which simply means 'how to get to where you want to go' (Carless, 2003, p.14). In formative assessment practice, the use of feedback is encouraged to foster students' capabilities of 'evaluating, judging and improving their own performance' which are the core of 'autonomous learning and of the graduate qualities valued by employers and in professional practice' (McDowell *et al.*, 2006, p.3). It is widely and empirically argued that formative assessment has the greatest impact on learning and achievement (Elton and Johnston, 2002). Increasing the proportion of formative assessment is advocated as a guide to facilitate students to become autonomous learners during the transition (Hussey and Smith, 2010). Compared with summative assessment, formative assessment is more effective in nurturing and monitoring students' transition towards desirable results due to the following reasons.

One reason to consider formative assessment as a way to nurture students' transition is that it pays attention to the process rather than the results. Transition is a process and, during this process, formative assessment can provide timely and effective feedback for students' transition to autonomous learners. This can be vividly illustrated by the figures of speech used by Biggs (2003) and TKI (2007) demonstrating the difference between these two kinds of assessments. Biggs (2003) thinks that when the chef tastes the sauce it is formative assessment, while when the customer tastes it, it is summative. Another well-known analogy is that of the garden, which takes students as plants.

> Summative assessment of the plants is the process of simply measuring them. It might be interesting to compare and analyse measurements but, in themselves, these do not affect the growth

of the plants. Formative assessment, on the other hand, is the equivalent of feeding and watering the plants appropriate to their needs - directly affecting their growth (TKI, 2007, p.15).

It is undeniable that summative assessment may have played a definite role in assisting students' development. However, the problem is that the timing of traditional exams is normally too late for early feedback (Light and Cox, 2001). The results of formative assessment are for feedback during learning, and benefit both teaching and learning (Biggs, 2003).

The other reason to consider formative assessment as a way to nurture students' transition is that formative feedback will enhance students' self-esteem, which is crucial for a successful transition. Traditionally, summative assessment, such as exams and tests, measures student achievement and is intended to be used as a performance indicator (Knight, 2001). It can reduce the self-esteem of lower-achieving students, who will then not believe that they can succeed in other tasks (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Because the result of summative assessment can affect the students' future in some way, and the greater the impact, the higher the stake, it is always linked to the concept of high-stakes assessment (Trotter, 2006). Therefore, high-stakes summative assessment should be used 'rigorously but sparingly rather than as the main driver for learning' (McDowell *et al.*, 2006, p.3).

Teaching methods may also be restricted to what is necessary for passing the examinations. Hussey and Smith (2010, p.162) argue for a flexible, personal and individual tailored system that respects transitions, and which assesses students when they are ready, rather than when it suits the academic calendar. In the transition in higher education, students are expected to take more responsibility for managing their learning. Formative assessment practices are expected to empower these students and develop their self-study abilities. The above arguments have provided me with the premise to propose a hypothesis that adopting formative assessment in teaching will facilitate students' transition in higher education, on the condition that students actively use formative feedback to improve their learning.

3.6 Intercultural Transition---Group Oriented

In this research, due to the unique feature of the articulation programme, my participants will study abroad as a group of 50. When they come to the UK, they will meet another group of students, primarily home students, who have studied in the host university for a whole year. The interaction experience between these two groups will unavoidably influence the intercultural transition experience of my participants. Therefore, a discussion of literature in this area is necessary

3.6.1 Intergroup Contact

Sherif (1967, p.62) defines *group* as 'a social unit that consists of a number of individuals (1) who, at a given time, stand in status and role relationships with one another, stabilized in some degree, and (2) who possess, explicitly or implicitly, a set of norms or values regulating the behaviour of individual members, at least in matters of consequence to the group'. When two people interact they do not merely respond to each other as individuals but as members of their respective groups, and the larger the differences between groups, the greater the tendency will be for the participants to make a distinction between in and out-group membership (Bochner 1982, p.35). The distinction takes the form of categorizing people as belonging either to "us" or to "them", through which they acquire the value differentials between these groups (Tajfel, 1981, pp. 254-255). The consequences of group membership is referred by Tajfel (1981, p.255) as *social identity* which is 'part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'. Social identity is based on the motivational assumption that individuals prefer a positive to a negative self-image (Tajfel, 1981, p.45).

Turner *et al.* (1987) extended the social identity theory by developing the self-categorization theory, 'which specified in detail how social categorization produces prototype-based depersonalisation of self and others and, thus, generates social identity phenomena' (Hogg and Terry, 2000, p.123). 'According to self-categorization theory, group identities arise in context when meaningful differences are perceived to exist between the ingroup and

the outgroup, and ingroup members are perceived to share important attributes or experience in common' (Schmitt, Spears and Branscombe, 2003, p.8). Social identity theory and self-categorization theory, which adopt the social categorization approach, have influenced the social psychological study of intergroup relations since the early 1970s (Brewer, 1996, p.291). Brewer (1996, p.292) describes the three characteristic features of any social situation possessing a salient ingroup-outgroup categorization as:

1) The intergroup accentuation principle: ingroup members are considered to be more similar to the self than the outgroup members

2) The intergroup favouritism principle: positive affects selectively generalized to ingroup members rather than outgroup members

3) The social competition principle: intergroup social comparison associated with perceived negative interdependence between the ingroup and the outgroup

Social psychologists tend to understand intergroup relations in three aspects: stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination (Mackie and Smith, 1998, p.500). These three aspects are referred to as intergroup bias, which is the tendency to appraise the in-group (one's own membership group) or its members more favourably over the out-group (nonmembership group) or its members (Hewstone, Rubin and Willis, 2002, p.576). This tendency can take two forms: in-group favouritism and out-group derogation (*ibid.*). Bochner, (1982, p.20) argues that 'individuals are more familiar with in-group than out-group behaviour, and the actions of an in-group member are more likely to be assigned a situational attribution, whereas similar behaviour performed by out-group members will be attributed to their personalities'. 'This effect may also account for the stability of out-group stereotypes, since the behaviour of out-group members would be seen as being determined by their stable personality, racial and national characteristics rather than as a response to changing circumstances' (Bochner, 1982, pp.20-21). He suggests that 'the better we get to know other people the more do we come to regard them as we regard ourselves, i.e. in situational terms' (*ibid.*).

Sherif (1967, p.72) conducted three separate experiments to explore the formation of the groups, intergroup conflict and co-operation. The findings

that are related to the present research are 1) the formation of groups influence the choice of friends; 2) the competition for insufficient resources will cause hostility between groups, but will increase the solidarity and cooperativeness within each group; 3) contact as equals does not necessarily reduce conflict between two hostile groups, but contact involving interdependent action toward superordinate goals contributes to cooperation between groups (Sherif, 1967, pp.75-93). Cooperative interdependence in pursuit of common and superordinate goals is a necessary condition to reduce intergroup conflict and prejudice (Cook, 1985). However, as Sherif has argued, the cooperation toward superordinate goals is not a one-off thing, but a series of activities which has a cumulative effect in reducing intergroup hostility and negative stereotypes. Multiple ways are suggested to reduce intergroup bias, which will be discussed in the following section.

3.6.2 Ways to Reduce Intergroup Bias

3.6.2.1 Common Ingroup Identity Model

Dividio *et al.* (2001, p.171) support Sherif's argument about cooperative interaction. They believe that it may partially enhance positive evaluations of outgroup members by transforming interactants' representations of the memberships from two groups to one group (*ibid.*). The Common Ingroup Identity Model has been developed as a strategy to reduce intergroup bias and combat aversive racism by redirecting the forces of social categorization and social identity (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000). The fundamental idea of the Common Ingroup Identity Model is that 'strategies that expand the inclusiveness of one's ingroup to include people who would otherwise be regarded as outgroup members may have beneficial consequences for promoting more positive intergroup attitudes and behaviours' (Gaertner, Dovidio and Bachman, 1996, p.273). Thus, the perceptions of the memberships can be transformed from subordinate "Us" and "Them" to a more inclusive superordinate "We" (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005; Gaertner, Dovidio and Bachman, 1996).

Their arguments are influenced by the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954) which advocates that four distinct conditions are necessary for positive

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intergroup contact: 'equal status between the groups, cooperative intergroup interactions, opportunities for personal acquaintance between outgroup members, and supportive egalitarian norms' (Gaertner, Dovidio and Bachman, 1996, p.272). Simple contact between groups is not sufficient to improve intergroup relations. Gaertner and Dovidio's research studies (Gaertner *et al.*, 1999; Gaertner *et al.*, 1994; Gaertner *et al.*, 1990) support the hypothesis in the Common Ingroup Identity Model: the recategorization of people from members of different groups to members of a common group will significantly influence the intergroup attitudes (prejudice), cognition (stereotypes) and behaviour (discrimination) (Dividio *et al.*, 2001, p.171). Developing a common superordinate group identity can diffuse stigmatization by perceivers and 'produce more productive orientations among the targets of stigmatization, for example, by enhancing cohesiveness, commitment, and effectiveness' (Dividio *et al.*, 2001, p.172). They argue that developing a common group identity will improve students' satisfaction with and commitment to their institutions, and lessen the effects of factors, such as feelings of racial or ethnic distinctiveness (*ibid.*).

Developing a common ingroup identity does not necessarily require each group to completely abandon their own group identity (Dovidio *et al.*, 2001, p.179). Recategorization can take the form of a dual identity in which superordinate and subgroup identities are both prominent and represented by different groups working together on the same team (*ibid.*). There are four cognitive representations in this model which are based on Berry's (1997) four acculturation strategies: integration (different groups on the same team), separatism (different groups), assimilation (one group) and marginalization (separate individuals). The integration model shows a pluralistic integration perspective which recognizes a dual identity: one's ethnic group identity and a superordinate identity. A dual identity in the integration model suggests that simultaneous activation of superordinate and subgroup identities has been found effective to reduce intergroup bias and lead to more harmonious group relations (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000, p.243). This will not deny the value of culture and traditions of the minority group members, nor threaten their personal and social identity (Dovidio *et al.*, 2001).

Gaertner *et al.*'s (1994) research in a multi-ethnic high school shows that students who perceive themselves both in the superordinate category and subordinate category, different groups working on the same team, have lower degrees of intergroup bias than those who only identified themselves in the subordinate category. In terms of different disciplines at university, Hornsey and Hogg (2000, p.242) conducted two studies to examine relations between two groups of students (humanities and maths-science students) who implicitly or explicitly share a common superordinate category (university student). The results show that participants for whom both categories were salient exhibited the lowest levels of bias, whereas bias was strongest when the superordinate category alone was made salient (*ibid.*).

Brewer (1996) proposes that apart from the simultaneous activation of superordinate and subgroup identities, individualisation of members of both subgroups needs to be integrated into the perspective of both groups to enhance intergroup contact. This attempts to depersonalize outgroup members through personalizing intergroup interactions to both reduce the salience of category distinctions and increase opportunities to get to know outgroup members as *individuals* (Brewer, 1996, p.293). Thus, group members' own personal characteristics are considered as the basis for classification in the interaction rather than the category identity (*ibid.*). This decategorization will lead to developing cross-group friendships before recategorization, which will maximise a reduction in prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998). As Gaerter *et al.* (1999, p.399) have concluded, decategorization and recategrorization can be functionally related, a complementary process to reduce intergroup biases.

3.6.2.2 Intercultural Competence
To improve the integration between groups, intercultural competence of all the students in the international classroom needs to be enhanced. This ability of communicating across cultures and difference is of fundamental importance to the global citizen (Brockington and Wiedenhoeft, 2009, p.121). Byram (1997) develops an influential model of intercultural competence (see Table 3_3).

Table 3_3 Factors in Intercultural Communication (Source: Byram, 1997, p.34)

	Skills interpret and relate (*savoir comprendre*)	
Knowledge of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (*savoirs*)	**Education** political education critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*)	**Attitudes** relativising self valuing other (*savoir être*)
	Skills discover and/or interact (*savoir apprendre/faire*)	

Byram (1997, pp.70-71) explains that Intercultural Competence as the process whereby 'individuals have the ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering, i.e. of overcoming cultural difference and enjoying intercultural contact'.

Furthermore, intercultural competence is not gained purely by exposure to intercultural experience (Deardorff, 2009). We must intentional develop learners' intercultural competence through 'adequate preparation, substantive intercultural interactions, and relationship building' (Deardorff, 2009, p.xiii). The crucial way in the cultural learning process is to build authentic relationships through 'observing, listening, and asking those who are from different backgrounds to teach, to share, to enter into dialogue together about relevant needs and issues' (*ibid.*). Berdrow (2009) presents a model for international education programmes that includes pre-departure preparation, on-site structures for interaction, and post-experience debriefing, all focused on learning about the self and other. Brockington and Wiedenhoeft (2009, p.123) argue that curricular intervention or programme structure should lead students past superficial contact with the host culture into a deeper, more meaningful cultural experience.

In fact, the success of interaction being dependent on both interlocutors, and the notion of intercultural communicative competence, can be used to describe the capacities of a host (home student), as much as a guest (international student) (Byram, 1997, pp.41-42).

'Although the host will often speak in their native language they need the same kinds of knowledge, attitudes and skills as their guest to understand and maintain relationships between meanings in the two cultures. They need the ability to decentre and take up the other perspective on their own culture, anticipating and where possible resolving dysfunctions in communication and behaviour' (*ibid.*).

Home students, the other side of interlocutors on campus, seem not to have prepared for intercultural interaction as much as international students have. 'There is the possibility that local students' investment in English monolingualism may work to structure their marginalisation in the transnational labour market' (Singh, 2005, p.28). Therefore, Singh (2005) proposes a question: how home students will develop a transnational identity grounded in a knowledge and understanding of other cultures and languages? Harrison and Peacock (2010, p.880) argue that the interaction between home and international students on university campuses partly predicated the successful 'internationalisation at home'. Their research finds that home students perceive threats to their academic success and group identity from the presence of international students on the campus and in the classroom. 'These are linked to anxieties around "mindful" forms of interaction and a taboo around the discussion of difference, leading to a 'passive xenophobia' for the majority' (*ibid.*).

Cultural diversity on university campuses creates ideal social forums for inter-cultural learning (Volet and Ang, 1998). However, extensive research studies have reported the separation of home students and international students on campus (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Brown, 2009; Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2007; Volet and Ang, 1998). Evidence from the study of Gu, Schweisfurth and Day (2010) 'indicated gaps in cultural values and behaviours between home students and international students which posed challenges for academic and social integration' (p.17). Half of their participants were not happy with their social life, feeling 'powerlessness' and a 'lack of a sense of belonging' (p.17). A lack of host contact was attributed by the participants of Brown's (2009) study to indifference on the part of the host community. Montgomery (2010) identifies that relationships formed by international students and home students are

superficial and peripheral. There are geographical and physical distances between these two groups. Certain barriers, such as language skills (Harrison and Peacock, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Volet and Ang, 1998), age (Montgomery, 2010), different 'centre of gravity' in social lives and motivations (Montgomery, 2010), cultural-emotional connectedness (Volet and Ang, 1998), stereotypes on both groups (Harrison and Peacock, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Volet and Ang, 1998), fear about lower group work marks (Harrison and Peacock, 2010); and work and family commitments (Volet and Ang, 1998) have hindered the integration between home students and international students. There is a negative relationship between the strength of the international student network and the possibility of home students' participation in the network (Montgomery, 2010).

Universities are asked to take more responsibility in promoting beneficial social contact between these two groups of students. Structured contact between host and international students, like peer-pairing programs, can benefit international students' experience (Quintrell and Westwood, 1994). Sakurai, McCall-Wolf and Kashima (2010, p.176) found that through multicultural intervention programmes, such as bus excursions, their participants developed a greater number of new friends, especially local Australian friends, and maintained their interests in local culture while non-participants weakened their interests. Smart, Volet and Ang (2000) show that culturally mixed group assignments can be a medium for intercultural contact. It is an effective means to enhance students' intercultural competence, but should take long enough to allow culturally mixed groups to overcome initial difficulties and reap the longer term advantages of cultural diversity (Summers and Volet, 2008, pp.358-359).

3.7 Conclusion
Review of the models and theories of intercultural transition leads to the conclusion that existing literature presumes a happy-ending of the sojourners' intercultural transition experience. However, the complexities of the transition process cannot be covered by any of the existing models. To avoid simplification of the individual complexities and an over-optimistic attitude towards the transition process, a microscope perspective focusing on

individual factors, such as motivation, pre-departure knowledge, language competency and autonomy, is argued to be necessary. This perspective is believed to be able to escape the pitfalls of overgeneralisations of international students' transition experience based on their nationalities and cultural values. It highlights the diversity of each student as an individual and their active agency in the transition process. Meanwhile, from the contextual perspective, the support students receive during the transition, such as social support and formative assessment practices, are also considerable. Social support has been empirically evidenced to be a facilitator for sojourners' intercultural transition, while there is still a lack of empirical studies to support the tentative argument that formative assessment can be a way to nurture their transition. To extend it could help my participants' transition and deserves great attention in the current study.

Review of social identity theory finds that in-group favouritism and out-group derogation are two tendencies in the intergroup interaction, leading to intergroup bias strengthened by competition for insufficient resources. Therefore, developing a Common Ingroup Identity Model taking the form of a dual identity, and enhancing all students' intercultural competence, is possibly an effective way to reduce intergroup bias. Meanwhile, most of the arguments and suggestions in the reviewed literature on intergroup integration on campus are based on the studies whose participants are international students studying abroad individually. My participants, the Articulation Programme students, are studying in the UK as a group. The size of the group has resulted in a high ratio of Chinese students in the Engineering course. In a learning context where Chinese students are in the majority, the experience could be very different from the phenomena presented by the studies reviewed above. There is a concern about the extent to which suggestions from these studies can be helpful. Furthermore, as Brown (2009) has suggested, research into the host perspective of international education is needed to counterbalance studies that document the student perspective. This study triangulates the perspectives of the international students with the host views, which will add a new dimension to studies in this area.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter first presents my philosophical assumptions, which consist of ontological orientation, my epistemological consideration, and my intention to be an inside learner with a balance to be an outsider expert in understanding my participants' social world. It then moves on to a discussion of the rationale of my choice of a qualitative research strategy: ethnography. My data collection methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews and document analysis, are described and followed by an explanation of the data analysis process. My ethical concerns and critical reflexivity on the research process are also discussed.

4.2 My Philosophical Position

This section explains my philosophical position in this research, which consists of my understanding of the nature of social reality and how I know what I know (Blaikie, 2007, pp.13-14). The aim of this research is to understand the cross-cultural transition experience of the Articulation Programme students from China to the UK. I embrace the idea of multiple realities (Creswell, 2007, p.16) which 'are continually being accomplished by social actors', rather than existing independently (Bryman, 2008, p.19). There is no objective fact or truth in social construction and people view the world from different perspectives (Burr, 2003, p.152). The plurality of truths is associated with different constructions of reality (Blaikie, 2007, pp.24-25). My role is not to discover the meaning that already resides in the phenomena I research, nor to impose meanings on it (Blaikie, 2007, pp.18-19). On the contrary, I believe that meaning is constructed and as a researcher I participate in the construction actively (Blaikie, 2007, p.19). My participants, as social actors, 'socially construct their reality' by conceptualizing and interpreting 'their own actions and experiences, the actions of others and social situations', while I, as a researcher, socially construct my knowledge of their realities, and the 'conceptions and interpretations of the actions of social

actors and of social situations' (Blaikie, 2007, pp.22-23). These two levels of construction demonstrate that this research is a cooperation between me and my participants (Burr, 2003, p.152). This collaborative relationship gives voice to the participants (Burr, 2003, p.153). The process of their interactions with each other, and with other actors in the new learning environment, is a focus of this research. Taking a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge, I recognize that knowledge is relative (Blaikie, 2007, p.24), is historically and culturally specific, sustained by social processes and relates to a different kind of social action (Burr, 2003, pp.2-5).

My participants are human beings who are different from the objects of natural sciences (Bryman, 2008, p.16). The social reality 'has a meaning for them and they act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others' (*ibid.*). In this research, to understand the participants' transition experience, and their inhabited social world, I need to go 'inside' to build up a close relationship with them and to learn how the participants understand their social world (Blaikie, 2007, p.11). I, as a researcher, become the main instrument in data collection (Burgess, 1982, cited in Brewer, 2000, p.59). The inside learner position enables me to understand my participants' behaviour. It is my job 'to gain access to people's 'common-sense thinking' and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view' (Bryman, 2008, p.16). According to Bryman (2008, p.17), there are three levels of interpretation going on: my interpretation of my participants' interpretation of the world around them and my interpretation furthered by the interpretation using the disciplinary literature, concepts and theories. This epistemological orientation of interpretivism includes a theoretical commitment to constructionism in social research (Bryman, 2008, p.22).

I reject the standpoint of a pure outside expert who stands back from the participants and observes them with existing social scientific knowledge (Blaikie, 2007, p.11). I agree with Brewer's (2000, pp.59-60) argument that researchers in the field should maintain the balance between 'insider' and 'outsider' status in order to 'identify with the people under study and get close to them, but maintaining a professional distance which permits adequate

observation and data collection'. The outside observer position allows me to reflect critically on what is observed and gathered while doing so (Brewer, 2000, p.60). It also prevents me from losing the sense of being a stranger, thus losing the critical, analytic perspective (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.90).

The logic of enquiry to answer research questions in this research is abductive research strategy. The process sees 'a weaving back and forth between data and theory' which is called 'iterative strategy' (Bryman, 2008, p.12). Blaikie (2007, p.99) attributes it to Abductive Research Strategy. 'Once the phase of theoretical reflection on a set of data has been carried out, the researcher may want to collect further data in order to establish the conditions in which a theory will and will not hold' (Bryman, 2008, pp.11-12). This is based on a spiral process rather than linear logic (Blaikie, 2007, p.57).

The aim of this section has been to outline my ontological orientation, my epistemological consideration, and my aspiration to be both an inside learner with a balance to be outsider expert in understanding my participants' social world. My above philosophical position has led me to adopt a qualitative research strategy to answer my research question. This will be explained in the following section.

4.3 My Choice of Research Strategy

Three research strategies have dominated the current research world: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods. The quantitative paradigm is based on positivism, which believes that the reality is single, objective and independent of human perception (Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil, 2002, p.44) Quantitative researchers believe that only objective authentic knowledge is scientific knowledge and define 'science' in terms of measurement and experimental or statistical procedure (Hammersley, 2001). Researchers, as outsiders to the research, attempt to neutralize their influence on the researched and endeavour to achieve objectivity in their research (Sarantakos, 1998, cited in Robson, 2002). They treat the respondents as objects and producers of data (*ibid.*). By contrast, constructivism, often combined with interpretivism, is the basis for the qualitative paradigm

(Creswell, 2009). Qualitative researchers embrace the idea of multiple realities by using multiple quotes based on the actual words of different participants and presenting different perspectives from these individuals (Creswell, 2007, pp.17-18). Researchers conduct their studies in the field, acknowledging their influence on the context. They try to minimize the distance from the participants and make explicit the values they bring to a study, as well as their biases (*ibid.*). Realizing that all methods have limitations, researchers may feel that biases generated in any method could "neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods" (Creswell, 2003, p.15). Triangulating data sources, which seeks convergence between qualitative and quantitative methods was thus born (Jick, 1979). One method can be embedded in another in order to probe into different levels or units of analysis (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

The aim of this research is to understand the transition experience of Chinese Articulation Programme students from China to the UK. Their motivations for studying abroad, attitudes towards pre-departure preparation, interaction with the new learning environment and so on are unlikely to be explained by the experimental or statistical procedure followed by quantitative research strategy. Meanwhile, Sale, Lohfeld and Brazil (2002) criticize mixed-methods research adopted uncritically by some researchers who have neglected the conflict between the quantitative paradigm and the qualitative paradigm. They argue that these two approaches cannot be combined for triangulation purposes when the two paradigms do not study the same phenomena. Therefore, this research has not adopted the mixed-methods research strategy, either.

Only by going inside the natural setting was I able to be close to my participants and explore their perceptions behaviours and the dynamic process of their transition. As I discussed in the previous section, I embrace multi-realities in the researched phenomenon. The realities cannot be objective or value free. Meanings are constructed through constant interaction between me and my participants. Any knowledge contributed by this study is relative and contextually, culturally, and historically specific. Articulation Programme students' transition experience is a complex issue

which enquires a detailed understanding. A qualitative research strategy enables me to pursue this detail (Creswell, 2007, p.40).

By participating in their daily activities in the natural setting, I gain closeness with my participants. They are empowered by being given multiple voices. The power relationship between me and the participants is minimized. In contrast, as I have mentioned in the previous section, we are cooperating in this research. Participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis are the ethnographic research approaches I adopted in the data collection, and are explained in the following section.

4.4 My Choice of Methodology

Methodology is 'the strategy, plan of action, process of design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes' (Crotty, 1998, p.3). This research was guided by the principles derived from the set of theoretical and philosophical premises of ethnography (Brewer, 2000, p.18). The history, definition and features of ethnography are discussed in this section.

Ethnography originated in 19th century western anthropology and became central to anthropology in the early 20th century (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.1). It has two intellectual pillars (Brewer, 2000). In Britain, social anthropologists carried out ethnographic studies to understand the cultures and groups ruled by the British Empire (Brewer, 2000, p.11). These anthropologists, such as Malinowski, Boas, Radcliffe-Brown and Evans-Pritchard, closely observed and immersed themselves into those preindustrial groups and cultures (*ibid.*). At the same time in the United States, sociologists at the University of Chicago created the Chicago School of ethnography, in which 'the everyday life, communities and symbolic interactions characteristic of a specific group' were analysed (Deegan, 2007, p.11). Led by Park and Burgess, these sociologists studied marginal groups of the urban industrial society via first-hand observations and active participation in the settings (Deegan, 2007; Brewer, 2000). 'Ethnography is about telling a credible, rigorous, and authentic story', through 'the eyes of

local people as they pursue their daily lives in their own communities' (Fetterman, 2010, p.1). Brewer (2000) defines ethnography as

> 'the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally' (Brewer, 2000, p.10).

As a social science researcher, I am keen on understanding what my participants do and how they experience the world, and this can only be obtained from 'intimate familarity' with daily practice and the meanings of the action (Brewer, 2000, p.11). This 'intimate familiarity' is an essential feature of ethnography, which enables me to participate in the field with my participants through closely working with them (*ibid*). As Feng (2009, p.78) has pointed out, 'adopting an ethnographic approach to examine the perceptions and behaviours of individuals or social groups and to study their engagement in a third space is more likely to reveal the dynamics and multifacetedness of the cultures in contact, leading perhaps to a new culture in the forming'. Therefore, ethnography is appropriate to this research.

The naturally occurring setting, the field, is where my participants live and form their community. It is also the place where I directly participated in their activities in order to 'explore the meanings of this setting and its behaviour and activities from the inside' (Brewer, 2000, p.27). In this research, the members of the particular cultural group were in the same age group (20-22) and had gone through the education system in Mainland China in their first 20 years. They all passed the National Higher Education Entrance Examination and achieved the academic standard required by the Chinese partner university. Before I entered into the field, these students had been studying on the same campus for one and half years and were going to finish another half a year study in China before moving on to their final two years' study in the UK. The settings, where they experienced their transition from China to the UK, were not deliberately set up for this research. Students' pursuit of education abroad would not be influenced by the study.

'Emic' and 'etic' originated from the linguistic technical terms *phonemic* and *phonetic* (Wolcott, 2008, p.142). Ethnographers were required to identify their positions as an 'emic anthropologist' or an 'etic anthropologist' in 1960s (*ibid.*). Currently, the divide is blurred and it is questionable for an ethnographer to conduct a research from a singular viewpoint, i.e. from a pure emic perspective or a pure etic perspective (*ibid.*). These two perspectives are now considered as the insider's view and the outsider's view respectively (Wolcott, 2008, p.144). As I discussed in Section 4.2 on my philosophic assumptions, I intend to be an inside learner with a balance to be an outsider expert in understanding my participants' social world. In this research, I shared a similar education background with the participants. All of us went through the 12-year Chinese education system from primary school to high school. I went to university in China in 1994 and spent four years there to achieve my first degree. Familiar language, teaching, learning, and cultural and institutional environment had provided me with insider perspectives. However, it had been 10 years since I left the university, and this was a fast developing stage for Chinese universities (see Section 2.4.2). Meanwhile, I was nearly 12 years older than most of the participants. My later experience as a lecturer and studying abroad helped me maintain a professional distance from the participants.

Participant observation is the primary data collection technique (Pickard, 2007). It is a way to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally (Brewer, 2000). Apart from that, I also adopted in-depth interviewing and documentary analysis to collect data. The following section will discuss my way of collecting data.

4.5 My Way of Collecting Data

4.5.1 Overview

The '2+2' articulation programme which is the focus of this study was set up by a university in the southeast of China and a university in the north of England in 2004 for two courses: *BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE)* and *BEng (Hons) Communication and Electronic Engineering (CEE)*. To protect the confidentiality of the field setting, the two

universities are referred to here as Southeast China University and North Britain University. The participants in this study (n=50) registered in 2006 on the articulation programme in Southeast China University, where they spent two years studying the syllabus of the core modules imported from North Britain University, as well as the compulsory modules required by the Chinese Ministry of Education. These students came to North Britain University in 2008 for their final two years' study. After successfully finishing the four years' study, they will be awarded two undergraduate degrees, one from each university. Students who prefer to undertake a work placement before the final year will spend an extra year obtaining their degrees.

A longitudinal ethnographic study was designed to explore the intercultural transition experiences of this group of students, based on on-site and online fieldwork carried out over 15 months in China and the UK. I went back to China in early 2008 when students were in their last semester in China. I stayed in student accommodation and participated in students' academic and social activities, then followed them through a whole academic year in the UK, carrying out observation on the students' in-class and out-of-class activities. Sixteen students were interviewed on three occasions. The first round of interviews was conducted in China before students arrived in Britain. The second and third interviews were carried out, respectively, two months after their arrival in Britain and the month after their first academic year in Britain. In addition to this, ten Chinese staff members, eight British staff members, five English students, two international students, and two Chinese parents were also interviewed. I also conducted cyber observations of students' online chat and used their blogs and coursework to achieve a comprehensive picture of students' experience in their transitional stage.

4.5.2 Locating the Natural Setting

This research was designed to understand the Chinese Articulation Programme students' intercultural transition experience from China to the UK. Fieldwork needed to be conducted at both partner universities. This required a stable cooperation which was able to enable a sustainable number of students moving on to their secondary study stage in the UK. As discussed in Chapter 2, the situation of cooperative programmes in China is very

complicated. Many programmes are fragile and more likely to fail to recruit any student. To avoid this risk, I carried out investigation on the cooperation links North Britain University had with Chinese universities. Five schools were operating articulation programmes with Chinese universities. Some were newly developed and had not brought in any cohort. Some long-standing cooperation was shrinking due to political, economic and technical factors. After consulting with staff at the International Office, I located the programme run by the School of Computing, Engineering & Information Sciences and its Chinese partner, the School of Electric & Automation Engineering at Southeast China University. Compared with other programmes, this was more stable and less risky. The programme was officially approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education. By the time I started my PhD course, there had been four cohorts of near 200 students enrolled in the programme. The number increased from 11 in 2004 to 80 in 2007. Two cohorts were studying in North Britain University and the other two cohorts were still in Southeast China University. Cohort 2006 had 50 students[1] who were officially enrolled in the programme through the National Higher Education Entrance Examination at second tier standard (540 score in that province) and about to study in the UK. These students were at their last semester there. It was an ideal setting and a suitable time to start my research.

4.5.3 Negotiating to Get the Permission into the Field

The located setting is closed and non-public and there were several *gatekeepers* to get into the field. The agents who had set up the links between two universities were in charge of the communication issues in the programme. They had devoted great effort and money to nurturing the programme. Any unintentional mistake might hurt their business, which was not wanted by the Deans of both partner schools. I exchanged emails with the agents and organized face-to-face meetings to inform them of the nature

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1 About 60 students were enrolled in the programme, but some transferred to non-programme course in the first year and one decided to stay in China in the second year. Some were auditors who could not have the degree from Southeast China University. They could only get the degree from North Britain University after successfully finish all the four years study in China and the UK. They were not Articulation Programme students in a restricted way. Therefore, my research did not recruit them as participants.

of this research. With the help of my principle supervisor, the Director of China Region Office and the Director of International Business at the School, I finally overcame their suspicions and gained their trust. The agents helped greatly with my fieldwork, not only assisting me to set up links with both Schools, but providing many insightful opinions about the programme, government policy and students' development issues. In early 2008, the Deans of both Schools signed organizational consent forms and hoped that my research might help them to improve the cooperation and students' learning experience. Staff at the International Offices of both Universities were also informed.

4.5.4 Getting into the Field

On my arrival at the Chinese campus, the agents introduced me to the students' personal tutor, Tao. As I will explain in Chapter 5, personal tutors (Ban Zhu Ren) in the Chinese education system are authoritive figures, who have the power from the School, parents and the role as teachers. Tao had close ties with the group and their parents. In this research, he became my *facilitator* and eased my access into the field. He set aside time before his teaching and introduced me to the students. I did not disguise my role as a researcher. Covert study would be impractical as well as unethical for this research. In agreement with Pickard (2007), I believe that all research should be overt as research participants have the right to choose to join in or not join in the research on the premise that they are fully informed about the nature, purpose and process of that research.

Facing students' curious and doubtful eyes, I explained the nature of my research and sent them consent forms with information sheets which were written in Chinese. Worried that they might sign the consent form due to pressure from their personal tutor, I made it clear that their participation in this research was completely voluntary and would not affect their study in China and the UK. When I gave them time to ask questions about the research, they were expected to ask questions about 'data collection', 'confidentialities' or 'anonymities'. However, they were very curious about my study abroad. Meeting up with a student from their will-be host university in the UK, these students quickly bombarded me with various questions about

my life abroad. Students at this stage considered me as a PhD student and a researcher from the British university which they were going to several months later. They were very happy to have contact with me before their study abroad and started to call me Xue Jie (senior student at school) or Hou Lao Shi (Miss Hou), which are two respectful addresses in Chinese culture. As will be explained in the following section, students gradually accepted me as a member of the group, although not completely. My way of getting access into the field has verified the argument of Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p.4) that 'access cannot be assumed to be available automatically, relations will have to be established, and identities co-constructed' (p.4). The process of my role co-construction and data collection are described in the following sections.

4.5.5 Participant Observation

4.5.5.1 Locating the Self in the field work
In the following sections, I present how I constantly reflected on my own position as an observer in the field and the potential influence I might have given to the research. I did not perceive myself as a total stranger in an alien culture attempting to make sense of that culture from an outsider's perspective, nor a complete member in the researched group (Coffey, 1999). It is a constant back and forth process between strangeness and familiarity (*ibid.*). As I mentioned in the above section, my own identity as a 'student' from my participants' will-be host university in the UK has eased my access to the field. It shortened the distance between me and my participants immediately. With the help of Tao, I was allocated a room in the students' accommodation, which was next to 16 girls in the group. Four girls stayed in one dormitory and had formed four groups naturally. This was also the case with the boys. These small dormitory groups normally did activities together. Those two groups who were opposite or next to my room were the first to get to know me. They took turns to show me around the campus and shared with me the detailed information of every student in the class. This enabled me to develop familiarity with the setting in a short time. I was new in the setting, and through 'watching, listening, asking questions, formulating hypotheses, and making blunders' to 'acquire a good sense of the social structure of the

setting and begin to understand the culture(s) of participants' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.79).

However, I was worried that the perspectives gained from a small group of students might be biased and fail to provide me with a holistic picture of the whole group. Therefore, I deliberately went to talk more with girls in the other two dormitories and boys after class. I also tried my best to remember every student's name and sought opportunities to talk with them. Within one week, I became familiar with their time schedules and daily activities. Meanwhile, I was constantly reminding myself to keep a sense of strangeness (estrangement) in order to keep my critical stance as an observer, which is crucial for fieldwork in familiar settings (Coffey, 1999).

To conduct the observation systematically and effectively, I then started to select times, people and contexts in a sampling manner that agrees with Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007, p.37) suggestions that both routine activities and extraordinary events should be included in observation, with the aim to ensure a full and representative range of coverage. I woke at 7.00am when I heard girls starting to wash their faces and brush their teeth, and then went to buy my breakfast from the caretaker downstairs as the other students did. Classes start at 8.00am and run through till lunch time with ten minutes' break between each class. With my participants, I had lunch at the two canteens on campus or snack bars outside the campus. While students were having a nap after lunch, I wrote field notes documenting the observations of the morning. From about 2.00pm, I started my observations with different groups on various out-class activities. After dinner, I went to observe students in the self-study room or the library, where I were also able to read books and take down notes. I spared one or two hours for chatting with the girls in their dormitory before going to bed. Reflective notes and memos were written on the same day or every other day.

My participant observation consists of two main stages: observation on the Chinese Campus and observation on the British Campus. These were conducted in three main contexts: classroom activities, out-class activities,

and online activities. I was not in the field all the time in these 15 months' fieldwork, especially when participants started their study in the UK. It mingled with my own progress in the PhD course, such as preparing for the Mid-Point Progression and attending research modules. However, I was in the field in a couple of weeks at the beginning and the end of each of their three terms. During the term, I organized visits to the site constantly and conducted more observations online.

4.5.5.2 Participant Observation in the Class on the Chinese Campus

In their last semester in China, students took part in two core modules imported from North Britain University: *Electronics* and *Power & Machines*, as well as three compulsory modules required by the Chinese Ministry of Education: *English*, *Physical Education*, and *Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory & Three Represents*. To facilitate students' transition abroad, the School also invited native speakers to teach students *Oral English*. Consent forms were obtained from the lecturers of all these modules before I sat in on their class.

My role in the class was as a student and an observer. I took notes in the core modules, sometimes worked out exercises, joined in their discussion in the English class, and played *Tai Ji* in the PE class. Students and the staff gradually overlooked my attendance as a researcher. This student role was not complete. I did not take part in the activities in the laboratories as they were quite complicated to me. At these occasions, I pursued my role as a complete observer. Meanwhile, I was constantly aware of the danger of 'going native', losing my critical faculties to become an ordinary member of the field (Brewer, 2000, p.60). As an observer, my focus in the class was on teaching practices, students' behaviour, staff-student interactions and interactions among students. As the dormitory groups normally sat together, I deliberately sat with different groups, listening, watching and interacting with them. During breaks, I chatted with students beside me about their study and current preparation for studying abroad. When students asked questions after class, I went to observe their interactions with their teachers. I intended to video some of the scenes in the class at the beginning of the research.

However, I found this was too intrusive. Although the staff and students had agreed to be videoed, I discontinued it after several days' trying.

4.5.5.3 Participant Observation outside the Class on the Chinese Campus

Outside the class, students carried out different activities. This required my observation to be more selective and systematic. I followed one dormitory group for a couple of days to see their behaviour patterns before joining another group. Not all groups gave me opportunities to do so. Girls' groups were much closer to me as we lived together and also due to my gender. Many activities, like window shopping, getting hot water from the station, taking showers in the public bathroom and girls' talking at night, can only be shared with the girls. To obtain more understanding about the boys, I increased my time to watch them playing basketball and football on the playground and chat with them during breaks.

4.5.5.4 Participant Observation in the Class on the British Campus

When students came to the UK, they joined an existing cohort of home students and other international students from different countries. Also included were students who repeated the year and part-time students, so the class became multi-national and multi-aged. Consent forms were obtained before I sat in on the class. Their programme leader became my *facilitator* to access the field in the UK. My strategy here was more or less the same as in the Chinese class, but more effort was allocated to the observation of the interaction between my participants and other students and staff in the class. My role in the class was less as a student than I was in the Chinese class, which was partly due to the harder professional knowledge of Engineering, and partly due to the academic English glossaries. For instance, the topic of a module I observed was Transmission Lines. As I wrote in the diary, '*I know 'transmission'. I know 'line'. But I don't know what 'transmission line' is. I can understand every word, but don't understand the contents*'. At this moment, I felt a strong sense of incompetence (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). My lack of professional knowledge had become an obstacle for me to understand the teaching in the class. Meanwhile staff seldom had a break during the two classes. I was unable to chat with students or observe their asking questions with teachers. When some of my participants' complained

about the difficulties they came across in the study, such as academic language or being unable to ask questions after class, I understood how they felt owing to my own experience in the class. Therefore, personal and emotional difficulties of accepting such estrangement was part of my learning process in understanding my participants' transition experience (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

When I was curious why my participants always sat together in the front, leaving other students sat at the back, I found some reasons from my own experience. During the fieldwork in the UK, I attended some PhD training sessions. When I entered the class, my Chinese friends would wave to me and let me sit beside them. It was rare for me to sit next to someone I barely knew apart from when some lecturers asked us to. Until then, I realized that it was a common human behaviour. When I re-entered into the class, seeing the strange but understandable phenomenon, I had an idea that structured introduction at the beginning of the course, or even before the course, might break the polarized situation in the class. This was echoed by some home students in the interviews later.

4.5.5.5 Participant Observation outside the Class on the British Campus

The observation started immediately from meeting my participants at the airport. Seeing them was like seeing old friends in another country. All of us were very excited. The university sent 'Meet and Greet' staff to the airport to take them to their chosen accommodation. I took a taxi with one of the dormitory groups to go to their accommodation. In the following weeks, I accompanied them to get familiar with the city just as they did for me in China. I was invited to different accommodation for dinner. I was surprised by their creativity and enthusiasm in reforming Chinese and Western cuisines. We shopped, cooked and chatted together. Students started to address me Xiao Hou Jie (elder sister Hou) instead of Xue Jie (senior student at school) or Hou Lao Shi (Miss Hou). Xiao Hou Jie is more intimate than Xue Jie and Hou Lao Shi, which showed that they had become closer to me and accepted me more as a member of their group. While enjoying the pleasure of the reunion, I suddenly noticed that I had become the information source for these students. I need to minimize my influence on their experiences in

the UK. Meanwhile, this kind of over-rapport relationship with my participants was likely to lead to a skewed perspective of a cultural setting (Coffey, 1999). This was not easy for me emotionally and culturally. They helped me a lot when I stayed on their campus. When they came here, I felt I should help them in return. Furthermore, coming from China where respect for the elderly and care for the young is a traditional virtue, I found it really hard to say 'no' to them, and even felt guilty for doing so. I tried my best to answer their questions by directing them to the university information service system. For instance, I suggested they check the university website, to go to Student Services, or write to their personal tutor.

My own identity as a Chinese international student in the UK overlapped with my role in the field. Many activities I did in the field were the same as I did outside the field. For example, I was given a ticket to watch the Chinese New Year performance organized by the Chinese Students' Community. A group of my participants were coincidently there too and sat behind me. Xiao Hua was with his football team members, and this was the first occasion in my observation where my participants were with members outside the group. There were also breaks where students moved out of their own circle and refused to 'stick together'. Although I was reluctant to take down any notes while enjoying my precious holiday, I still could not resist the temptation to write a reflective diary when I got back home.

4.5.5.6 Participant Observation Online
Diary writing was designed to collect data from participants in China. However, apart from one participant who wrote several diaries, the others were reluctant to keep these due to their heavy workloads. Instead, they were very active online. On the internet, students conducted activities such as writing blogs, posting pictures, conducting group discussions to share shopping tips, exchanging mobile numbers, organizing ball games, announcing meeting notices or asking for help.

Xiaonei, QQ, MSN and Facebook were the most popular websites or tools students used. Xiaonei, a Chinese website where students link their own webpage with their friends, was mostly used for students to write blogs or post their instant feelings. On arriving in the UK, some of the students started

to use the western website Facebook which has more links with students from different countries. However, Xiaonei was still the most active website for communication within their own group and former classmates in China. MSN is a chatting tool used by some of the students when they moved to the UK. However, every participant had an account and formed a chat group on QQ, which is the most popular online chatting tool in China. Students used it a lot for community learning instead of the E-learning Portal. In Module EN0213, a group of students formed their own learning group to exchange information in the chat room. The team leader encouraged students when they came across difficulties and helped them to become the best group in the class. Some students could not go to class sometimes, and their classmates uploaded the seminar questions and answers for them to download. As will be explained in Chapter 5, this kind of peer support has become a double-edged factor in the students' transition experience.

Students signed a consent form to give me the permission to use their web information as data. They added me on their friends' list and allowed me to observe online. This replaced data lost through the lack of diary writing. Furthermore, this data was more naturalistic and did not sound contrived. These tools became my main method of communication with my participants while I was on holiday and this continued to be the case after I finished my field work.

4.5.6 In-depth Interviews

Interviews are an important means for ethnographers to 'classify and organize an individual's perception of reality (Fetterman, 2010, p.42). The formal interviews I carried out were non-standardized, open-ended and in-depth (Robson, 2002, p.278). It is an essential way for ethnographers to 'access life on the "inside" and represent it accurately' (Brewer, 2000, p.67). In the 15-month fieldwork, I conducted three rounds of interviews with 16 articulation programmes, covering their preparation stage in China, initial arrival in the UK and post-final-assessment stage at the end of the first year on the British campus. Interviews were conducted in their native language, Chinese, to enable them to talk freely without the obstacles of language. So were the interviews with two parents and ten Chinese academic and

administrative staff members. I also interviewed five home students, two international students and eight British academic and administrative staff members, all in English. In the interviews, I tried to avoid closed-ended questions, long questions, double-barrelled questions, leading questions, biased questions and questions involving jargon (Robson, 2002, p.275). Fully informed consent forms were signed before interviews were tape-recorded. Notes were taken down in case of the failure of the tape-recorder. The length of interviews varied from 40 minutes to two hours. Altogether, over 80 hours of interviews were taken. The interview processes and issues will be discussed in the following sections.

4.5.6.1 Interviews with 16 Key Informants

Sampling

I adopted a purposive sampling strategy. The sample aimed to enable me to satisfy my specific needs in my research (Robson, 2002, p.265). By participating in the group for a month, I gradually became familiar with their background information, academic performance and individual personalities. To seek out varying individuals in the characteristics mentioned above, I deliberately invited 16 participants to join the interviews based on a voluntary principle. The stratified sample aimed to achieve representativeness in a group of 50 students (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p.106). As the ratio of boys to girls in the group was about 2:1, I intended to invite ten boys and six girls to reflect the relative numbers in the group population (Robson, 2002, p.262). However, as I mentioned in Section 4.5.5.3, the girls were much closer to me. Comparatively speaking, they were more active in my research, while some boys felt reluctant to be interviewed and declined my invitation. I finally recruited eight girls and eight boys as the interviewees, whose demographic information is shown in Appendix XII. When our relationship developed further, especially after their arrival in the UK, the boys were more willingly to talk to me. Although they did not become key informants as the other 16 students did, their information was also very important for me to get a holistic picture of the whole group.

First Round of Interviews

The first round of interviews was taken one month before my participants finished their last semester in Southeast China University. They were conducted in dormitories, gardens outside the classroom, the playground or wherever my participants felt comfortable. However, as it was the first interview for some students, many were a little nervous. Some of the boys were not very familiar with me and were very cautious. I tried to conduct in-depth interviews starting with 'how is everything going on', but found they were not talkative and did not provide much data. Therefore, I asked more specific questions (see Appendix XIII). These questions were not listed down before the interviews, but formed in the process. I did not follow the exact order, but proposed one when I felt the opportunity was appropriate. As a result, they were more like semi-structured interviews. This round of interviews focused on the participants' past learning experience, reasons for choosing the programme, learning experience in China, expectations and preparation for studying abroad, prediction of difficulties in studying abroad, and preconceptions of teaching and learning in the UK. The interviews were transcribed and analysed before participants' coming to the UK.

Second Round of Interviews

The second round of interviews took place two months after participants' arrival in the UK. They had undergone the induction week and several weeks' study in a new learning environment. As explained in Section 4.5.5.5, my participants were much closer to me at this stage. They felt they had more to tell me about their exciting and frustrating experiences. Therefore, the unstructured interviews continued very smoothly and turned out to be friendly and emotional conversations. We shared laughs as well as tears. The interviews lasted longer than the first round with an average length of over an hour. Before each interview, I reread the transcript of their first interview in China and my observation notes, and took down the points I intended to follow up in the interviews.

The first half of the interviews were led by the interviewees discussing whatever they wanted and the things they were interested in. Coincidently, all the participants made comparisons of their new learning experience with

what they experienced in China, as well as the differences between their actual experiences with what they had expected in China. However, their attitudes toward these differences and their ways of coping with them were different. Facing difficulties in communicating with staff, some took the difficulties as opportunities and communicated with staff by drawing pictures or listing formulas. Others would wait until their classmates understood and ask them for answers. A small portion felt frustrated and shrunk into their 'self-believed safe circle' (see Section 5.4.2.4). It was at this time that I started to feel that the transition experience was an individual process which depends on their autonomy more than their language ability.

In the second half of the interviews I prompted follow-up questions (see Appendix XIII) to see what the participants thought at this stage. For example, participants mentioned in China that studying abroad as a group was a big advantage for the Articulation Programme students. However, when we discussed the topic again, only two of them persisted in that idea. Most of them considered it as a disadvantage in hindering their integration with other students in the class. In this round of interviews, there was more self-reflection and discussion. This was partly because my participants used the interview as an opportunity to discuss their concerns with me. My role at this stage had many facets. Being an elder "sister" in the group, I could not ignore these students' asking for help when it was part of an interview. I admit that my participation in the group has unavoidably influenced their experience to some extent (see Section 4.9). However, their eagerness for help has triggered my questioning of the current personal tutor system and the international students' support system at North Britain University. Why did my participants rarely use the system? What was the more suitable system for this large group of Articulation Programme students? The questions I proposed in the reports written for the School have led the Deans to make the decision to hire a special Chinese tutor for the over 100 Articulation Programme students at their school.

Third Round of Interviews
The last round of interviews was conducted in the month after they finished their final examinations of the first academic year. The strategy I took at this

round of interviews was similar to the second round. The follow-up questions of the first-round and second-round of interviews were discussed. Participants were more concerned about their assessment at this stage. Rich data about participants' assessment experience were collected. At this stage, I asked students to check the credibility of the transcripts of their previous interviews and my interpretation of their individual transition experience. They checked my data analysis tables and diagrammes, pointing out missing points and adding what they thought was appropriate. They all mentioned what they would have liked to have done over the last 15 months if they could have gone back to the beginning of 2008 (their last semester in China). So did I. We were like old friends reminiscing about our past experience together.

4.5.6.2 Interviews with Non-key Informants

Unstructured interviews were also carried out with Chinese and English staff, home students, international students and parents. The sample strategy I took is theoretical sampling, another form of purposive sampling (Bryman, 2008, p.414). This happened during the process of my data collection (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p.45). The aim of taking theoretical sampling is to develop my emerging theory via developing the properties of the categories by seeking relevant data until the categories are saturated (Charmaz, 2006, p.96).

This research focused on the transition experience of the Articulation Programme students. The three rounds of interviews with key informants were designed before I entered the field. After I finished the first-round of interviews, I found many questions I had during the data analysis required consultation with the Chinese staff. For example, without the perspectives of the staff, I could not get a holistic picture of the classroom interaction. Students said, since high school, they were seldom asked to answer questions in the class. After interviewing the Chinese staff, I was informed how tense their schedules were in each module. To compare the two teaching teams, I interviewed English staff in the UK as well. Their programme leader was interviewed twice, at the beginning and the end of the

academic year. We also arranged monthly informal meetings at the staff bar for the discussion of the performance of my participants.

In the second round of data analysis, I found my participants were frustrated by the divided situation with home-based students in the class. Other students, especially the home students' views on this group of Chinese students, were essential in this research. However, it was not easy to find interviewees. I sent emails to all home students in the class asking for an interview, but did not get a single response. A snowball sampling strategy was adopted then. One staff member in the interview knew my situation and recommended that I talk to their course reps. After his introduction, I emailed this home student and interviewed him in the first term. A girl from Kuwait, recommended by a participant, happened to sit next to me whilst observing the class. A boy from Nigeria was a friend of another participant. He was 'persuaded' by her to accept my interview. At the third round of data analysis which was after I officially left the field, I felt the data from home students was too narrow as only one was interviewed. I talked to their programme leader over our monthly coffee. He introduced me to a group of home students at a workshop. We chatted for a while, and I followed this up by emailing them information sheets. I finally interviewed them in their final year. The comparison of these two groups of students helped me to triangulate the data. Two parents were interviewed when they came to the UK for their children's graduation ceremony. One interview was tape-recorded, one was not. Three other parents were informally interviewed at the celebration party.

4.5.7 Document Analysis

Apart from data collected from participant observation and interviews, some documentary sources have also generated rich data. These include three main facets. First, the official documents from both universities, such as enrolment brochures for Articulation Programme students, government certification of the programme, programme application to the Chinese Ministry of Education, student regulations and assessment regulations, etc. These documents have enhanced my understanding of the programme at the policy level. The second source concerns participants' academic activities. Their module guidance book, laboratory reports, examination

papers, hand-outs, group reports, presentation slides, and staff feedback on the E-learning Portal allowed me to make comparisons of the different practices of the two universities. The last source is the students' diary (only one student wrote on the diary book I gave, while others published a lot on the websites) (see Appendix XV). This source, including pictures and friends' comments, vividly shows the dynamic change of my participants.

4.5.8 Leaving the Field

I officially left the field when my participants finished their first academic year in the UK. In the last round of the interviews, I told them I was going to concentrate on my course and could not join their activities. They showed their understanding, but asked whether they could still contact me when they wanted to talk. I agreed. Therefore, in their final year at North Britain University, I was still invited to have dinner at their flats or China Town, chat at the coffee bar, or help them to solve various problems including settling quarrels between lovers. This has not only enriched my data, but also given me opportunities to carry out member checks for my interpretation. In July 2010, I received an invitation for their graduation ceremony. Sitting next to their parents and seeing them receiving the blessing from the Chancellor on the stage, I could not hold back tears. As a witness who had seen their ups and downs in the past two and half years, I felt so proud of them. The pictures taken with them afterwards are kept in my album, and will be there forever. Many of them have become life-long friends and they encourage me often while I am writing this thesis.

4.6 My Way of Analysing the Data

Data was analysed using the data analysis principles advocated in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss,1967) to identify the directions for the on-going observations and the following round of interviews. The following procedure is modified from the analytic instruction of Charmaz (2006). This study has carried out three stages of data collection: students' last semester in China, within two months after their arrival in the UK and at the end of the academic year. Data was analysed at each stage to identify the direction of the following rounds of data collection, as shown in Figure 4_1. After the first stage of data collection in China, the interviews were transcribed and read

through carefully. Open coding was conducted to identify concepts and discover the properties and dimensions in data. Memos were written to capture fleeting ideas. Constant comparisons were carried out to compare the interview data with the data in the observation notes, research diary, and memos. Some categories were identified and served as the foundation for future comparisons. What is worth mentioning is that the second stage of data collection was not confined within these categories, but gave an open consideration to the holistic picture of the students' transition experience. After the second stage of data collection, data were open coded and compared with the first stage's data and categories. Focused coding was then conducted to concentrate on the most significant codes which have been grouped into tentative categories. Conceptual categories were developed at this stage. These categories have become the focus of the next round of data collection. After the third stage of data collection, new data were open coded and focused coded as well. The conceptual categories developed at the second and the third stages were related to each other through the process of theoretical coding, aiming to tell a coherent analytic story. Constant comparison has been conducted extensively at this stage, intimately linking the three stages of data, codes, categories and memos. Theoretical sampling has been conducted at three stages to collect relevant data to refine the categories in the emerging theory. Thus, the categories were saturated, sorted and diagrammed (Charmaz, 2006). They were finally integrated into the emerging theory.

1st

Participant Observations: inside/outside the class

Semi-structured interviews with 16 participants and 10 Chinese staff

Document analysis: One participant's diary, official documents, textbooks, lab reports, etc.

D
A
T
A

- Line-by-line open coding to identify concepts and discover the properties and dimensions in data
- Memo writing
- Constant comparison
- Generate categories
- Make guideline for the 2nd stage of data collection.

2nd

Participant Observations: inside/outside the class; online observation

On-line observations:QQ group chatting room; facebook & Xiaonei writing walls

Unstructured Interviews with16 participants, 8 British staff, 2 international students & 1 home student

Document Analysis: Students' Blogs, official documents, hand-outs, etc.

D
A
T
A

- Open coding data to generate categories and write memos
- Compare data with data in memos and data collected at the 1st stage.
- Compare categories with categories in the 1st stage.
- Focused coding
- Develop conceptual categories which become the focus of the next round of data collection.

3rd

Participant Observations: inside/outside the class

On-line observations: QQ group chatting room; facebook & Xiaonei writing walls.

Unstructured interviews with 16 participants, 4 home students & 2 parents

Document Analysis: Students' Blogs, lab reports, project report, staff feedback, etc.

D
A
T
A

- Open coding and focused coding on new data to generate categories and write memos
- Theoretical coding on conceptual categories to tell a coherent analytic story
- Extensive constant comparison linking the three stages of data, codes, categories and memos intimately
- Substantive theory emerged

Figure 4_1 Three Stages of Data Collection and Analysis

4.7 Rigour and Trustworthiness of the Research

In the data analysis, it has been fully acknowledged that as an instrument of data collection the researcher's personal knowledge and cultural background may influence the research. The suggestion made by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.43) has been followed that qualitative research should be open and willing to listen and 'give voice' to informants, which means 'hearing what others have to say, seeing what others do, and representing them as accurately as possible'. Meanwhile, the following steps have been taken to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the research and to provide authentic and credible findings. First, multiple data sources have been adopted. Data collected from participant observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis were crosschecked to see if there were any inconsistencies. Field notes were kept while concurrently observing or carrying out interviews. At the end of the day, research diaries were written to reflect and analyse the data in the notes. The field notes and research diaries were also crosschecked at the stage of analysing data. Member checking (Guba and Lincoln, 1989) was conducted to establish credibility in the research: data collected from the observations was double checked with the students during the second and third rounds of interviews. At the end of second round of interviews, main themes generated from the first round of interviews were restated and negotiated with the interviewees. After the third round of interviews, participants were shown the typescripts, interpretations and analysis of the data to get their views. To some extent, the trustworthiness of the data was safeguarded through these negotiations.

4.8 My Concerns of Ethical Issues

This research took ethnography as the strategy and shared an intense interest in personal views and circumstances. It involved moderate risks and some ethical issues. Before data collection, this research underwent internal review and obtained formal ethical approval from the school research ethics committee. This research is an academic analysis of a learning context rather than an evaluation intended to feedback into a specific programme or institution. Although sensitive personal data were not involved, there was a risk that their identities might be recognised by someone else through the

data collected from them. As the researcher, I had the duty to hold the data in confidence and protect the participants from the exposure of identities in processing personal data (Oliver, 2003). I conducted this research abiding by the University's Policy on Ethics in Research and Consultancy and other ethical legislations with full consideration of the Data Protection Act (1998).

In this research, I did not disguise my identity as a researcher in the fieldwork. Participants were safeguarded from any harm. They were fully aware of the purpose of the research and understood their rights. I sent each participant an invitation letter (see Appendix I, IV and VI) with an information sheet (See Appendix II and VII) about the nature of this research. The information sheet was written without any difficult terms and coercive wording. It gave the potential participants the contact details of me and my supervisors, the title and purpose of the study, the sponsor, and the way of data processing including data collection, recording, storage and dissemination. The potential benefits to future students resulting from the research were also listed. Voluntary participation was clearly stated, informing participants that they could withdraw at any stage and refuse to answer any questions that they were reluctant to answer. The information sheet helped potential participants to make a judgement whether they wanted to join the project or not. Details of the complaint procedure were provided to protect the participants' rights including the name, address, email, and telephone number of the person to contact. Considering their language problem, the invitation letter, information sheet and consent form sent to the director, academic staff and students in China were written in Chinese. All of the documents were printed on university letterhead paper. Because Chinese staff and students might not be familiar with the Data Protection Act (1998) and the terms of anonymity and confidentiality, the information sheet also had an explanation of those items. In the process of writing the thesis and other academic papers, anonymity and confidentiality assured to the participants were strictly considered. Pseudonyms for persons and settings were used.

In this research, I gave the information of a participant to the University International Student Service under the circumstance of an emergency. This participant locked herself in the dormitory for a month and missed all

examinations. When another participant came to tell me about her situation, I was extremely worried. I tried to persuade her to open the door, but she refused. She knocked weakly on the door from inside to let me know that she was still there. She passed me a note under the door with only several words saying that she did not want to see anybody then. After consulting the supervision team, I went to see the staff at International Student Services for help. I intended to get some solutions, and then went to see her myself. But staff there were worried that she might hurt herself (the University had some similar cases previously). They said I must give them the name of the girl and the address. They also told me that as a PhD student sponsored by the University, I was considered as a member of staff. I had an obligation to give them information under emergency. I went back to her flat and told her that I had to give her name and address to the University considering the priority of her safety. They sent a counsellor to see her and helped her solve her problems. She came to see me the following day and asked me to go to see her programme leader. At dinner before her leaving for China, she expressed her thanks to me. So did her mother via telephone from China.

4.9 Reflexivity

Reflexivity, consciously looking back at myself in the processes of research "as inquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self", concerns quality in qualitative research (Guba and Lincoln, 2008, p.278). In the research focusing on the transitional learning experience of overseas students, I am an overseas student myself. Meanwhile, my previous teaching experience as a lecturer has influenced my understanding of the teaching practices of lecturers in the programme. Conducting this qualitative research project, I need to look critically towards myself, my 'social background, assumptions, positioning and behaviour impact on the research process', as well as the way I construct my research findings (Finlay and Gough, 2003, p.xi). This is because scrutinizing 'how the researcher and inter-subjective elements impact on and transform research' is a vital part in demonstrating the trustworthiness of the findings in qualitative research (Finlay, 2003, p.4). Researchers' individuality is not invisible and their motivations, interests and attitudes may have impacted on

any stage from choosing the research topic to interview questions (Gough, 2003). Subjectivity is inevitable in the research process (Maso, 2003). However the recognition of this individual dimension to research is considered as enriching and informative by qualitative researchers. There are two main aspects of influence of my own experience on this research.

4.9.1 My Personal Experience on the Interpretation of the Data

My first three years' learning experience in the UK was very positive. All the staff in my Masters and PhD courses were supportive. They gave me tutorials whenever I had queries. I was awarded an MA in Education Studies with Distinction in 2007 and started my PhD course with full studentship on the following day. I also joined the University Student Community Action group and won awards for my distinctive volunteer efforts. I made friends with students from different countries. I often organized parties at home. It seemed that most of the difficulties that other Chinese students might come across did not exist for me. Therefore, when I heard my participants complain about this or that, subconsciously I doubted it. It might be because they had not tried their best. For instance, Fang Fang was depressed, locked herself in her room and missed all examinations. I interpreted her 'failure' as simply as lacking autonomy. Why did not she study as hard as others? Why did she watch cartoons all the day? Why did not she go to Student Services for help? To me at that time, it was obviously mostly her fault.

However, in my last two-year's study in the UK, my life changed completely. This has affected my interpretation of Fang Fang's case. My husband got his MSc in Business Information Technology in the UK. As a former manager with 10 years working experience in China, he found it was very hard to find a professional job in this country which was undergoing an economic recession. After one-year's trying, he decided to go back to China where he was appointed as the deputy-chief manager in a software company. I had to stay abroad to finish my course. After he left, I suddenly realized that my 'real' learning experience as an international student had just started. I used to have my husband looking after me. He took care of everything from shopping to cooking, from moving house to changing bulbs. I told him everything when I finished a whole-day study at university, whether happy or unhappy. He

always listened to my long stories patiently. He was also the first audience for my small pieces of writing. His leaving was a big loss to me. I started to skip meals as it was too troublesome to cook for myself. On a rainy day, I could stay in bed for a whole day watching Chinese soap operas. It was a way to escape the pressure of the course. At that time, I moved on to the writing-up stage, which was the most challenging part to me. The tremendous work, on-coming deadline and loneliness gave me huge pressure. I became sensitive, emotional and irritable. Whenever I heard someone kindly asking "How's your PhD going?", I started to have tears in eyes. I gradually understood Fang Fang and all her troubles. Before things became worse, other PhD students noticed my unstable mood. Rung and Jo chatted with me over lunch very often. Sarah dragged me to have a half-an-hour walk in the afternoon. Gillian invited me to dinner. At her house, I felt at home when I was running after her lovely son, Max. My supervisors also gave me strong support at this time. They gave me the 'PhD tissue' while I was crying in the supervision. I realized that I was not alone at this difficult stage. Their voluntary help supported me to calm down and carry on.

When I reread the data, I had more insight into those troubles my participants had come across. Moreover, I had more questions about the current student services and school administrative system. There are more alternative endings in Fang Fang's case. If someone noticed her trouble earlier, went to talk to her, encouraged her, and gave her the voluntary help just as I received, would Fang Fang have failed completely? 'Someone' here could be her peers, monitors (course reps), Ban Zhu Ren (personal tutor) or student services. Most often, we take for granted that international students should go to ask for help themselves. However under some circumstances, we need to go to them to offer our help. I know some people might argue that these students are adults and should take full responsibility themselves. However, sometimes it is really hard to open the door when you lock yourself inside. My personal experience has made me realize that. It made me more aware of the need for student support systems.

4.9.2 My Participation in the Field on My Participants' Transition Experience

As I mentioned in Section 4.5.5, my participants were very happy to have me, a senior "sister" from their will-be host university in the UK, enter their group. They asked me various questions about the life there. When they arrived at North Britain University, I had unavoidably become a source of information. Rather than finding informants for my research, I found I became an informant to their study in the UK. Although I had been trying to avoid becoming the information source, this unavoidably continued being the situation for the rest of the 15 months. With my research questions progressively refined, their questions changed at different stages of transition. When they first arrived in the UK, they were eager to know how to enlarge their social circle and make friends with other international students. Starting their course, they asked me to share tips about communicating with some 'unfriendly' staff. Before their final examination, they worried about how to meet the standards of assessment. Even after I finished the fieldwork in their final year at North Britain University, they still often contacted me asking questions on the Masters course and studentship. Here, on one hand, my participants and I have become close friends. They leave notes on my webpage, encouraging me to go through the thorny process of my PhD course. Some of them have become life-long friends and become a precious treasure of my entire life. On the other hand, the unavoidable consequence was that me and my participants had developed dual roles. Me: officially a researcher for my study and an informal informant; my participants: official informants and informal 'researchers' for their 'study'.

While observing their chat activities online, I felt guilty that I didn't give the answers which I knew. For instance, they were going to attend their first meeting with their personal tutor in the office which was close to my own. I intended to tell them, but had to wait to see how they would find the answer. When I started to sit in their class for observations, the struggle became stronger, as shown in my research diary:

> 'Fang Fang and Xiao Jie didn't come this morning. I really wanted to call them. I was a lecturer in China. Each time, students didn't show in my class, I asked the monitor what happened. Are they sick? Something wrong? Need my help? In China, Tao, their

personal tutor called them directly to ask where they were. Here, my colleagues told me that the lecturers won't ask in the first couple of weeks...As a researcher, I must minimize my influence on the setting as much as possible' (9th October, 2008).

I thought a lot afterwards about how to help them. In the second round of interviews, I went through their first interviews in China as I did with other participants. I deliberately emphasized what they had told me about their future plans. Both Fang Fang and Xiao Jie realized that they had gone back to their old habits unconsciously when they arrived in the UK. I really did not know whether what I had done was right or not, especially as the end was not a happy ending. Both of them failed the year (see Chapter 5 for details).

4.9.3 Rethinking the Research Methodology

4.9.3.1 Lessons Learned in the Field

When I started entering into the field, I was very excited. I believed everything that happened there was valuable and could become important data for the research project. Thus, I followed students everywhere. This was possible in class when the whole group were in one classroom. However, I lost my focus after class. Students took part in different activities. I did not know which student to follow or which activity I should be involved in. I always worried that I might miss some key information that I would regret later. This is a potential problem with ethnographic studies described by Charmaz (2006) as they see data everywhere and nowhere, gathering everything and nothing.

Another problem is when and how to deal with the data. After only one week's observation, I had collected piles of data through informal chatting and participant observation. Students were very happy to tell me about their past learning experience, current concerns and future expectations. Furthermore, students' transition learning experience is a process rather than a static setting which I could have plenty of time to describe and examine. The mobility of the process and timeliness of data collection opportunities required me to be very organised, focused, efficient and flexible. If I left the data undigested until the end of whole data collection process, I might lose focus and consistency for the following two stages of data collection.

Through my reading, I found I could use the principles advocated in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to identify the directions for the on-going observations and following round of interviews. Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) claim that because of the flexibility of data collecting and analysing strategies, grounded theory methods are able to assist ethnographers to conduct 'efficient fieldwork' and create 'astute analyses'.

Grounded theory strategy is to 'seek data, describe observed events, answer fundamental questions about what is happening, and then develop theoretical categories to understand it' (Charmaz, 2006, p.25). This approach increased my involvement in the research inquiry. It helped me to select the scenes and direct the gaze within them (Charmaz, 2006, p.23). I made connections between events by using grounded theory to study processes through comparative methods. I compared data with data from the beginning of the research; compared data with emerging categories and demonstrated relations between concepts and categories (*ibid.*). 'Grounded theory methods provide systematic guidelines for probing beneath the surface and digging into the scene' (*ibid.*). This prevented my analysis becoming a superficial description as in journalism. It helped me to carry out theoretical interpretations, which involves 'taking data apart, conceptualizing it, and developing those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions in order to determine what the parts tell us about the whole' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.64). Therefore, grounded theory enabled me to take a fresh look and created novel categories and concepts instead of relying on stock disciplinary categories. This made my fieldwork more efficient and moved the research toward theoretical interpretation (Charmaz and Mitchell, 2001, p.160). Therefore, grounded theory methods were able to help me to carry out a focused, structured and organized project which kept the research within control. As a new researcher, this was very important. Meantime, adopting the grounded theory analytical approach made me realize how much work I need to do to generate the skills and commitment to produce a piece of sound ethnographic work (Timmermans and Tavory, 2007).

4.9.3.2 Things could be Done Differently

This research could be done differently. A case study (Yin, 2003) methodology might be an option. The sampling size can be decreased to six key informants. Multiple data sources will also be adopted, in which in-depth interviews will become the primary data collect approach. Five rounds of interviews could be carried out at the time before their leaving in China, first arrival, and at the end of each term in the first academic year in the UK. This might give me a more dynamic insight on their progress. The presentation of the findings can be their individual transition stories. This can give a clearer profile of each of the key informants than the current style.

4.9.3.3 Generalizability of the Findings?

Ethnographic research is very time consuming and breadth is always sacrificed for depth (Brewer, 2000). Findings produced from one or two settings are limited in generalization (*ibid.*). The intention of this abductive research is to develop theory grounded in the data, rather than generalize the conclusions to a larger population. Although I have tried my best to stratify my participants in the sampling to show the differences within the group, I still cannot say they are representative of a group of Articulation Programme students in other similar cases. Therefore, the findings cannot be applied to other settings directly. However, in the future when similar studies conducted in different fields can be compared across these cases, a body of cumulative knowledge can be built up and generalizations are feasible (Brewer, 2000). Currently, policy makers and other stake holders in Transnational Higher Education can draw some practical implications from my research findings, which will be presented in Section 7.5.3.

4.9.3.4 Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations in this study. First, a lack of professional knowledge in Engineering meant I was not very confident in discussing the teaching practices with the staff at the interviews. This also prevented me from taking further steps to understand some specific subject problems, especially in the observation in the laboratory. Second, I should interview more male students as they took up over two-third of the participants. Third, I was much closer to my 16 key informants, and neglected some of the other

participants. Due to the time limit, I was not able to observe them very well. Some distinctive incidents might not be noticed.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has given the rationale of my choice of ethnography as the research methodology in answering the research questions and reported the procedures of research process. My philosophical position in constructionism and multi realities led me to adopt a qualitative research strategy to explore students' transition experience in a China-UK articulation programme. Guided by the principles derived from the set of theoretical and philosophical premises of ethnography, data was collected by multiple ethnographic research approaches. My research has become a way for me to participate actively in my participants' meaning construction. Meaningful closeness and critical professional reflexivity were interwoven in the meaning construction as I was trying to keep a balance between an insider learner and an outsider expert. In the process, I gave power to my participants by considering them as collaborators in the research and presenting different perspectives and voices from individuals. Data were analysed by using the data analysis principles advocated in grounded theory. Multiple data sources were triangulated and member checks were conducted to safe guard the rigour and trustworthiness of the findings. In the research, I tried my best to safe guard my participants from any harm. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Their participation was fully informed and voluntary. Being a qualitative researcher, I was fully aware of the influence of my personal experience on my construction of the findings. Therefore, constant reflexivity was conducted to demonstrate the trustworthiness of the results.

Chapter 5 Individual Transition

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter focuses on the individual transition experience across two universities. Although the students in the programme came from the same country and had the similar educational experience, there were a lot of factors which made individuals' transition experiences and their response to those experiences very different. We should not over generalize about students based on their nationality and so-called 'culture of learning'. However there were some significant patterns. I identified three broad response categories that represent the key types of experience found within the group, which encompass different motivations for studying abroad and strategies and attitudes towards the pre-departure preparation which particularly influenced their interaction with the new learning environment and their outcomes of academic performance. Three patterns of interaction with the new learning environment are identified and presented in terms of **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction** and **Avoiding Interaction**. These patterns show, how in the new learning environment, many factors can be 'double-edged' in that they can have negative or positive impacts depending upon the student's transition response. Examples are: '**internet**', '**privacy**' and '**peer support**'.

5.2 Motivation for Studying Abroad

All participants went through the same education journey following the Chinese education system: a 9-year basic education and 3-year secondary education in senior middle school. The senior middle schools that the participants went to were the top schools in their cities, which had good reputations for the proportion of students entering universities. Teaching then aimed to prepare students to achieve a high score in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, which was 'tough', 'tense', 'terrible', 'very competitive', and something my participants would 'never want to experience again'. All the interviewees did not intend to choose the articulation

programme when they took part in the Examination. Most of these students aimed to get into the first-tier universities. Unexpectedly, their score could only let them go to second-tier universities. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the articulation programme between Southeast China University and North Britain University was a second-tier programme. Along with their parents, students thought that going abroad to study could be a kind of compensation. In addition, the Engineering courses of the programme enjoy a comparatively high reputation for employability. Most importantly, on successfully finishing their studies in China and in the UK, students will be awarded two degrees, one from each university. At that time (the summer of 2006), this programme was still new to parents and had just run for two years. Students enrolled in 2004 and 2005 were still studying on the Chinese campus. Parents worried more about their children's safety and security. The first concern was the authenticity of the programmes. Taking the articulation programme could reduce risks in three ways. First, the Chinese partner is one of China's key universities. Parents thus felt confident about sending their children abroad through a programme guaranteed by a distinguished Chinese university. Second, the programme is approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education and has a licence which parents can check on the Internet. Finally, after two years' study in China, students could go abroad with a group of classmates who know each other very well, which reassures their parents about their children's safety. Compared with receiving the whole undergraduate education abroad, 2+2 programmes cost less. Parents also believed that their children would be more mature psychologically after two years' university study in China in comparison with going abroad directly after graduating from high school.

After two years' study in China, this group of 50 students moved onto the second stage of study at North Britain University to finish their courses. However, their attitudes towards studying abroad were different. Three kinds of motivations were identified in the data: 1) own decision supported by parents; 2) decision out of respect to parents' opinion; and 3) parents' decision, but neglect students' interest.

5.2.1 It is My Decision Supported by My Parents

Participants in this category are those who have high intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000) for their study abroad. They have been viewing studying abroad as an enjoyable journey which they have looked forward to for a long time. This journey will enable them to realize their personal goals, such as exposure to British culture, fulfilling their dreams, experiencing different education systems, connecting more to the society, making friends, enjoying more freedom, widening their views, and enjoying more colourful activities.

Juan Juan has been interested in English since she was a little girl. Her obsession with the language has become one of the main reasons why she chose the programme.

> 'My father went to America and asked me what gifts I wanted. I asked for English movies and music. He bought me many American DVDs without Chinese transcripts. I listened to them while doing the homework. I could understand them all without looking at the screens. Later I got some British DVDs as well. Sometimes I repeated after the actors and imitated their intonations. My listening and speaking have been improved. I'm fascinated by the language and gradually the countries and cultures behind it. For instance, I like Britain. It might because of the influence of Harry Porter. I bought an English version of the seventh book and finished it in three days! I'm looking forward to the study in the UK next semester' (Juan Juan, Female Chinese Students, 1st Interview).

Juan Juan's interest in the language and literature has encouraged her loving of the culture. Studying abroad to her will be a journey in which she can experience British culture, which she has been looking forward to since she was a little girl. Her decision is supported by her parents.

> 'She likes English very much. Going abroad is her dream. As parents, her mum and I tried our best to support her. I've visited many countries around the world and found there is still some distance between the higher education in our country and that in the western countries. We still need to learn more from them. So I hope she can learn the essence of the knowledge' (Mr. Li, Juan Juan's Father, Interview after the Congregation).

Xiao Hua is another example where interests lead him to choose studying abroad in the third year.

> 'I like making four-wheel cars since I was a kid. My parents didn't force me to join different kinds of training courses. Instead, they

gave me money to buy spare parts for four-wheel cars. Very expensive. I always want to be an engineer and build my own 'Iron Man'. I'm always after my teachers to give me extra experiment tasks to do. I was told that they will divide us into groups to design a project [in the UK].The lab will open late. I feel excited about that' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Students, 1st Interview).

Xiao Hua's interests in Engineering give him the passion to choose the course. He is expecting that the course in North Britain University will help him to fulfil his dream---becoming an engineer and build his own 'Iron Man'. He is enjoying his study in the programme and learning is an interesting experience to him. Experiencing a different education system is his expectation. This is normally strengthened by the negative feeling of their past learning experience, which can be shown in the following case:

'I didn't think highly of Chinese education. I didn't do well only once in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination that I lost the chance to go to my dreaming university. Studying abroad is a good opportunity. I hope I can experience a different education system. The senior students who have been there give us the feedback that teaching will be more practical. We will be asked to do more experiments. Sometimes, they have to stay up till 3 o'clock in the morning. Very intense, but very exciting as well. I don't want to waste my time' (Ying Ying, Female Chinese Students, 1st Interview).

For Ying Ying, who was very disappointed with the education system in China, she hoped she could experience a different education system in the UK. Apart from that, students also believed that studying abroad could bring them some other benefits, as Xiao Ming put it:

'The programme cuts our university life into halves. I'm looking forward to the second half. Here [in China], we don't have many opportunities to know the society. I hope I can find part-time job in the UK. Not for the money, but to know more about their culture. Hope I can make friends with British students. I'll talk to them first definitely. I'm very independent since I was a child. But this time, I'll be totally separated from my parents. More freedom. Very excited' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Students, 1st Interview).

Xiao Ming hoped his study in the UK, the second half of the programme, could provide him with more opportunities to be exposed to society and understand British culture. Being apart from his parents could give him more freedom. Coming from a well-off family, Xiao Ming did not need a part-time job. It was just a way for him to see the culture. He was also looking forward to making friends with British students. He had made up his mind to take the

initiative and talk to them first. Ping Ping and Li Li had the same expectations. They were looking forward to making friends with British students and knowing more about the society outside the campus.

> 'I have been planning to study board since I joined the programme two years ago. It hasn't changed. I hope I can make friends with other students, widen my thoughts and broaden my horizon' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Students, 1st Interview).

> 'Our after-class activity is a little bit boring. Because we're leaving soon, the Student Union didn't invite us for their activities. I hope my university life will be more colourful in the UK. Hope there will be more clubs and organizations to join' (Li Li, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

From the above we can see students in this group make the decision to study abroad because they feel that it will be an enjoyable journey. Their decision has been supported by their parents. The motivations of participants' studying abroad in the next group are slightly different.

5.2.2 Decision Largely out of Respect to Parents' Opinion

Participants in this group decided to study abroad largely out of respect to their parents' opinion. At the same time, their willingness reflected 'an inner acceptance of the value or utility of a task' (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.55). Xiao Dong's example shows how his learning has been influenced by the will power of his parents.

> 'In high school, my parents wanted me to get a high score, so I worked hard to get a high score. In university, my parents wanted me to be an overseas student, I agreed without much thinking. I trust them and I know it'll be good for me. Hope it can improve my English and help me to find a good job in an international company' (Xiao Dong, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Xiao Dong studied hard to please his parents; meanwhile he trusted his parents' decision to send him abroad. Studying abroad did not conflict with his interest. On the contrary, it could help him to improve his English and find a job in an international company. His parents' decision represented his own personally endorsed needs and goals (Ryan and Deci, 2002).Therefore, he accepted the arrangement willingly. This was the same for Min Min and Yan Yan:

> 'My parents didn't say anything, but I could feel from the way they looked at me. I'm their hope…Each term I brought them the scholarship certificate. Not for the money, but the honour. I bought my mum a ring using my first scholarship, ¥1000. She showed it to

everybody. Other parents were jealous. She was happy, which made me feel happy. To me, I want to get a Masters degree after this. This is also what my parents want me to do. I'll try to apply for the best university in the UK' (Min Min, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

'My parents told me this course has high reputation for employment. It's a lot of money, but they said they will give me all their savings to support my study abroad…I got scholarship every semester to make my parents happy. My cousin studied abroad and found a very good job in Shanghai. Hope I could get a good job too when I come back from the UK' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Min Min and Yan Yan worked hard to be the top in the class in order to get a scholarship which would give their parents more honour. This motivation pushed them to study hard and become successful in study. Their parents' devotion to education and high expectations for their future in the UK gave them pressure to study hard. Their decision to study abroad was also to please their parents. Moreover, studying abroad in the third year could be a spring board for them to either get a Masters offer from a top university in the UK, or obtain a good job after graduation. These were in line with their interests as well as their parents'.

Parents of the students in this group are more autonomy-supportive than those in the next group (see Section 5.2.3 for details). For instance, Xiao Qiang stated:

'The reason why I study hard is that my parents have done so much for me. My dad said this course will enable me to go abroad and have a bright employment future. I didn't have an idea then. After the first year, I told my parents I wanted to quit because I failed two modules. Teaching was half English, half Chinese. I couldn't understand. I asked them to transfer me to non-programme course because I didn't want to go abroad. They didn't say anything but asked me to talk to senior students who were in the UK then. I called a student [in cohort 2005] via MSN. We're from the same city. We chatted for three hours! He told me a lot about his study in the UK… After that, I decided to continue. In the second year, I understood better and passed the exams without difficulties. Now, I like this course, especially it gives me a chance to go abroad. I can experience some part of the university life in China first and get preparation before going abroad. I need to think about my future. I'm going to find a part-time job to improve my English. Hope I can find a one-year placement in the UK to highlight my CV and then apply for a Masters degree offer in America' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Students, 1st Interview).

From the above quotation, Xiao Qiang illustrated how his attitude changes from resistance to willingness towards study abroad, assisted by his parents' support and feedback from senior students in the UK. He gradually took the first two years' study in the programme as a transition from high school to university life abroad, where he could develop professional knowledge and improve his English. The second part of study of the programme in the UK could also be a springboard for his postgraduate study in America. He gradually built up a conscious value of the goal of studying abroad and accepted this behaviour as personally important (Ryan and Deci, 2002).

Students in this group appreciated support from their family and acted to please their parents and meet their expectations. Meanwhile, studying abroad was in line with their personal needs and goals. They were willing to accept the decision. They agreed with their parents' view that studying abroad could benefit their future career. This entails personal endorsement and a feeling of choice (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.60), which is not the case in the following group.

5.2.3 Parents' Decision, but Neglect Students' Interest

In this group, participants' studying abroad largely derives from pressure from their parents. Xiao Feng's experience is a clear example. His father did not go to university because of the Culture Revolution (1966-1976) 'which closed the entire higher education system, sent many professors and students to rural areas to work, and destroyed a generation of academics' (Altbach, 2009, p.182). As one of the young people going to the countryside, his father was eager to get into universities to study. After the Culture Revolution, he came back to the city and became a worker in a research institute, where he met many experts and professors.

> 'They all have been to university and very knowledgeable. I didn't want to be a worker for the rest of my life. I wanted to be one of them. So I went to night school after work and attended the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. When I got the offer, I almost cried' (Mr. Wang, Xiao Feng's Father, Interview after the Congregation).

After several years of hard work, Mr. Wang became a senior engineer in the institution. Because of his hard and dreadful education experience, he pushed Xiao Feng very hard in his study:

'I didn't want to push him, but the pressure outside pushed me to give him pressure. Without a degree from a good university, he can't get a respectable job. The Entrance Examination is so competitive. Most of the parents are pushing their children, sending them to the top high school and hiring private tutors. The big environment is there. How can I be an exception? You asked me whether I wanted to make a change, I think it's the Chinese education system should change first' (Mr. Wang, Xiao Feng's Father, Interview after the Congregation).

The pressure from the competition in the country drives Xiao Feng's father to make the decision to send his son abroad.

'My dad really wants me to go abroad to avoid the competition. Many of his colleagues have done that. He always compares me with his colleagues' children. He didn't encourage me to do anything except study. I like to make small things, such as earphone exemplifier. But my dad said it wasn't a kind of study. In fact, in his eyes, nothing is useful except study. He always criticizes me. Give me a lot of instructions. You must do this. You mustn't do that. ...He has never praised me. I was in top 3 in primary school. In junior school, if I drop to No. 8 or 9, he would take it seriously. ...At night, he sat beside me watching me doing the homework. Can you imagine how stressed I was? Anytime I didn't do well in my exam, he watched me like that. And very critical: 'why you write so fast?' or ' how can you remember?' I was very upset. If my mum wanted to talk to me, he would say no. He didn't want my mum to disturb me while I was working on my homework. I was disgusted with what he was doing, but on the other hand I became reliant on his enforcement. He forced me and I was efficient. He didn't. I easily idled away my time' (Xiao Feng, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Xiao Feng's quotation demonstrated that he was very upset and unsatisfied with his father' compulsion in his study. However, he became reliant on this kind of compulsion. Studying abroad was his father's decision following a comparison with other colleagues. Xiao Feng's own interests, such as making an earphone exemplifier, were despised by his father, who thought 'it wasn't a kind of study'. In this group, participants' interests are neglected by their parents. Xiao Yong is another example. As the only child in the family, he has faced great expectations since he was a child. In high school, he was transferred to the best middle school, where he was under great pressure by the competition of class rankings. Once, he knocked out the glass of the classroom window. 'My hand was bleeding. My teacher sent me to hospital.

She didn't blame me as she knew how stressed we were'. He was pushed hard by his parents to go to university.

> 'I wanted to be a car racer, but my dad thought I was crazy. After the Examination, he chose this course for me. He talked a lot about the benefits of going abroad and how good this course is. He said after I get the degree, my English will be very good. I can go to international companies. I don't think it's a big deal. If I can't be a car racer, I can be a business man like him and have my own business. But he thinks his career is too tough and doesn't want me to take the same road. My English is very poor. I didn't know I could go until this term when my father was told that as long as I go to take a summer language course at North Britain University. To tell you the truth. I really don't want to go' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Right before his leaving for the UK, Xiao Yong fell in love with a girl. Thinking of parting with his girlfriend increased his reluctance to study abroad. Studying abroad was simply his parents' decision and in conflict with his interests. Furthermore, when students are not confident in their ability to cope with study abroad, they show great reluctance in their action. Xiao Yong's lack of language competence has strengthened his resistance to studying abroad. This was also true with Xiao Yu:

> 'To tell you the truth I'm not that keen on study abroad. It's just because my parents think highly of western education. My dad hopes I can improve my English and have an easier life in the future. I'm OK with other subjects except English. I don't know why. No matter how hard I work on it, I have never got a good result. That'll be a big problem for me' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Xiao Yu's deficiency in language was, as he predicted, the biggest obstacle to his study abroad (see Section 5.4.2.2). Apart from language, self-management was another concern for some of the participants in this group. Fang Fang and Xiao Jie were two clear examples:

> 'In high school I like to be a chemist or biologist, but my mum said, 'do you want to be in the laboratory for the rest of your life?!' She asked me to take this course. But there's a lot of physics which is my most headache subject. Gradually, I'm like cattle eating the grass and prefer to stay in the dormitory watching cartoon. But because of the roll-call I have to attend the class. Mr. Yang (Tao) would phone my mum if I was absent too much from the class. The other girls in my dormitory also ask me to go to class with them. I won't become serious about the study till the examination. I'm not ambitious to become very rich in the future. I prefer to use the minimum effort to get the maximum achievement...Not sure

what will happen there [in the UK]… I think the biggest obstacle abroad is myself. I have weak will to manage myself' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Due to pressure from her mother, Fang Fang had to give up her dream of becoming a chemist or biologist. The engineering course was not what she wanted or was good at. Self-management was an obstacle hindering her study abroad. Xiao Jie was another student who had the same concern. He used to be a top student in high school and was forced by his parents to study hard. When he entered university, he felt life there was easy. He started to become obsessed with PC games.

> 'My parents woke me up at 5am and asked me to start reading and memorizing. I got to school at 6am and studied until 10pm. When I got back home, I was not allowed to go to bed. They forced me to study until midnight. I only had less than 5 hours to sleep every day. At that time [in middle school], I thought life was miserable. Life in the university is very relaxed. I spend a lot of time in the internet bar. If it is not the roll-call system and the phone calls from Mr. Yang (Tao), I'll just stay in the bar. I don't know whether I can manage myself or not in the UK. Mr. Yang has told us that nobody there will discipline us. It's more relying on us' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Mr. Yang (Tao), mentioned in Fang Fang's and Xiao Jie's quotations, is students' Ban Zhu Ren, their personal tutor. Ban Zhu Ren, a staff member who is in charge of a class, plays an important role at different stages in the Chinese education system. It is similar to a personal tutor in the UK universities, but has more power and responsibilities. In primary school and middle school, they work closely with the parents to administrate the students. They are normally the teachers of core modules. Therefore, they have power from the students' parents, the school, and their roles as teachers. They are the authoritative figures in the students' study life. Tao appointed two monitors to help him manage the whole class. They carried out a roll-call at the beginning of each class, wrote down the names of those who were absent from the class, and reported to Tao afterwards. Tao would phone these students to see why they were absent from the class. He sometimes phoned their parents to discuss the students' performance at school. He believed that:

> 'These students graduated from senior middle school where they were strictly disciplined by teachers. The university life is free and open. Students need to be more independent. However, without

teachers' instruction, some of them don't know what to do. They are like candles. They won't light themselves until you light them. So I am strict with them especially in the first year. I couldn't remember how many long-distance calls I've made for their parents' (Tao, Chinese Staff Member).

Tao worked closely with the parents. After the examinations each semester, he would text students' results and rank to their parents. If students displayed bad behaviour and were reluctant to change, he would also contact their parents. He hoped their parents could spend more time to educate their children. Some students' parents also took the initiative to phone him when they wanted to know their children's behaviour in the university. If a serious situation happened, he would ask the parents to come to the university.

'The reason why I keep a close contact with their parents is that they sent their children to my class. If these students have some problems but I don't inform their parents, I will be blamed when the situation becomes very serious. For example, if students couldn't go abroad or had to drop out, parents would blame me, 'I sent my children to you. Why didn't you tell us earlier?' It's my responsibility to let them know' (Tao, Chinese Staff Member).

Tao organized a Parent Meeting at the end of the first year. He considered it as a middle-point report of students' learning on the Chinese campus. He gave every student an individual comment on their behaviour: hoping parents could help him to manage their children's study and life. He inspected students' accommodation regularly to check the state of hygiene and to see whether they were playing cards. Under this kind of disciplined environment, students were seldom absent from class.

Compared with students in the previous group, this group of students were overly controlled by their parents. Their motivation to study abroad was nonautonomous, and an action to avoid parents' sanction (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The most important point is that studying abroad is either in conflict with their interests or largely what their skills or competency cannot cope with. Various motivations of studying abroad influenced students' attitude towards their pre-departure preparation which will be illustrated in the following section.

5.3 Pre-departure Preparation

5.3.1 Preparation from the Programme and Schools

The first two years' teaching and learning at Southeast China University aims to prepare students to study abroad academically, linguistically, culturally and psychologically. This is to increase the predictability of the new situation and their anticipatory familiarity, which can reduce the uncertainty facing international students (Tsang, 2001, pp.352-353). It can also enhance sojourners' readiness and ability to be open and flexible in the new learning environment (Alred, 2003, p.18). The following section demonstrates the efforts that both sending and receiving universities contributed to pre-departure preparation.

5.3.1.1 Bilingual Education

The curriculum was designed by educators from both sides. Apart from the compulsory modules required by the Chinese Ministry of Education, students spent the rest of their time learning the first year core modules of North Britain University. The British staff sent their Chinese counterparts the syllabus and also suggested English reference books. The core modules were delivered bilingually by Chinese staff. Every student was given an English textbook as well as a Chinese one for each module. Their choice of which book to read depends on the lecturers' preference. Some lecturers' teaching was based on the English textbook, while using the Chinese one as supplementary, and vice versa. The practices have been conducted unevenly due to the language level of the lecturers, attitudes towards bilingual education and contents of the subjects. However, lecturers were trying their best to enlarge the use of English in their teaching. Some made slides in English; some embedded English terminology in the lines; some lecturers, like Lin, whose English was competent enough, taught students in English. Lin had been in the UK for 15 months and stayed in America for seven and half years as part of her PhD. She also led a demonstration course of bilingual education in the university. She was appointed to teach the module of Engineering Physics and EM Fields.

> 'In the first class, everybody brought the Chinese textbook instead of the English one. I put my slides up which was in English and started to speak English to them. They all burst into laughs. I knew

what that stood for even if they didn't say it out. They were thinking 'Hey Miss, you are really flattering us. You have too much expectation on us. We won't understand.' But I didn't stop my teaching. Soon they became quiet. After a while, I asked them how they felt. Some said OK. Some said they couldn't understand. In fact, what they didn't understand was the overwhelming English, not Physics. The formula's there. The theory's there. I didn't worry about that at all' (Lin, Chinese Staff Member).

This kind of explosion in learning a new subject in a second language gives students a taste of the learning environment in the UK. Lin discussed the benefits of bilingual education.

'Encouraging students to read English textbook is to let them enter into the English environment. Teaching in English and Chinese is to build up a bridge between English terminology and Chinese concepts. When teaching new material where students haven't got any concept, we use Chinese to help them understand the theory and get some basic understanding of the concepts. Then we use English to assist them to build some models. Students feel easy about that. If we teach them new area in English directly, they will feel very difficult' (Lin, Chinese Staff Member).

In Lin's class, students were encouraged to read the English textbook. Homework questions were from the English textbooks and the examinations were in English as well. After a semester's teaching, students felt their English in physics had been improved. 'All the links are in English, so you started to think the subject in English' (Xiao Hua). Having been exposed to English teaching predominantly in a module like Physics, they had mastered the knowledge of the discipline and improved their language skills, especially the terminology and expression of the glossary.

5.3.1.2 Early Interventions

North Britain University valued the cooperation with Southeast China University greatly, not only because of the revenue made from the high tuition fees paid by the Articulation Programme students, but also the international atmosphere created by their participation in the School. Therefore, they expanded the visit from management level to academic level. British staff were sent to lecture in China. This was designed to help Chinese students become familiar with teaching and learning practices in the UK. As Xiao Hua commented:

'We have several lecturers from the UK to teach us in the first two years. Before I attended their lectures, I thought it would be very hard. But after that, I felt their teaching was not as difficult as I

thought. I think the crucial point is that I did pre-class study. My learning approach works. I'll continue to use it in England. Maxwell [a British staff] said my English was OK for daily activities, but I need to improve my academic English. He suggested that we remember all the glossaries at the back of the English text book. I'm working on that now' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Through the interaction with British staff in China, students assessed their own academic level, built up confidence and worked out things they need to improve. Thus, they were better prepared for their learning abroad. Staff, on the other hand, became familiar with students' previous learning experience. As Frank, one of the British staff members, mentioned:

'I give them some information about the city, university and the programme they are going to be studying, in terms of the content and how much time they have to spend on their studies, how they are assessed, and I also give them a lecture because I know the Chinese approach is different from ours. I do that to give them an idea of what our approach is. From what I gathered in China, their delivery is a bit more one-way and students sit and write and the lecturer or academic, delivers. Ours is a bit more two-way. I try to be more interactive to try and get the students more involved in what I'm doing and ask questions all the time. So that's what I did when I was in China' (Frank, British Staff Member).

As the Programme had only been set up for four years, the early intervention was still at the initial stage. Due to the limits of time, British staff could not spend much time in China. Students hope the teaching could be longer and more systematic.

'The teaching was too short. Normally one person one session. There's no connection between their teaching. Only one way to help us to adapt. Not systematically teaching. Now after their teaching, our teacher will tutor us in Chinese. We need to see how we understand their teaching for a period of time without Chinese tutoring' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The early intervention has not covered the assessment yet. Students have not experienced the real assessment procedures. The situation is changing. Some Chinese staff have started to think about the integration of assessment practices, which will be presented in the following section.

5.3.1.3 Academic Exchange and New Assessment Practice

How successfully the two teaching contexts in the two universities integrate will affect students' transition to a great extent. Every year, North Britain University invites an academic staff member from Southeast China

University for a nine-month visit. They attend lectures, workshops and seminars with students. They also exchange teaching and research experience with British counterparts. Their overseas life has enhanced their understanding of the teaching and learning context in the UK and the challenges their students are facing in the transition.

Sheng lectures on Electronic Machinery in China. He spent about nine months in North Britain University in the academic year of 2007/2008. He was interviewed twice, one month before he left the UK and seven months after he went back to China.

> 'The participation in the class, seminar and laboratory gave me some ideas about how they deliverd the module. I also gave the English staff a lecture, in English obviously. They asked questions after my teaching. This is a very good opportunity for two staff teams to understand each other better' (Sheng, Chinese Staff Member).

When Sheng went back to China, he made some changes in his teaching.

> 'Now, I'm trying to teach my students in English and make the class more interactive. I also encourage them to ask and answer questions in English as well. Although they felt reluctant to do that at the moment, it's still worth trying. After all, it will benefit their study in the UK and I know that very well' (Sheng, Chinese Staff Member).

Tao, the Electronics lecturer, introduced 'Course Design' into his module. He asked students to conduct a 'two-week' design project in pairs in their last semester in China. Students were asked to design an audible and visual alarm. Tao explained why he made the innovations in his modules:

> 'Through my visit to the UK, I found our experiments are mostly asking students to test out a result, while their experiments are research based. They ask students to work into groups to design a project, which is good' (Tao, Chinese Staff Member).

In the first three semesters, there were more replication experiments. Students followed the guidance step by step to verify the results. Tao believed that this kind of experiments might not improve students' practical skills and innovative ability.

> 'We gave students the circuits in the verification experiments and told them what appliances to use. We demonstrated first showing them what parameters to test and how to do it. What they need to do is to follow our instruction and get the results. There is not much thinking in the process' (Tao, Chinese Staff Member).

Students felt that this kind of experiments did not give them a sense of achievement. As Fang Fang mentioned, '*You can find all the answers on the guidance book. You really don't see the point why you do it. It's easy. Not challenging at all*'. Their passive attitude changed in the new assessment. They needed to find information online, go over text books, discuss with teammates, and use software to draw the circuit, implement it in the lab and write a project report. These will be steps similar to those they need to take to finish some assessments in the UK. Familiarity with these practices is a bridge to the assessment practices in the UK.

Fang Fang, who previously was not bothered with experiments, became serious this time. She was put into a group with Xiao Hua.

> 'I picked up the learning points I forgot. I read the two Electronics books from the beginning to the end searching for ideas to design the project. I had never done that before. We kept on changing and changing to implement our design. We realized that theory and practice can be totally different. The threads were so hard and hurt my fingers. We were like making cross-stitches [Laughs]' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

After many attempts, their alarm system was successful. They got 90% for their design course. Looking at the circuit board, Fang Fang was reluctant to take the thread off. It was so valuable and precious to her.

Xiao Jie had spent a lot of time on PC games, but changed his attitudes towards learning and identified his deficits through the design course.

> 'Before the design course, I thought what we had learned was useless. I couldn't connect the learning points together. Now, I realize that I can apply the knowledge into practice. I also find that there are many areas I need to work on. Otherwise I may fail the study in the UK. I feel regret that I didn't study hard before' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The newly introduced assessment practice helped students link the knowledge they learned in class to real life practice. Their so-called passive and cure-seeking behaviours changed in this assessment. This shows that students' learning behaviours are not fixed as described in the culture of learning. They can be changed in the same 'culture', but by different practices. These depend largely on the teachers and their individual practice. Meanwhile, the teaching practices themselves are not fixed. They change in

different contexts based on the information they receive, the tasks they need to finish and the flexibility they may hold for their teaching.

5.3.1.4 Culture Learning

Apart from academic preparation, Southeast China University greatly increased the teaching hours to help students improve their language. Native English speakers were appointed as oral English teachers giving weekly classes where students practised their English and learnt about UK culture. The lecturer observed is from Australia. He shared the tips of overcoming difficulties abroad based on his own experience as an international student in China.

> 'One of the topics was 'Culture shock. What is it?' and so I explained to them the five stages that they will go through. And then we actually talked about ways to get over culture shock. Doing sports, making friends, QQ and MSN, keeping in contact. Maybe. When I told them about what it's like to study, I taught them what it was like to be a foreign student here, I told them that the food was different, I told them about difficulties I had and I told them about how I got over my difficulties of being in China. I explained to them that in organisations like that, that usually… I said, 'Join clubs, make friends, play sport' and those are good ways to adapt' (David, Chinese Staff Member from Australia).

In his teaching, David tried to prepare his students for the culture they were going into. He introduced students to the features of the city where the North Britain University is located:

> 'I show them the weather and photographs of the city. I show them photographs of pubs, buildings, and the train station where they will arrive... I try to give them the prices about how expensive things are in England, so how much is milk and how much is a bottle of water, how much is a bus ticket. ... So they say, 'Oh, the teacher showed us a picture of the train station. I know where I am' and I show them a picture of Chinatown so they know it's not so far away, so it's not so foreign and strange to them' (David, Chinese Staff Member from Australia).

Staff's intentions here were to make the students familiar with the new environment they would come across. Through which, the strangeness these students might feel in their study abroad was likely to be eliminated. Language was taught in a context which aimed to help students understand the environment they were going into and make more sense of the language.

> 'I showed them The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe, which was a little bit English related. I explained to them who C S Lewis

was and explained to them that he went to Oxford and to Cambridge. I explained a little bit about the background history. I know one girl who has read all the books in the class; she was very interested in it, so that was good. Because I'm trying to expose them to English literature' (David, Chinese Staff Member from Australia).

Students were given topics that they might come across whilst overseas, such as culture shock and goals to go abroad. Ways to cope with problems, such as boarding a plane and losing the passport were also discussed. These make their language learning more relevant and practical.

'Because what I'm doing is, I'm teaching them to think and not just to repeat... I try to pick topics like going overseas or things that are related to where they are going. Because I think that if you make language practical and they can see the point, they want to learn it because, 'Hey, this would be useful when I'm over in England, I'm going to travel over there' and so if it's more practical then there is a point, rather than learning about fashion or something, or learning about something that's maybe not so related. So I try to make it practical for them' (David, Chinese Staff Member from Australia).

Through discussing these topics, students started thinking about the country they were going to, predicting the difficulties they might come across, and preparing for the differences in the new learning environment. In his teaching, David tried to encourage students to participate in the classroom. He allocated a mark to students' participation.

'I give them a debate on a topic, 'There is no advantage to going overseas' and then split them into two groups, then that way, they have to talk about it. But with the debate, what I was marking was their participation. I'm looking to see which students actually say something without me asking...I know from different studies that the people that make better speakers in the long run, are the ones that are more extroverted and are the ones that ask questions, are curious, that are more involved, they are the ones whose language will get better and better' (David, Chinese Staff Member from Australia).

David's teaching differs from the argument in the literature (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996a) that students' learning in China is teacher-centred and emphasises listener responsibility. When the institutions become more internationalized and various teaching practices are adopted, students are exposed in a more diverse learning environment. The so-called distinctive divisions in the education practices between Chinese and UK systems are blurred. Being

exposed in an internationalized teaching environment, students become more familiar with the future academic culture to some extent.

However, not all the students have the same level of preparation, and it is up to their motivations for studying abroad. This will be explored in the following section.

5.3.2 Attitudes towards Pre-departure Preparation

5.3.2.1 Active Preparation

Students who have high intrinsic motivation or internalized extrinsic motivation show great autonomy in their active attitude towards pre-departure preparation. Going abroad was one of the reasons this group of students chose the articulation programme in the first place. They knew from the start that they were going to the UK for the latter stage of their studies. Their attitude has resulted in high-quality learning and creativity, as proved by evidence in this research. They actively collected information about living and studying in the UK from the Internet and they chatted online with students who were studying abroad and read their blogs.

> 'Studying abroad in the UK is not strange to me. I have relatives and friends who have been abroad. Our lecturers who have visited the North Britain University told us how they felt about the country' (Xiao Dong, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Here Xiao Dong demonstrated that lecturers, relatives or friends who had been abroad, and the older students, were the sources of knowledge for these students. They were actively seeking chances to develop their familiarity with the signs or cues that might lessen their anxiety in the new environment abroad. They predicted the difficulties they were going to come across in the UK, such as food, missing home, autonomous learning, language and making friends with home students, and started to learn the skills to cope with these. The prediction set up an alert in their mind and pointed out directions they should take.

> 'I chat with the seniors who have already been there. They told me self-study is very important. You have a lot of your own time. You must do a lot of self-study. Mr. Yang (Tao) told us that nobody there will tell you to go to class. It's your own responsibility. In England, everything relies on you.' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The feedback Xiao Ming obtained from the old students or his tutor highlighted the importance of autonomous learning. With this kind of alert in mind, students were more likely to work in that direction. Academically, they conducted extra study, more than the teachers had required. For instance, Ping Ping read both versions of the textbooks to get familiar with the terminology and definition in English. She believed that trying to study the subject in English could make her study easier in the UK.

> 'From what others told me, a larger academic vocabulary will help me there…I collect the glossary from my daily reading, mark them down and will go over them again this summer holiday' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Methods to cope with English teaching abroad were tried and practiced in their study in China, as shown by Xiao Ming:

> 'To understand the class better, you really need to read the English textbook before the class. Look up words in the dictionary. Find the Chinese version and get to know the English meaning. When we are asked to work out the questions in English and submit them as homework, we need to go over the textbook again' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

As data has shown in Section 5.3.1.2, these students identified their strong points as well as deficiencies by interaction with British staff in the first two years' teaching in China. Xiao Ming's way of learning, such as pre-class study, had been proved effective in understanding the teaching, which gave him confidence to succeed in study abroad. Advice provided by British staff pointed out the direction students need to work towards, too.

Students had been working hard to enhance their language ability. Apart from increasing their academic glossary, students joined various language training schools outside the campus to polish their English. To be accepted by the North Britain University, they need to achieve 5.5 in IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or equivalent. They learned the skills to gain high mark in listening, speaking, reading and writing in the IELTS. Xiao Ming got 7.0 in his second year. He shared his experience in preparing for the language test.

> 'I studied very hard preparing IELTS and I think my English has been greatly improved. Many classmates went to language training school in the summer holiday. I went there in the first year. I bought many reference books and recited a 3000 new words book. We studied very hard in language school. Two days per

week. 5 hours one session. The teachers there encouraged us to talk. I talked a lot in that school. I have an MP3. I listen to BBC every day. I got 7.5 in listening' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Juanjuan, got 6.5 in IELTS in her first year. Apart from preparing hard for the language test, she and her roommates watched TV series and movies shot in English.

'I watched *Gossip Girl*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Hero*, etc. Our English teacher showed us *Little Britain* in the class. I covered the transcript to practice my listening' (Juan Juan, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

'I finished ten seasons of *Friends* as well as *24 Hours*, *Lost*, *Desperate Housewives* and *Prison Break*. I like *The Princess Diaries* very much. It was hard to understand the British accent at the beginning, but now it's much better' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

These English movies or TV series not only allowed students to pick up English, but also the customs and cultures of western countries while they were still in China. These students also created opportunities to communicate with native speakers.

'I helped the British lecturers set up Multi-media equipment. So I had more opportunities to chat with them and helped them communicate with others' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

'I offered to show the UK staff around the campus. I talked a lot that day. They said my English was good. I was very happy about that' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The initiative to communicate with native speakers was also shown in their strong desire to make friends with British students and other international students as well as integrate into the local culture. Before departure, they expressed their strong willingness to get to know other students abroad as well as their concerns in the process of integration:

'I'm eager to make friends with British students and will take the initiative to talk to them, but I'm also worried that there might be ethnic conflicts with British students. Hope they won't bully us' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

'Western media gave a lot of negative reports on China. They blamed many things to Chinese population. For instance, if one country's employment rate dropped, they would say, 'that's because Chinese people come and steal our jobs'. So they will discriminate Chinese or even assault us. I just worried this kind of report might influence the public's opinions on Chinese overseas

students. But I believe in Yanni's point of view that the world is a family. We should see the common things among us instead of differentials. I'll take the initiative to talk to the British students first' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The willingness to integrate with other students and the concerns of conflict interwove together and this was shown in their strategy of accommodation application. Apart from one dormitory group who applied to live in the same flat, all the other students applied to live with one roommate (normally their best friend) and wanted the Accommodation Office at North Britain University to dispatch foreign flatmates. The reasons were:

'I apply to live with one of my current roommate and hope the rest of the flatmates will be British students. We two could look after each other on one hand. On the other hand, we could communicate with foreign students to practice our English. I don't want to stay with Chinese all the time. It'll be meaningless if we only stay with our own group members' (Min Min, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

From reading senior students' blog, students predicted the problems they might come across, such as missing home.

'I know I'll miss home. I'm teaching my parents how to chat online. We could do video chat every week' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Ping Ping here worked out a way to cope with her future problem assisted by new technology. Through the test of chatting online, both she and her parents had the psychological preparation for their being apart in the next couple of years. Food was predicted as an obstacle for their study abroad. As the only child in the family, Xiao Qiang showed his concern about cooking.

'Cooking will be a problem for me. Last winter vacation, my parents taught me how to cook. It's not as difficult as I thought. I'll learn more dishes this summer holiday' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Students were working hard to make up for this deficiency. This had been observed on the internet. They shared recipes of Chinese cuisines on the blogs. For example, Xiao Hua made his first two dishes: *Sweet & Sour Ribs* and *Roasted Chicken Wings* in the winter holiday of 2008. He posted the recipes with pictures on his blog (24th January, 2008). His classmates made comments on his webpage:

'You can make a living when you come here [the UK]' (Student in 2005, 24-01-2008 22:20).

'Professional chef! Mine doesn't look as good as yours. What's the secret? ☺' (Ying Ying, 24-01-2008 22:23).

'The secret is to leave them in the source of salt, soya source and cooking wine ☺' (Xiao Hua, 25-01-2008 01:40).

The above dialogues between Xiao Hua and his classmates or students who were in the UK demonstrated that this group of students were actively preparing for their future life in the UK. As Xiao Hua has predicted:

'I think there will be a run-in period. They said it's hard to get to know English students. I'll take the initiative to talk to them. We're all young people with a lot of common interests. It shouldn't be a problem for me. I'm practicing English, collecting information about England, going over the learning points teachers have covered in the first two years, and will polish my cooking skills this summer. Don't think it'll be very difficult' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Xiao Hua anticipated that there might be a run-in period. He might come across various problems such as how to get along well with home students. However, he believed that the positive attitude he was taking and preparation he had done in China would enable him to overcome the difficulties. For students who were unwilling to study abroad, their attitude towards the pre-departure preparation was different.

5.3.2.2 Passive Preparation

As presented in Section 5.2.3, studying abroad is not always done willingly by participants. Some of the parents made the decision and overly controlled the students. These students' attitude towards pre-departure preparation was passive affected by the negative feelings about studying abroad. Evidence showed that the stronger the negative feeling they had, the less autonomous they were in preparation. Unlike students in the previous group, who intended to stay longer in the UK either to continue their course or find a job, this group of students were determined to come back to China as soon as they finished the final two-year study in North Britain University, which was a 'return' to their parents' expectation and investment. This might let them underplay the importance of various moderating factors, such as acquiring language competence and establishing interpersonal relationships known to enhance positive adaptation, owing to the temporary nature of their stay and their intention to return home (Berry and Sam,1997, p.306). For these students, the importance of bilingual education was not appreciated. For

example, Xiao Yong believed that 'it's weird to see teachers teaching modules in other languages' and was reluctant to read English textbooks. He commented that:

> 'Those books are big and thick! They're not as concise as Chinese ones. I think the first two years' teaching should focus on providing us with a solid theory foundation. Once we understand the theory, we could just pay attention to the language when we're in the UK. Chinese teachers should teach us in Chinese only' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

These students went to the classes, attended the examinations, prepared for the IELTS test, and finished the homework and other tasks required by the teachers in preparation to go abroad. Apart from that, they did not do extra work as other students had done in the previous group. Although they expressed concerns about studying abroad, they did not do much active preparation for them to overcome the potential challenges.

> 'I prefer to use the minimum effort to get the maximum achievement. I don't want to work too hard that in the near future I'll be sitting there counting how many grey hairs I've got. I know I need to read English books and recite those technical words. In fact, I make plans at the beginning of each semester, but after two weeks, I'll just be what I am. Maybe when I get there, I'll make some changes. I'll cross the bridge when I get to the river' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Fang Fang did not do much preparation due to this kind of attitude of using minimum effort to get the maximum achievement. She knew what she should do, but she did not put it into practice. Xiao Jie had many friends in the grade above who were in the UK then. They gave him some 'positive' feedback.

> 'They told me that the passing line is 40%. You can also get the previous examination papers. It's easy for you to pass it as long as you go through those papers. I just want a pass and get the degree' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The tips he had received from the students above gave him a rosy picture of learning in the UK. The passing score (40%) is lower than what they are now (60%), which has made Xiao Jie feel relieved. However, what he did not realize was that the standard was not lower and the possible effort he should put into the study was not lower, either.

Unlike students in the previous group who applied for accommodation with one Chinese classmate and left three or four vacancies to home students or

other international students, students in this group, such as Xiao Yu and Xiao Jie, preferred to stay in the accommodation with their own classmates.

> 'I didn't apply to live with British students because I don't want to have conflict with them as our cultures are different. I'll stay with my Chinese classmates. They are 'Zi Ji Ren' (people on my side). It is more secure and easy to look after each other. With 'Zi Ji Ren', you can do whatever you want to do. I might have problems with the British students as we can't understand each other. I don't think going abroad is suitable for me. I feel headache to speak English. I really don't know how I will go through the two years abroad' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

'Zi Ji Ren' are people from the same group who will stand beside you when you are faced with problems. They can also give you freedom without worrying about courtesy or conflicts. Xiao Yu's deficiency in English has aggravated his reluctance to communicate with British flatmates and increased his negative feeling towards studying abroad. This kind of negative feeling made him become passive towards the pre-departure preparation. Students' motivation towards study abroad and pre-departure knowledge have affected their adoption of different strategies in coping with the changes in the new learning environment, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.4 Interaction with the New Learning Environment

5.4.1 New Features in the New Learning Environment

Apart from several students who came to North Britain University for summer school to improve their language, most of the students arrived on the 11th of September, 2008. In the following week, the university also arranged induction programmes for every new student which covered the information on health care, the library, Students' Union, bank accounts, etc. Students opened bank accounts, registered for a GP, enrolled at the School, and registered at the police station as required by the British government. Interacting with the new learning environment, participants identified some differences in the features of two campuses.

5.4.1.1 General Features

Coming to North Britain University, students experienced different administrative systems: from being disciplined to discipline themselves. As mentioned in Section 5.2.3, in the first two years in China, Ban Zhu Ren

worked closely with their parents to discipline students. Things in England were different.

> 'You could ask your friends to tick the box for you. No one will find out and care. In China, we're 'scared' of our Ban Zhu Ren. There isn't a figure in the UK that we're 'scared' of. And I don't think the lecturers here want us to be 'scared'. They treat us as adults' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Students, 2nd Interview).

Although a personal tutor was assigned to these students, he managed them in a different way.

> 'Under the University regulations, we can't make students come to classes. The only thing the University does is, students are assigned a tutor, and obviously if there is continuous absence, then the tutor will contact a student to find out what is wrong. But there's nothing that the University can actually do to say, 'You must come to class.' But ultimately it's the decision of the student' (Colin, British Staff Member).

Staff also expressed their concerns to give parents students' information.

> 'Over here, there is the Data Protection Act. So as soon as they are 18, they are adults. And strictly speaking, you're not allowed to give any information to their parents because they are 18' (Tom, British Staff Member).

Being self-disciplined was considered by some participants as a big challenge. This was exaggerated by some new features on the British campus. These were supposed to be facilitators but became 'double-edged', such as more **privacy** and easier access to the **internet**. In Southeast China University, students were asked to pass National Computing Rank Examination (Grade 2) and computing was one of the compulsory modules. However, students did not use computers a lot for their learning. Computing was used in the teaching, but mainly in showing slides. Apart from the report in Course Design, which was done by computer, most of the reports and homework were handwritten. Worrying that students might play PC games that affected their study, the University allowed the internet to be installed in the students' dormitory under strict conditions. In North Britain University, students were able to get access to the internet anywhere on campus. They use the internet a lot for their study. This came along with a problem: distraction. As Ping Ping has described:

> 'Here, it's so easy to just wander on the internet, checking email, chatting on QQ, surfing on facebook or Xiao Nei. I found time flying quickly' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Students, 2nd Interview).

Another 'double edged' factor is **'privacy'**. As compared in Table 5_1, all the students lived on campus in Southeast China University and four of them

Table 5_1 Comparison of General Features on Two Campuses

	Southeast China University	North Britain University
Facilities	Walls around the campus with gatekeepers at two entrances.	No walls. Open to the city.
	Library: Time limit.	Library: 24 Hours.
Accommodation	Four students live in one room.	Every student has an individual room.
	Roommates are from the same class.	Flatmates can be in different courses.
	Girls and boys live in different accommodations. Boys are not allowed to visit girls in their accommodation.	Flatmates could be boys or girls.
	No kitchen. Students have meals in canteens; sometimes go to restaurants or snack bars near campus.	With kitchens. Students normally cook for themselves; sometimes go to canteens on campus or restaurants outside campus.
Administration	Ban Zhu Ren is responsible for most of the administrative stuff. He also represents the power of the School and is assisted by students' parents.	Personal tutor provides academic development and pastoral care for students to enhance their academic and personal development. He is not allowed to contact parents without students' permission.
	Two monitors help Ban Zhu Ren to supervise the class. Eg. roll call and organize meetings.	Course reps support and represent the views of other students in the course through attending meetings with staff to ensure that staff take into account the concerns and needs of students.
Internet	Could have internet in the dormitory, but have strict regulations (eg. All the roommates have to pass the examinations in the first year) Use internet bar outside campus/at home during holidays Seldom use internet for study, expect the Course Design	Have access to the internet anywhere on campus/dormitory Use internet for the study

lived in one room with bunk beds. They slept on the lower bed and put books and luggage on the upper bed. Washrooms were shared by about 50 students on the same floor. There were no kitchens in the building. Students normally attended activities in the form of 'Dormitory Group'. They went to class, the library, the canteen, etc. with their roommates. In North Britain

University, students were dispatched to several accommodations near the University. They had their own room. Compared with their accommodation in China, these students had more privacy. Some students, like Fang Fang, could watch cartoons as late as she wanted without worrying about disturbing others. This had partly led to her failure of the academic year which will be discussed in Section 5.4.2.4.

5.4.1.2 Teaching and Learning Practices

The programme was accredited by the Institution of Engineering and Technology and successful graduates could become Associate Members of the Institution. Two weeks' after their arrival, students started their study on the new campus. Seven chose the course of *BEng (Hons) Communication and Electronic Engineering (CEE)* and the rest chose to take *BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE)*. However, apart from the module of Power, Machines and Instrumentation (EN0215) for CEE students and Distributed Circuit (EN0219) for EEE students, this group of students took their other five modules together. These included Electronic Product Development (EN0213), Data Communication & Transmission Systems (EN0214), Advanced Engineering Mathematics (CG0037), Microprocessor Systems & Digital Signal Processing (EN0217) and Analogue & Digital Electronics (EN0216). To facilitate students' transition to the new learning environment, the school provided the module of Language Support (CM0561) specifically for the programme students.

All the modules had a lecturing team of two to three staff. They put their slides on the E-learning Portal before the class. There was no text book, but a reading list with some reference books. Staff compiled their own hand-outs and gave students these at the beginning of the module. Assessment tasks, requirements and deadlines were informed in the first lecture. Students were expected to attend lecturers, seminars and laboratories. They needed to read lecture notes and suggested reference material after class. Seminars were new to students. They were divided into four or five groups and asked to attempt the seminar sheets with questions on E-learning portal before the seminar. Answers to those questions would be discussed in seminars, facilitated by a staff. Students were constantly comparing the teaching

practices of both campuses. Table 5_2 shows the main differences identified by the students.

Table 5_2 Comparison of Teaching and Learning Practices on Two Campuses

	Southeast China University	**North Britain University**
Teaching Language	English and Chinese	English
Delivery format	Lectures and laboratories	Lectures, seminars and laboratories
Lectures	Around 50 students Lecture theatre	Around 120 students Lecture theatre
Seminars	No. Lecturers will let students work out some problems in the class. It's imbedded in the lecture.	Yes. 3-5 groups. Seminar is considered as an important part of the teaching for students to ask questions.
Laboratories	Testing a result (90%) Course Design (10%)	Research based
Learning format	Direct learning and independent learning	Direct learning and independent learning
Teaching Hours	40 minutes per teaching hour 2-3 teaching hour per lecture 10-minute break when the bell rings	50 minutes per teaching hour 1-2 teaching hour per lecture No bell. Whether have break or not is decided by lecturers who might prefer to go through the whole session without break and leave the class earlier
Text book	One English text book One Chinese text book (recommended) Teaching was based on the textbooks	Reading list Hand-outs Professional website and magazines
Teaching facilities	Computer/Slides/Projector	Computer/Slides/Projector E-learning Portal
E-Learning Portal	No. Lecturers recommend students to do pre study of the text book before their teaching	Yes. Lecturers put the hand-outs on the E-learning Portal before the teaching
Teaching team	Individual teaching	Co-lecturing

Staff in North Britain University tended to keep the lectures more interactive. They set up slots in the class for questions. They believed that one student's question might be many students' question and 'students don't learn if they are just talked to all the time and they have got to do something to be more likely to get engaged and learn about the subject' (Eric, British Staff Member). An interactive atmosphere was believed to be able to facilitate the staff's teaching, especially in a large class.

'We'd like them to interrupt, to say, 'Can you just do that again? I didn't understand that bit.' Because if one says it then you know there are probably 30 other people thinking the same thing but don't say it. So as long as one says something then you can stop and say, 'Okay, let's go over this one more time' and then everybody gets the idea again' (Simon, British Staff Member).

However, the Articulation Programme students had their own philosophy for questioning in the class. First, they considered questions as a way for the staff to test knowledge, rather than to promote interaction. They were more interested in 'hard' questions than 'easy' ones. As Yan Yan has described:

'Sometimes the questions are too easy. For instance, once a lecturer asked 'what's $\sin\frac{\pi}{2}$?' Nobody gave him the answer. He got the cold shoulder and answered himself 'equals to 1' [Laughs]. You see. You don't have any sense of achievement' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Answering questions has been considered by some students as a way to show off. As Xiao Yong has pointed out:

'A maths teacher asked us questions, I didn't answer. Everybody can answer the question, why you stand up to answer it? Show off. Even if I know everything, I won't answer. Why should I answer the question? I know how to do it. That's fine' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

In fact, their questioning behaviour has been influenced by the teaching practices in the first two years in Southeast China University.

'We thought that the time in the class is limited. If we disrupt the lecturer, he may not finish his teaching in time. In addition, it's unfair for other students if my question takes up too much time. I'd ask questions after the class' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Students, 2nd Interview).

Teaching in the first two years in Southeast China University was very intense. Lecturers were asked to cover the learning points of the syllabus in allocated teaching hours. Because other compulsory classes had taken half of the teaching hours, staff felt they did not have enough time to deliver the material they had prepared.

'40 minutes is too tight. I need to finish my teaching task first. So I don't encourage them to ask questions in the class. They could ask questions after class' (Xin, Chinese Staff Member).

Because of the above concern, staff seldom built up a session in the teaching to interact with students in the class, but encouraged students to ask questions before or after the class. Therefore, in the class observed,

students paid attention to the teaching and took down notes. They normally asked questions during the break.

When students had questions about the teaching, they were more likely to continue the listening through which they try to find the answers. They engaged themselves in active learning. Therefore, not being interactive in the form of questioning in class does not mean they were passively listening to the lecturers' teaching. Students like Ping Ping and Xiao Ming found that with questions in mind, they became more active in classroom learning.

> 'When I have a question, I would like to keep it in my mind. Try to find the answers in the teachers' further explanation. I find I am more attentive with questions in mind' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Students, 2nd Interview).

> 'Many questions could be sorted out by reading after class. With the question in mind, I read more actively. I could also discuss it with my classmates. If we couldn't answer it, we'll ask the teachers' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Students, 2nd Interview).

This questioning behaviour influenced their learning approaches, as illustrated by Xiao Hua:

> 'I read the textbook before the class and mark down the things I don't understand, this will impel me to learn actively in the class trying to find the answers from the teaching. If I still couldn't figure it out, I'll ask the teachers during the break or after the class' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Students, 2nd Interview).

The impression these Articulation Programme students given to the British staff was that they were *quiet*, *shy* and *less interactive*, which linked to the presumption that 'they seem quite passive in the class, but obedient' (Frank, British Staff Member). However, as time passed, the staff noticed that these students did interact, but not at the time and place they had expected.

> 'What I have noticed is that I built in some time for questions and answers, and nobody asked anything. But as soon as the lecture finished, they all came to the front and asked me individually. I don't know if that was a cultural thing or not' (Frank, British Staff Member).

Asking questions not at the built-in time, but after the class, was considered by some staff as wasting time and lacking courage.

> 'I do get the odd students that do come up and ask me. They got the notes and what was all this about? But they should really ask me at the time. I would like it if they said, 'Can you do that again?' because if they are asking me then there must be at least 10 or 15 others who would want to ask the same point, but that they

haven't got the courage to ask so they go away and try and learn from friends' (Simon, British Staff Member).

In China, when the bell rings, normally the classes had a break. In the UK, there were no bells to stop the class. Staff had their own preferences. Some of them would like to finish the two-hour lecture without a break.

'I never break. I finish early so I usually do an hour and a half, because if you have a break and they go away, they've forgotten what we were talking about and you have to recap, 'This is what we're doing, this is where we were…' and so I intend to just carry on straight through to about half past' (Simon, British Staff Member).

'I think it's part of the language problem, they don't ask too many questions in the class, but they do ask questions after I finish. And I don't mind doing this [having a break] but sometimes it becomes hectic if I have another class to go to' (Louise, British Staff Member).

There was a conflict that these students were 'quiet' when staff wanted them to 'ask', but 'ask' when staff expected they should be 'quiet'. As presented before, being 'quiet' in the class did not mean being passive in learning. Some staff attributed students' asking questions after class to culture (Frank), language problems (Louise) or lack of courage (Simon). Data collected in this research found that learning and teaching behaviour might be about 'habits' not 'culture'. As we have discussed above, due to the limited teaching hours, the teaching practices in Southeast China University have made the students form the habit to ask questions after class. Students also took questions as a way of testing knowledge in class, rather than a way to interact with the staff. When the teaching practices changed in the UK, some students made relevant changes to join in with the new classroom culture. Some were still keeping silent in the class or asking questions after class. Data collected from this research does not show the differences of two kinds of questioning behaviour in affecting students' academic performance. Some students became more reliant on their peers. Their different ways of interaction with the classroom environment will be discussed in Section 5.4.2.

5.4.1.3 Comparison of Assessment Practices on Two Campuses
There were some similarities and differences between the assessment practices in North Britain University and what students experienced in the first two years in Southeast China University (see Table 5_3).

Table 5_3 Comparison of Assessment Practices on Two Campuses

	Southeast China University (Year 1 and 2)	North Britain University (Year 3 and 4)
Formative Assessment	Mid-term examination; Homework	Lab reports; MCQs; Seminar Questions
Exam questions	Compulsory to finish all	Have choices (eg. 8 questions attempt 5)
Examination Time Each Year	4 times: 2 middle-term exams 2 final-term exams	Once At the end of the academic year
Previous assessment paper provided	No. Examples will be given during the teaching.	Yes. Previous 5 years.
Tutorial before exams	Yes.	Yes.
Marking criteria	Not provided in paper, but will be explained in the tutorial before exams.	Yes.
Feedback on Assessed work	Middle-term examination paper will be explained in the class. Final examination paper will give the mark only.	Group feedback will be posted on the E-learning Portal. Individual feedback will be given.
Confidentiality of Grades	Students will be ranked based on the academic performance. Not confidential. Parents will be informed.	Confidential. Parents will not be informed.
Grade Category	Distinction: over 90% Commendation 80-89% Clear Pass: 70-79% Pass: 60-69% Fail: under 60%	Distinction: over 70% Commendation: 60-69% Clear Pass: 50-59% Pass: 40-49% Fail: under 40%
Scholarship System	Will be awarded according to the ranking based on the academic score, attendance, extra work done for the collective and award. 1st class scholarship: Top 3 2nd class scholarship: No. 4-9 3rd class scholarship: No.10-23	Will be awarded according to the academic score: 1st class scholarship: over 70% 2nd class scholarship: over 60%
Degree Classification	Pass: over 60% Failed: under 60%	First Class: over 70% 2:1: 60-69%; 2:2: 50-59% 3rd : 40-49%

As students moved from the 1st stage of study to the 2nd stage of study, the requirement and format of the assessments were different. Some of the differences in practice were due to different stages of academic requirement rather than being purely influenced by a 'culture of learning'. Most of the assessments in the first two years were closely connected to the textbook used in each module. Every core module had one lecturer. They chose the text book for their modules according to the syllabus. Teaching and learning

were based on the textbook. No other hand-outs were given. In the class, lecturers used Power Point slides to assist their teaching. Students were asked to take down notes. After theory explanation, they taught the examples in the book step by step. Sometimes they asked students to do some questions in the class, and check the answer afterwards. Homework was normally made up of the exercises in the textbook. Students answered them and submitted for feedback once or twice a week. The majority of the exam questions were based on the format of the examples in the textbook or homework.

The term of 'formative assessment' was not familiar to the Chinese staff. There was no specific format for this kind of assessment in the curriculum. However, there were four examinations in one academic year in China, twice a semester. Feedback was given after the exam. Mid-term examinations, as well as the fortnightly submitted homework, were considered by staff and students as ways to check the progress. Therefore they resembled the functions of formative assessment. Students found that the different practices of marking lines, scholarship system, degree classification system, formative assessments, and new requirements of assessment had influenced their learning.

Grade Categories
Grade categories were higher in China. At Southeast China University, there were two semesters in each academic year. The first semester started from September to January, and the second semester started from February or March (normally two weeks after Chinese New Year) until the end of June. Students had two rounds of examinations in each semester, and these happened in the middle and at the end. The weight of assessment consists of middle-term exam (20%), final-term exam (50%), experiments (20%) and homework with attendance (10%). The pass mark was 60%. 80% was commendation and 90% was distinction. Students must pass experiments; otherwise they will fail the module even if their overall score is over 60%.

Students expected higher marks than they achieved in the UK. Xiao Hua who always received 90% in China, could not accept the fact that one of his first reports 'only' got 80% which was a brilliant score in the class. '80%

doesn't sound good enough. In my mind, distinction is over 90%' (Xiao Hua). He set up a higher standard for himself and worked hard toward it. At the end of the first academic year, his average score for all the modules was 83%. Xiao Jie had a different opinion:

> 'The passing line is only 40%. That's easy. We used to have to pass 60% in China' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Here, Xiao Jie did not realize that the lower marking lines did not mean the lowering of the assessment standards. This misunderstanding gave him a kind of false sense of security, which had influenced his attitude towards study. He did not devote enough effort to his study, which led to his failure in his modules (see Section 5.4.2.4).

Scholarship Systems

Scholarship as a kind of honour was important to these students' motivation. At Southeast China University, they were put into a rank according to their academic score at the end of each semester. Parents were updated by texts sent by Ban Zhu Ren. Student committee members could get some points for their contribution to class administration. Students absent from a class would be deducted by two points. Students worked hard to get the scholarship.

> 'My motivation is to get the scholarship. I think all the girls in my dormitory have the same goal. It's not only for the money, but the certificate which will be helpful for my future. My parents were very happy each time I showed them the certificates' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Scholarships and certificates were evidence of hard work and a reward to parents' high expectation. Meanwhile, students positioned themselves in the group according to the league. They compared their achievement with other classmates.

> 'I studied very hard in the first semester because I didn't know others' actual ability. After the examinations, I was in the top five. I felt secure. I knew I couldn't drop to the bottom' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Once the group position was set up, students at the top felt secure, while students at the bottom felt that it was hard for them to beat the top 3 and win the 1st scholarship. This was different in North Britain University. To award students' academic achievement in study, the School set up the 'Dean's

Award' for international students. Students could qualify for the 1st

scholarship if they achieved an average of 70% or higher for the year.

Theoretically speaking, every student had the chance to win the prize if they

achieved the standard.

> 'I want to get the 1st prize scholarship. Not for the money, but for
> the honour. In the first two years, we were put into a ranking list.
> We were constantly competing with each other. Here, we don't
> have the concept of ranking. You get 70%. You get the Distinction.
> We all have the chance to win. We're willing to have discussion
> with other classmates because all of us could make progress and
> get benefit from the discussion. There is less vicious competition'
> (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Ping Ping compared her academic performance with the standard rather

than someone else. This had greatly enhanced her motivation. The other

practice which has the same effect is the degree classification system.

Degree Classification System

There is no degree classification system in Southeast China University.

Students who successfully graduate from the University will get the same

degree.

> 'The certificates are the same no matter you get 90% or 60%. The
> employers won't ask to see your grades. So pass is OK' (Xiao
> Yong, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

To get a postgraduate offer, students need to pass the National

Postgraduate Entrance Examination. For students who aim to get an offer,

great effort will be devoted to passing the high-stake Examination.

> 'In China, to get an offer for a master course, you need to pass the
> National Postgraduate Entrance Examination. So many students
> focus on the Examination. While here, universities will see all your
> academic scores in your undergraduate study. To get a first class,
> you need to be excellent in all the modules. So I have to work
> harder throughout these years' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese
> Student, 3rd Interview).

> 'Here, they don't have the ranking, but the degree classification.
> I'm aiming to get a first class for my degree, first scholarship and
> get an offer from Oxford or Cambridge. My parents will feel proud
> of me' (Min Min, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

As Ping Ping and Min Min have pointed out, getting a good class degree in

the UK might help students to get a better offer for their Masters course. The

classification is based on their academic performance in every module. This

has cut the big task (getting first class) into small tasks (getting over 70% in

every module). The risk has been lowered and the tasks are easier to achieve. Obtaining a better classification in the degree has encouraged students to study hard all through the course.

Formative Assessment Practices

Students experienced different types of assessment practices in North Britain University, which are shown in Table 5_4.

Table 5_4 Assessment Practices in Different Modules

Modules	Assessment
Advanced Engineering Mathematics (CG0037)	Final Examination 100%: eight questions, attempt five. Questions are of equal value.
Data Communication & Transmission Systems (EN0214)	Laboratories 30% Final Examination 70%: 40 MCQs; Seven questions, attempt three. Questions are of equal value. One formative assessment by MCQ test after the 1st semester to highlight the basic knowledge that students should know prior to the formal examination.

Microprocessor Systems & Digital Signal Processing (EN0217)	Semester 1
	Laboratory 10%
	Assignment 40%
	Semester 2
	Examination: 50%
	    2 questions 50% + 25 out of 40 MCQs 50%
	Assignment 10%
	    Two laboratory scripts of equal marks

Analogue & Digital Electronics (EN0216)	2 Labworks on Analogue/Digital: formative 2 Labworks on Analogue/Digital: 30% Examination: 70%
Power, Machines and Instrumentation (EN0215)	2 labworks 30% Examination: 70%; 8 questions and attempt 5 with minimum of 2 from each section.
Distributed Circuit (EN0219)	Laboratory 30% Examination: 70%; 8 questions and attempt 5
Electronic Product Development (EN0213)	Preliminary Design Review 20% Intermediate Design Review 45% Final Design Review 35% (Report 20%; Attendance 5%; Presentation 10%)
Language Support (CM0561)	Non-credit No test.

Apart from Language Support (CM0561), which was a non-credit module, five out of the seven key modules assessed students in the form of summative assessment (laboratories assessments, examinations, assignments, group reports and presentation) and formative assessment (Laboratories, MCQs and seminar questions). Although examination was still the main assessment tool, some laboratories and Multiple Choice Questions were given during the year to highlight the basic knowledge that students

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should know prior to the formal examination. The continuous assessment practices in Module EN0219 drove students to identify the deficiency they had and gave them the direction to improve their learning during the study process. Students could manage their time evenly during the term, rather than 'cramming' for examinations at the end.

New Requirements of Assessment in the Lab: being Independent and Critical

The most challenging part in the assessment was being independent in the lab. Staff were there to facilitate research in the workshop. Students could not get solutions from the staff. They were asked to find the answers themselves. This was different from the verification tasks they did in the first two years.

> 'We were told to make an amplifying circuit. We need to think why to make it, how to make it, the theories we need, the formula for calculating, the components we need, etc. Basically, everything. Most of the experiments in the first two years have told us what to do and how to do. We needn't think much, just follow the instruction steps by steps and note down the results. Course design is different, but has given us the circuit. We only need to calculate the parameters and choose the components. If we couldn't work it out, our teachers will tell us. Here, some of my classmates think the teachers are waiting to see us make mistakes. It's not easy to adapt to it at the beginning' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Apart from being independent in learning, being critical in report writing was another challenge. The laboratories students completed were mainly verifying tests in the first two years. In the reports, students wrote down the facts and steps of the experiments they had followed without much reflection and interpretation of the results. Moving onto the next stage of study, the laboratory tasks became research-based, which required students to be more critical about the results they obtained in the experiment.

> 'We were asked to reflect more on what we have done. Getting the result is just the first step. We have to interpret it and be critical about it. What are the conclusions from this lab? How does the practical experiment compare with theoretical results? What are the reasons for any differences? Writing a report was not easy, not because of the language, but the critical thinking inside' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

As Xiao Hua has found, critical thinking was more challenging than the language in report writing. Many students did not have a clue at the

beginning of the academic year. Lecturers explained the format and requirements of the report writing in the first class.

> 'I don't want them to write a report which comes in and I just scratch it all off and then they get disillusioned and disheartened. And I tell them at the start, 'This is what I'm expecting' and I also send an email out to all the students when they've had to do their submission, with further instructions as to what they have to do, then hopefully they will follow it… the next reports are better. And really, it's leading them to their final year thesis' (Simon, British Staff Member).

As Simon pointed out, he had tried to give students instruction and feedback on their first report. Students were supposed to use the feedback to improve their next report, gradually leading to a successful final thesis. However, as we will discuss in Section 5.4.2, feedback was treated differently by different groups of students.

Apart from the above five practices, some factors have also influenced students' transferring learning experiences. For example, attendance and homework have been included in the assessment in China, with a weight of 10%. If students were absent for one-third of the class, they would not be allowed to take the final examination. Homework, which was assigned every two weeks, had been marked and registered. However, the attendance and seminar questions were not considered in the students' academic score in North Britain University. Fang Fang and Xiao Jie's failure in their academic year was partly attributed to this. This will be discussed in Section 5.4.2.4.

5.4.2 Three Patterns of Students' Interaction with the New Learning Environment

This section will discuss the different responses from students to the changes in the new learning environment. Three patterns of their interaction were identified, which led them to different outcomes at the end of their transition. They are **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction** and **Avoiding Interaction**. Within each pattern, there are also some varying responses.

5.4.2.1 Direct Interaction

Students in this group were willing to interact with the new learning environment directly. They were highly motivated and intended to get a first-class degree and a postgraduate offer from the top universities around the

world. They chose to have dialogues with staff regardless of their language competence. They identified the requirements of the learning and assessments themselves. They sought the feedback from the staff, and sometimes from their peers. They also provided 'tutorials' to their peers. Students who have actively prepared for their study abroad are in this group.

Response to the changes in general features

As presented in Section 5.4.1.1, the new administrative feature in North Britain University required students to be self-disciplined. Furthermore, easier access to the **internet** and more **privacy** gave students more distractions from their study. This was true with this group of students, such as Ping Ping. She realized that surfing the internet had taken her a lot of time.

> 'I forced myself to be away from the internet, just focused on the study. Our Ban Zhu Ren and the students above told us in China that there won't be anyone to discipline us. We have to take the responsibility ourselves. But it's hard, you know, we use computer a lot for our study. So I use one-hour surfing online as a reward after several hours study and it works' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Ping Ping demonstrated that the 'preventive injection' of self-disciplinary in the UK, given by their Ban Zhu Ren and senior students in China, had some effect. She found a method to avoid the distraction. The strategy she used was to identify the priority of her tasks and set up a time boundary, in which she had improved her time management skills.

For some students, like Xiao Qiang and Min Min, parents' expectation and expensive tuition fees made them become more disciplined.

> 'I used to idle around during the term in the first two years. My parents and the lecturers always pushed us to study and study. I was not bothered. But when I get here, I just find I want to study. My parents have spent so much money. I can't waste their money' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

> 'My parents always give me the best education. Although they ask me not to put pressure on myself or worry about the fees, I still couldn't help. When I think of them working hard, I can't help blaming myself. I didn't realize that last year, now I understand them more' (Min Min, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Students here mentioned the high tuition fees paid by their parents and the expectations arising from that. Studying abroad, the annual tuition fee increased from around £2,000 to £7,000. Accommodation and maintenance

fees were almost twenty times that of in China. It was unnecessary for them to find a part-time job to pay these fees. They received full financial support from their parents. Their understanding of this kind of parental expectation increased with growing age and change of the environment. These students learned to take responsibility for themselves. They responded better to being 'free' and 'unwatched'.

Response to the Changes in Teaching and Learning Practices

The prominent change in the teaching and learning practices in the new learning environment was the teaching language. All the modules were delivered in English. Unlike the bilingual education in China, where either students or teachers could go back to Chinese when faced with difficulties, English was the only medium in the communication between staff and the students. Students who have been preparing for their study abroad actively felt easy in class.

> 'For most of my classmates, the biggest obstacle is to couple the two versions of the terminology. We know most of the technical parts, but it's hard to reflect the phenomenon immediately when you heard the English. So I read the hand-outs before the class and try to remember the English definition. In fact, I started to build up my academic vocabulary when I was in China. I think this really helps' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Like Ping Ping, Xiao Ming and Xiao Hua also prepared for lessons before the class, which has given them more confidence in the class.

> 'I borrowed books on the reading list and read through the chapters that our teachers were going to cover in the following lecture. I looked up the words I didn't know in the dictionary' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Xiao Hua, who had adapted to bilingual education very well in China, felt excited after his first class.

> 'My learning approach works here too! I borrowed books from the library before the class. Data Communication. I thought it will be very abstract, but after the reading, I felt it was not that difficult. After the lecture, it became easy. The teachers put the hand-outs on the Blackboard. I went through them before the class. This makes my study in the class more efficient' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Xiao Hua here used the resources provided by the University to enhance his learning. The active attitude towards pre-departure preparation also helped his academic transition in the UK.

> 'I think the two years' study in China provided me with a solid foundation for the main modules, such as Electronics, Electronic Machinery and Mathematics. If I had come here to learn those modules without any previous knowledge, I would have died like a dog' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Another change is the different practice of asking and answering questions in class. In the initial stage, these students did not realize that they could save questions for the seminar. They still did what they did in China, asking questions right after the class. As not many lecturers had a break between the classes, students highly valued the time after the whole session. Their classroom behaviours affected the learning experience of the existing cohort in the class, which will be discussed in Chapter 6. In the observation conducted during the second and final terms, some of the students had picked up the requirements of classroom interactions and interacted with the staff more in the class. Xiao Hua and Xiao Ming were two examples.

> 'I find here students can just sit in their seats and prompt the questions instantly. You don't need to put up your hands. I answer the questions when I know the answers. Sometimes, the teachers can come down to us to have a discussion. I also like seminar where you have smaller groups and better discussion with tutors' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

> 'I normally sit in the first row and ask questions when I have. Once in Data Communication, I didn't agree with the solution given by the teacher and we had a discussion. It turned out that he forgot to give us a parameter which had misled me' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Other students in this group still remained in their previous habit of asking questions after class. As discussed in Section 5.4.1.2, data collected from this research does not show the differences of two kinds of questioning behaviour in affecting students' academic performance. Students in this group asked their lecturers questions straight away. These students normally had competence in the English language. Thus, they were able to interact with staff directly. However, some students, like Xiao Qiang, whose English was not very good, still chose to face the challenge directly.

> 'My English is poor and I didn't get a good score in the language test. It's very hard for me to organise my words when I have a question. But I think apart from getting the degree, improving English is also my aim. I explain my questions slowly to the teachers by pointing to the equations on the blackboard. Some of them are very patient and give me answers clearly. There is only

once I felt very uncomfortable. One teacher cleaned the blackboard while I was asking him a question. I think he might be in a hurry to go to another class. Anyway, I prefer to ask teachers questions to get the answers while improving my English' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Through **Direct Interaction**, the presence of this large cohort of Chinese students also motivated some of the academic staff to modify their teaching to adjust to the students' learning. Staff identified that some Chinese students lack practical skills in the laboratory, report writing and presentations. Although they were good at line-by-line Mathematics, they were weak in interpreting the results. Thus, in the first couple of weeks staff were trying to help these students make up for their deficiencies. Simon explained the criteria and format of the report step by step; Eric instructed basic practical skills with the equipment used in the laboratory; Tom put a mathematic problem into an Engineering context to encourage students to interpret the results they have got. In assessment practices, they also made great effort to provide more formative feedback. Students appreciated the help from staff.

> 'Before I came, I was told that it was not easy to find staff. You need to make an appointment. But when I came here, I found the lecturers were willing to help us. They're very patient. I came across a professor on the corridor. I asked him something about the work placement. He spent more than one hour to explain it, which was very nice' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese student, 3rd Interview).

> 'Getting my first report, I went to see the lecturer to clarify the comments he made on my report. He explained them one by one and told me why he marked me down by one point here or two points there' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Through interaction, staff gradually recognized the strength of these students as well. At the end of the term, staff gave very positive evaluation towards this group of students: they were hard working, determined to succeed, and committed to learning with good knowledge of Physics and Maths.

> 'I'm quite surprised actually, the Chinese group, just for the first report. They are much better than the English students. They had a first report; when was it? I think it was about two weeks ago, and I gave all the students a chance that if they did it two weeks earlier that I could look through it and tell them what they'd done wrong and what's going to help improve it. The Chinese students did that. The English students thought, 'Oh well I don't need it. I'll do it myself' (Eric, British Staff Member).

Some lecturers noticed the strengths of the Chinese students and adapted their approaches to teaching accordingly. For example, Tom, a British staff member noted:

> 'My teaching style changed a little bit when the Chinese students arrived because I would say that I lecture or teach slightly differently, depending on the group of students in front of me. ... If I know there are some good students in there, which is certainly the case with Chinese students, I will tend to give one or two more difficult problems or do something that will puzzle them, to make them think a bit more' (Tom, British Staff Member).

Students' final assessment results showed that the standard of the course has improved, owing to the Chinese students' participation in it. 45 of the 50 participants gained over 70 per cent in Mathematics. In terms of the average score for the six modules, 19 students achieved over 70 per cent, which is the standard of a first class award. Staff appreciated their participation

> 'This group are committed to learning and to score high marks. It's brilliant for the University because we say that the students are scoring top marks, brilliant for staff that they can say, 'Okay, out of my group, all the average is up because of the Chinese students' and that is superb for us as a University and we can be proud of this group. I know for a fact that some of last year's group in the final they scored First Class and they got the top of the project, marks of distinction, so that is superb. So keep sending more students! [Laughs]. We need them; we need good quality students' (Ben, British Staff Member).

Through lecturing students who have studied the same modules in another university abroad, staff have noticed the difference in academic performance between the home students and the Chinese Articulation Programme students. Some of them started to be more critical of the education system in the UK.

> 'It's a bit like football. What you don't see when you watch a football match is, all the training that goes on. The Premiership footballers are that good because they train hard all the time, they practise their skills and do things over and over again until they are really good. And then you see them in the match and think, "Oh, good footballers" but they had to do all this training. … We've not quite got that right over here at the moment and I think there's not enough training' (Tom, British Staff Member).

Response to the Changes in New Assessment Practice

Compared with their first stage of study in Southeast China University, the second stage of study at North Britain University required students to be

more independent and critical in lab experiments and report writing. Students, like Xiao Ming, took the challenges as opportunities to enhance their independence in learning and research ability.

> 'These circuits have similar structure with different characteristic features. We need to work out their slight difference through experiments and to decide which one to choose in the application. We have to try many times before we get it. It's like we're doing research' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Through independent research-based experiments, students digested and absorbed what they had learnt in the class. After the workshop, students went back to the laboratories, which were open to them anytime during week days. Students in this group finished their reports independently. For instance, Xiao Ming highlighted the requirements and followed them step by step. Xiao Dong and Xiao Hua went to the laboratories whenever they had time. Xiao Qiang asked tutors for feedback.

> 'Writing the report is not easy; I have to look up the dictionary constantly. This is not the biggest issue. Teachers emphasised many times: be critical, be critical. I didn't have any idea about it. So I asked them many times and showed them my work asking for feedback. Gradually, I think it means never taking your results for granted' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Students' first reports were not as good as they had expected. When the report came back, there is not only a summative score on the cover page, but formative feedback given by the lecturers. These students first wanted the staff to clarify the feedback, and then used it to make an improvement for the next report. Xiao Hua, who achieved 80% for his report, went to the lecturer to go through the feedback step by step. Xiao Qiang, who has asked the lecturers to clarify the requirements many times, got over 70%. When he got the feedback he still went to see the lecturer for further feedback.

> 'I was thinking how to improve my next report. I wanted to know why here he marked me down by one point, why there he marked me down by two points. I wanted to know the mark standard clearly' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Through writing their first report and getting feedback from their tutors, they became familiar with the requirements of being critical. Feedback here was to help students to improve their next reports. The function of feedback can also be seen in the following case. Yan Yan, Ling Ling and Li Li used to 'cram' for examinations. They waited until the last minute, relied on the

textbooks, remembered the examples and could 'sail' through the examinations. They studied to pass the exams. The assessment task was not challenging, which they could cope with without putting in too much effort during the term. When students moved on to the next stage of study in the UK, they realized that their learning approaches did not work in the UK.

> 'Lecturers will check our answers in seminars. After several seminars, I found if I didn't review the lesson after class, I couldn't work out the questions' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

> 'I thought MCQs will be a piece of cake. But after the test, I found they were more than A, B, C, D. You need to understand the theory very well before making the choices' (Ling Ling, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

What Yan Yan and Ling Ling referred to are the formative assessment practices encouraged in North Britain University. Different formats of assessment were held along the process of teaching and learning to give ongoing feedback to guide students' learning, such as laboratories and seminars. For instance, Module EN0214 (Data Communication and Transmission System) and EN0219 (Distributed Circuit Theory and Communications circuits) gave students formative assessments by MCQ test after the 1st semester to highlight the basic knowledge that students should know prior to the formal examination. Module EN0216 (Analogue and Digital Electronics) asked students to submit two pieces of lab work to get familiar with report writing. Formative assessment was via tutorial questions given at regular intervals and within the laboratory sessions. In Module EN0217 (Microprocessor Systems and Digital Signal Processing), practical exercises and MCQ tests were carried out during seminar sessions to provide instant feedback to students. These practices enabled students to constantly check their performance with the requirements of the module, and helped to manage their time during the term. Students gave positive feedback to these practices, especially the assessment of the group project on Module EN0213.

> 'We are more interactive with the lecturer at weekly workshop where they give us feedback to our progress. We could use their feedback to our first report to improve our next report' (Ping Ping, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

> 'As a team leader in our group, I have to study harder. Three reports and each builds upon the content of the previous report. It

cuts my time into small slots and makes me feel I have task to do every week' (Li Li, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

In the observations, there were more collaborative activities in this module. Students met their group members regularly outside the class. Some groups, like Xiao Ming's, set up online chat group because they lived in different accommodation.

> 'We exchange information instantly. Any useful information I get, I'll forward it to my group members. Our tutor gave some supportive information. But we still need to go to the library to read the books on the reading list. We'll end up with reading other books that are not on the reading list. We have to surf online to identify the market, do a survey on the street or contact a company at home country to get some suggestions' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

In coping with the assessment, these students directed their own learning path. They had a great sense of achievement at the end of the module. Xiao Ming had always wanted to be a manager in the future. He became a team leader in his group. He distributed different tasks to his group members according to their own strong points. He highlighted each item of the assessment standards and chose a group member to be responsible for it. He believed that this module had let him practice his management skills, something he had really wanted to do but had not previous got the chance.

> 'I like to learn something about team management, but haven't got a chance. Now I was chosen to be the group leader. I set up online chat group just for our group project and exchange information there. I motivate my group members that we'll finish the best project in the class. I borrowed books about risk assessment, marketing, engineering, etc., and marked down the part I think they should know. I think the experience will be useful for my future career' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

At the end of the group presentation, one professor asked Xiao Hua's group a question. Xiao Hua gave his answer, but the professor did not agree. Xiao Hua stood up to defend his answer, even if he knew that this professor was going to mark his presentation and final report. In the final interview, he told me proudly that,

> 'After one year's research, I believe I'm an expert in my area. He [the professor] has his reasons, I have mine. I don't think I'm wrong. I'll do more to convince him' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Students felt the result of the assessment, not the mark but the designed product and the process to design the product with other students, was useful. *'It's something you can and you want to use in the future'* (Xiao Ming). Some even considered developing their ideas as potential business opportunities in the future.

The design of the assessments had increased students' learning motivation. Students had been attracted by the learning itself, as shown by Xiao Hua:

> 'I used to care more about the ranking. I worked hard to achieve a high score. Now I don't care about the score. My second report of Electronic Machinery only weighs 10%, but I spent a whole week in the lab. I don't care how much the core is. The requirement of the reports is very interesting. So I like to spend time on it' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

From caring about the score to being interested in the learning itself, and from learning for the examination to learning for the future, students' study objectives changed. Their concept on the function of the assessment changed as well.

> 'I study to get a placement and find a job in the future because many companies value the working experience gaining in the placement. I used to study just for the examination. But now I think more about my future' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

These students also became the 'tutors' to their classmates. They provides peer support to facilitate the learning in the class. As Xiao Hua has explained:

> 'Sometimes, I have to explain the solution to 5 or 6 classmates...I earnt a lot through the teaching. To know something is one case, to teach something well is another case... I won't give my report to them. I have spent long time on my work. Sometimes, a whole week. They can ask me questions, but can't copy my work. And they told me there is a software to check our work' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Through tutoring his peers, Xiao Hua enhanced his understanding of the learning. Moreover, what Xiao Hua demonstrates here is the concern of plagiarism. North Britain University has adopted the software, Turnitin, to help students avoid plagiarism in their work. In the practices, some modules have not adopted the software. As many of the tasks are the same every year, some students could ask the reports from the students above and make slight changes. When students are blamed to make plagiarism in learning, we might ask why the lecturers do not design new tasks in teaching.

If the tasks are different, students might think 'I'll just take this report as reference to see the format. I need to do it myself, as the tasks are different'.

In general, participants who had intrinsic motivation or internalized extrinsic motivation demonstrated great autonomy in their coping with the challenges brought by the different features and teaching practices on the new campus. However, not all the participants had taken **Direct Interaction** with the new learning environment. Their different journeys are discussed in the following two sections.

5.4.2.2 Indirect Interaction

Facing changes in the new learning environment, students like Xiao Yu and Xiao Yong were reluctant to interact with the new learning environment directly, but prefer **Indirect Interaction** through their classmates. This is largely because of their language deficiency, passive attitude towards studying abroad and insufficient pre-departure preparation.

Response to the Changes in General Features

As presented in Section 5.2.3, Xiao Yu and Xiao Yong were reluctant to study abroad due to their language deficiency. They applied for accommodation with their own classmates. They spent most of their time hanging around within the circle of their classmates coming from Southeast China University. These students became the medium for them to communicate with outside world.

> 'Five of my flatmates are from my own class. It's very convenient. We go shopping together, share the bills, and take turns to cook. I needn't speak English very much. Students in Cohort 05 took us to open bank account and register for the police' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

> 'I hang out a lot with my classmates. My English is worse than before, because I seldom use it here. You pick up food in the supermarket and pay at the casher. The only thing you need to understand is how much you need to pay' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Both Xiao Yu and Xiao Yong showed that their language ability was not improved due to the absence of direct interaction with the new environment. Acting as a group, they were influenced greatly by their classmates.

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'I play PC games a lot in my own room. Time is flying. Xiao Dong asks me to go to class or library together.' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

'I am not absent from class a lot. My friends attend class, so I go with them' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Unlike students in the previous group who were self-disciplined in the new learning environment, these students' behaviour was influenced by their peers. This was especially evidenced in their strategies to cope with the new challenges in learning.

Response to the changes in teaching and learning practices

Unlike students in the previous group, this group of students preferred to go back to Chinese books they took from home or turn to their peers for help when they were stuck with the learning. As Xiao Yu has noted:

'I still prefer to read the Chinese textbooks. I got *Electronics, Electronic Machinery* and Advanced Mathematics with me and all the notes I took in China. My head was muddled in the first week. I waited till Xiao Ming understood the teaching, and then asked him to explain it for me. I used to communicate a lot with teachers when I was in China, but now I prefer to discuss with my classmates. I think it's because of my language' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

His problem in English has hindered his interaction with the staff.

'My language holds me up. I don't know how to organize the words. I don't know how to express many Engineering symbols in English. Xiao Dong and I live in the same flat and he has helped me a lot. Xiao Ming is our team leader and I ask him a lot. They read English books and will sometimes tell me what they have read. Reading will take me so much time' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Although students were alerted in China that there was going to be more self-directed learning in North Britain University, Xiao Yu still felt that it was not easy to meet these requirements in the UK.

'They [British staff] had taught us several times when we were in China and I know I need to learn more on my own. But I found they always want you to guess. They don't tell you the correct answer. They won't give you the things you need to learn. They didn't tell us as thoroughly as our Chinese teachers did. I miss my Chinese teachers' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Xiao Yu's insufficient preparation in academic English blocked his understanding of the teaching in the UK. His reluctance to participate in bilingual education affected his learning in the UK. He was not confident in

English, which hindered his communication with the staff. This was true with Xiao Yong:

'When I found I couldn't understand the teaching, I didn't want to continue. English makes me feel headache. You have to look up dictionary constantly. I wrote what I wanted to write in Chinese first, then put it into Google online translation, made some changes and copied the English translation to the report' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

These students' interaction with the staff was rarely to see. The deficiency in language pushed them to rely more on their Chinese classmates. Their attitude represents a whole group of students, which can be noted from the following quotation.

'I think the classmates I hang out most just want to fool around and get the degree. We never ask teachers. Something we can't understand, we ask the good students. (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

In the class, when they could not understand the teaching, they constantly sought help from their peers. This caused more noise in the class and complaints from the existing cohort of students (see Section 6.2.3.3).

Response to the Changes in Assessment Practices

Unlike students in the first group, who coped with the changes in assessment practices independently, students in this group asked for help from their classmates when they had difficulties in finishing the experiments or reports.

'I have more questions here in the lab and sometime get stuck there for a long time. My classmates who are top students are very helpful. We have discussion and it will help me to detect problems and find the solutions. I know I should work it out myself, but I didn't copy theirs. I get a lot from the discussion' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

When Xiao Yu was not sure whether the results he got were correct or whether his writing was what the tutors wanted, he preferred to have discussion with his classmates, especially those who were independent in the previous group. In a way, seeking help from the peers had become a surviving strategy for these students like. However, their habit of 'cramming' for examinations did not change.

'I need to go over everything before the exam. I can't sleep last night. I'm not in a good status in the exam. Hope I could pass all. I don't think I learn a lot this year' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

However, in the Module EN0213, where students were divided into groups to make a project together, they behaved differently.

> 'I learned a lot from the project. Even if I copied something from the internet, I still need to understand it to give the presentation and answer the questions from the examiners. Most of us felt that we had learnt a lot. For instance, we didn't use computer software a lot in China, but for this project, we used a lot' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Xiao Yu's group got 71%. He was a team member of Xiao Ming's group.

> 'In our group, I'm responsible for information searching. I think Xiao Ming saw me on the internet all the time. Search information might be my strong point, which is correct. This is a long continuous work. The disadvantage of exams is that some of the students won't study during the term, but wait till the deadline and then cram for exams. They only focus on some learning points that the lecturers mentioned in the revision class. They can't learn much. While for this module, we are constantly focusing on the project for the whole year. The most important thing is that we can understand it better' (Xiao Yu, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Although Xiao Yu and Xiao Yong seemed to be passive in their communication with staff, they were still very active to seek support from their classmates. They chose to avoid direct interaction with staff and the challenges they face, but instead conducted **Indirect Interaction** through their peers. Although they were not as keen as the students in the first group to interact with the learning environment directly, they still sailed through the academic year with the help of their peers and their own effort. However, some other students, who had passively prepared for their study abroad, failed.

5.4.2.4 Avoiding Interaction
Students in this group shared some of the common features of the students in the above group. Their interaction with the new environment relied largely on their peers. However, the indirect interaction through peers was rare to see during the term except before the examination week. They misinterpreted the information and misjudged the amount of effort they need to put in to achieve their goals and had a rosy picture based on selected information passed by the students above. They retracted into a 'self-believed safe circle' fostered by the double-edged factor '**peer support**'.

Response to the Changes in General Features

Double-edged factors, such as **'Internet'** and **'privacy',** have been distracting to this group of participants. Students like Xiao Feng, Fang Fang and Xiao Jie found it was hard to stay away from the distraction.

> 'I didn't go to the library, because I can't use some software on the university computer, such as 'Ping Mu Qu Ci' (instant translation). So I prefer to use my computer in the dormitory. Here we have more privacy, but it might be too much. I mean no one to disturb you. You don't know whether other classmates are studying or not. You can easily idle away your time by clicking on the links of website news one after another. Hours past and you won't notice. I tried to give it up, but I couldn't' (Xiao Feng, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

As discussed in Section 5.2.3, Xiao Feng's father was very strict with him and used to sit beside him to observe him doing homework. He was reliant on this kind of compulsion, which pushed him to be more efficient. In Southeast China University, his Ban Zhu Ren could inform his parents of his performance. This was not the case in the UK.

> 'If I didn't do well in the exam, my father would ask me to tell him what I had done wrong. Then he would keep an eye on me all the summer holiday and force me to study. But now he can't ring my teachers here to ask about my performance' (Xiao Feng, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Without his father's and personal tutor's supervision, Xiao Feng felt his life in the UK was more relaxing. At this time, he started to be distracted by the internet.

> 'There're links one after another. You don't need to think anything when you read the webpage. I could spend hours reading the rubbish news. When I get used to the jumping among websites without thinking, it's hard for me to go deep with the study. I knew I shouldn't do it, but I just couldn't stop. I didn't study well because I didn't sleep well. Feel very tired during the day as I surf online a lot' (Xiao Feng, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Fang Fang and Xiao Jie also found that self-management became the biggest challenge to their study abroad. Fang Fang would not concentrate on her study until the examination in the first two years. As a cartoon fan, she preferred to watch cartoons in the dormitory. However, if she didn't go to class in China, her monitor would report her name to Ban Zhu Ren who would talk to her to see what happened. If things got serious, her parents would be informed. They could also

phone him at any time to ask about her performance at the university. Furthermore, three other roommates in her dormitory encouraged her to attend the class and go to the library. When Fang Fang came to the UK, there was no register at the beginning of the class. Students only need to tick the attendance sheet, which she could ask her classmates to do for her. The **'privacy'** in the UK has set up some distance between the participants. Lack of influence from peers and supervision of the tutor, Xiao Jie and Fang Fang were absent a lot from their classes.

> 'Even if I don't go to the class, nobody will notice me. I ask my friend to tick the box [sign the attendance sheet] for me and get the hand-outs. Gradually they got bored and refused to do that. In China, four girls lived together. They asked me to go to the class easily. But now, I live in my own room with the door shut. They don't know where I am or what I am doing. We don't have a person here like our Ban Zhu Ren in China to phone me to go to the class' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

> 'My flat is twenty minutes' walk from the university. The road is slippery in winter. Too cold. I just shut myself in the room playing PC games or reading something. No roll-call here, so I needn't worry about the attendance' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Their former roommates felt it was unfair to help them in such a way. They pointed out:

> 'We haven't seen her (Fang Fang) for a long time. In the first several weeks, we could sign for her or get the hand-outs for her, but we can't do that all the time. To be frank, I think it's her responsibility for her own study. I think it's unfair for us. We're too busy now' (Ni Ni, Female Chinese Student, Informal Chatting at the End of the Academic Year).

The 'nobody- will-notice' system at North Britain University has fostered their absence. Few people contacted them when they were absent from the classes for several days. Their parents, 8,000 miles away, were unable to call the tutor. Both of Fang Fang and Xiao Jie failed their modules at the end of the academic year and had to repeat their second year. Xiao Feng passed the second year, but failed his final year.

Response to the Changes of Teaching and Learning Practices
This group of students have noticed the changes of teaching and learning practices in the new learning environment and their difficulties in coping with the changes. However, they attributed their difficulties to the teachers'

laziness or unsupportive attitude. For example, Xiao Jie found that the British teachers were 'lazy', and did not provide the same support as the Chinese teachers used to do.

> 'I don't think the teachers teach us much. It largely depends on us. Teachers are lazy. They won't give us the learning points as our Chinese teachers did. You have to find yourself' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Fang Fang felt frustrated in her first class too:

> 'I went there and found I couldn't understand anything. So I stopped going. In China, without study before the class, I was able to understand most of the teaching, but not here. I tried to study by myself in my room. We had text books in China. Each of us got one for each module. It tells you everything in detail. Here we need to borrow the books from the library. They're big and thick. Headache. I borrowed several times, but it's very hard to find learning points. In China, I could ask my roommates. Now, we don't live in the same building and they are busy. Nobody to talk to here. I'm alone most of the time.' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Frustrated by the teaching in the class, Fang Fang tried to learn by herself. But the language became the obstacle again in her reading. Her former roommates were all busy and lived far away. She understood less and less of the hand-outs. Gradually she hid herself in the room to escape from the pressure.

Evidence found in this research showed that language was not the only reason that had hindered the interaction. For example, when Xiao Feng did not get on very well with his supervisor, he did not know he could find another supervisor. He did not know that he could make an appointment with staff before going to see them. When he could not find the tutor at the office, he just gave up. His unfamiliarity with the rules showed that he was not ready to undertake the academic culture in the UK, due to his passive attitude towards pre-departure. Furthermore, he did not get enough sleep at night because of his interest in the Internet. He always felt tired during the day. He was absent a lot from the class. At the end of the final year, Xiao Feng's parents came to the UK for his graduation congregation, but found he failed two modules and could not get the degree. At the request of his father, I arranged for his parents to meet his programme leader. At the meeting, Xiao Feng had a long discussion with the programme leader about the possibility

of repeating the final year. He also interpreted for his father in the meeting. English was not a barrier in the communication. As his father commented:

> 'I sent him to English training school when he was five years old. Three years. Every Sunday, I waited for two hours outside the class. In the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, he got 135 out of 150 score in the English test. I don't think English is a problem to him. He needs somebody to tell him what to do and when to do' (Mr. Wang, Xiao Feng's Father, Interview after the Congregation).

In Xiao Feng's case, rather than language deficiency, unfamiliarity with the rules of the new campus and a lack of self-management contributed to the unhappy ending at the end of the transition.

Response to the Changes of Assessment Practices

As presented above, some of the Articulation Programme students in the final year told these students that the exams in the UK were easy to pass.

> 'The students above told me the examinations are not difficult. I'm not ambitious now. A pass is OK' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

The rosy information from the students above matched with Fang Fang's expectation: a pass is OK. She did not pay attention to the new requirements of the lab reports. She was waiting for the deadline of the examination as she had done in China. One month before the examinations, Fang Fang started to go over the modules. It was at this time that she became serious, but it was possibly too late.

> 'There were no textbooks to follow. All the hand-outs and seminar questions needed reviewing. I felt panic and had a try, but gave up finally. It was too late' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

After several days' trying, Fang Fang felt exhausted. As she had not previously been in touch with her peers, she was now too embarrassed to ask for help. She shut herself into her room and missed all the examinations.

As presented before, Xiao Jie was very 'optimistic' about the passing level here in North Britain University. The false sense of security he gained based on the misunderstanding of the assessment practices influenced his attitude towards study. He believed what the students above had told him. His aim was to pass the exam. Any 'useless' material did not deserve his effort.

'Some of the students download the hand-outs from the Blackboard (E-learning Portal) and check the words, but I don't. Students above told me hand-outs are useless to pass the exam. Why I'm bothered?' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

The rosy information passed on by former students above strengthened his false sense of security. He was very happy to use the tips shared by the students.

'They told me seminars were not important as long as you had a look at the questions and solutions. My classmates published the questions and answers on QQ (online chat room). I just downloaded them and had a glance.... No need to read books or hand-outs. Just work through the previous papers and remember the steps. The secret is that this year's examination paper will follow the examples of the year before. So this year, 2009, I should focus on the paper of 2007. As long as I remember the steps, it will be a piece of cake' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Following these instructions, Xiao Jie did not go to seminars very often. He downloaded the answers from the online group space posted by classmates and read through the answers without figuring them out first. However, on leaving the examination hall, Xiao Jie felt puzzled:

'The types have changed. I didn't realize it till I finished the exams. I thought one week would be enough for me to prepare for an exam. The questions were not as easy as they told me' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Spending too much time on the internet, Xiao Feng found he did not have enough time to do the preparation for the examination.

'Before the exam, I only had time to look through the hand-outs, and tried to remember the solutions to the examples. That's it' (Xiao Feng, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

However, these students had positive feedback to the assessment of group project in Module EN0213.

'I think 213 is more interesting than other modules. You design something. We rehearsed twice for our presentation' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Xiao Feng recommended himself as the team leader.

'I like to make small things since I was a kid. But my dad always blames me for wasting time. This time, we're going to make a high frequency switching power supply. I told my group members I wanted to be the team leader. They were nice and agreed. Xiao Hua is my team member who is responsible for technology design.

He used to be our monitor. He helps me a lot. In fact, all the group members are watching me. They count on me. I can't be lazy any more. The module asks us to write three reports. It kind of helps us to divide our time into three portions. We need to work evenly hard during the whole year' (Xiao Feng, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Here, Xiao Feng found his interest in the group project and created a chance to improve his skills as a team leader. With team members' 'watching', he could not waste his time on the internet. The module also helped him to improve his time management skills, which had been a problem without his father's supervision. Their group project received 66% at the end.

Fang Fang listed some reasons why she liked the module.

'In the course design, I got 90%. I was looking forward to conducting the group project. In the weekly workshop, our tutor looked at our progress report and told us what was good, what needed to do more. We had three reports. One based on the other. It's less risky. I had to go to all the workshops because the attendance was marked by group. I didn't want to upset my team members. They asked me to design the outlook of the shoes and the cartoon for presentation, which were what I'm interested in and good at' (Fang Fang, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

First, a similar assessment practice, Course Design, has been introduced by Chinese staff in their last semester in China as a kind of pre-departure preparation to enhance their practical skills and design abilities. Fang Fang obtained 90% for the assessment and was really looking forward to doing the group project in the UK. Second, the assessment assessed students by stages (see 5.4.1.3 for details). Compared with examinations, it is less risky. Third, the assessment gave 10% for students' attendance in the workshop. Fang Fang went to all workshops, as she did not want to let her team down. Last but not the least, she was responsible for the design of the outlook of the shoes and the cartoon for their final presentation, which was what she liked and was good at. She achieved 65% in this module.

Out of various reasons, Fang Fang, Xiao Feng, and Xiao Jie chose to 'quit' the interaction with the learning environment. It was a kind of **Avoiding Interaction**. Their indirect interaction with staff through peers was rare except for some formative assessment activities. They retreated into their own 'self-believed safe circle', where they thought they were secure and

certain to achieve their 'unambitious' goal --- just pass the examination. The boundary of their circle was built up by the information they selected from the students above. They interpreted the information and made judgements on the amount of effort they need to put in to achieve their 'unambitious' goals. Once those two parts matched, they made the conclusion that this amount of effort was enough for them to achieve their goals. They were sure that they were able to sail through their study as well. This kind of self-righteous judgement misled them to avoid the interaction with the new learning environment. Their retraction was fostered by the 'kind' **peer support**, which was supposed to be a facilitator to their study. The publication of seminar questions and solutions was used by other students as an additional way for learning, but had become the main way that these students took in their learning. Their classmates 'kindly' signed the attendance sheets for them, which had pushed them to stay away from the class. In addition, the 'nobody-will-notice' system had also fostered their retraction.

5.5 Transition Outcome

Figure 5.1 shows the differences in performance of my participants compared to full-time home students in the class. Forty eight (96%) of the Articulation Programme students passed the assessment (mark of 40% or more) compared to seven home students (43%).

Figure 5_1 Comparisons of students' performances at the end of the academic year
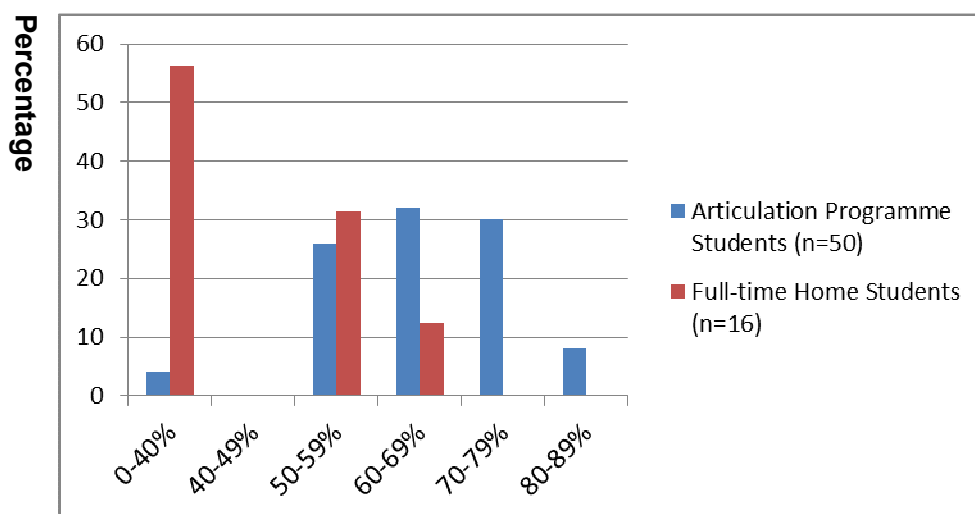
When tested with the Fisher's Exact test, this difference was significant (p=0.00001). When the performance of the students who achieved 70% or

more was explored, 38% of the Chinese students compared to no home based students achieved this level of performance. Again this difference was significant (Fisher's Exact test: p=0.003). These results indicate significantly better performance in the cohort of Chinese students when compared to full-time home based students. The academic divide will be discussed in Chapter 7.

However, not all my participants have achieved a happy ending at the end of the academic year, as shown in Figure 5_2. Among the 16 interviewees, nine achieved over 70%, two obtained over 60%, three got over 50% and the rest failed the academic year and had to repeat their second year. As presented in this chapter, my participants' transition experiences from Southeast China University to North Britain University were different. As shown in Figure 5_2, three significant patterns that represent the key types of experience found within the group were identified and presented in terms of **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction** and **Avoiding Interaction**.

Figure 5_2 Three Patterns of Transition Experiences of Articulation Programme Students
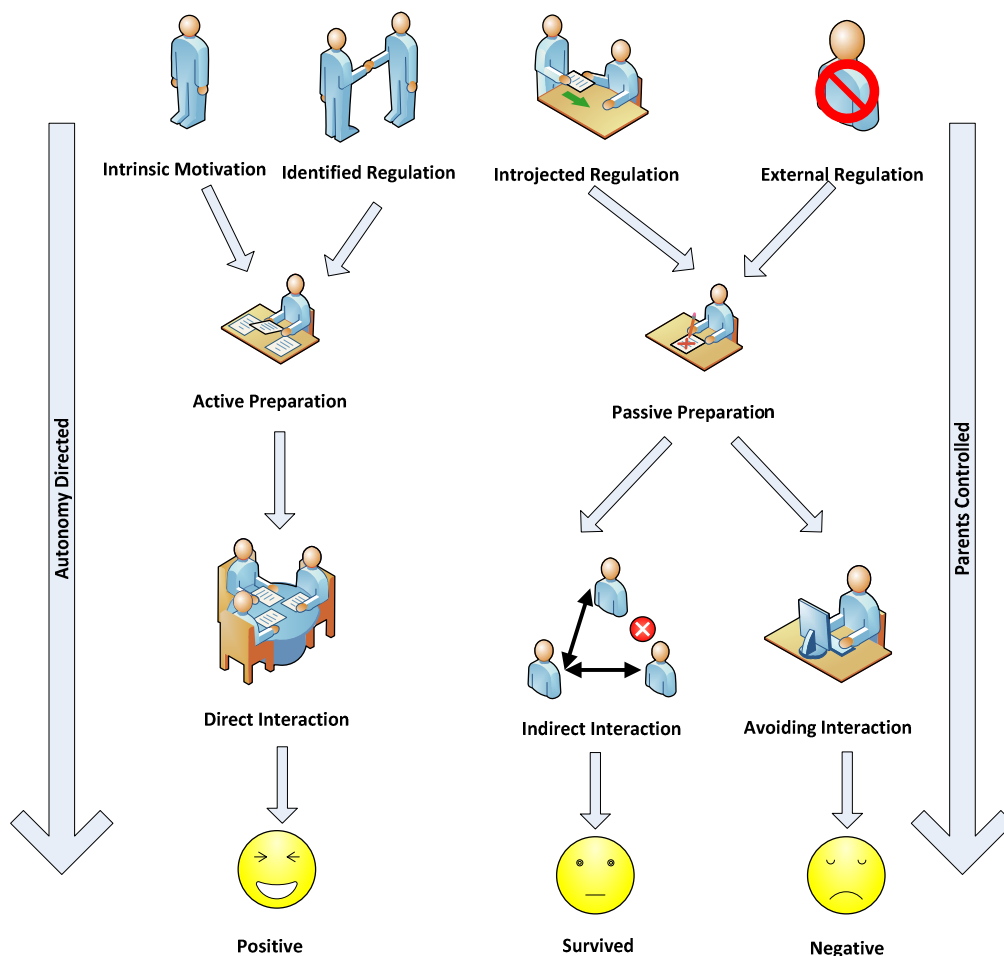
The transition model encompasses different motivations for studying abroad, and strategies and attitudes towards the pre-departure preparation. These factors all influenced their interaction with the new learning environment and their outcomes of academic performances. Participants who had high intrinsic motivation or internalized extrinsic motivation were active in their pre-departure preparation. They demonstrated great autonomy in their direct interaction with the new learning environment and achieved positive outcomes in the transition. Students who exhibited high level of introjected regulation or external regulation were passive in their pre-departure preparation. Some of them chose indirect interaction with the new learning environment through the help of their peers, others retracted into their own 'self-believed safe circle to avoid the interaction. The former survived in the transition, while the latter failed.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I present the different journeys and different outcomes of my participants' individual transition experience from the campus of Southeast China University to North Britain University. I argue that the Articulation Programme students' transition experience is an individual process. Each student responded in their own ways to the interaction with the new learning environment. Even within the same typology, the individuals' responses to the new learning environment were different.

I first point out that motivations to study abroad can affect their attitudes towards pre-departure preparation. For students who have intrinsic motivation for studying abroad, transition is inherently interesting or an enjoyable journey, which has resulted in high-quality learning and creativity (Ryan and Deci, 2000). For students who agree with their parents' view that studying abroad will benefit their future career, they develop the relevant skills and confidence through pre-departure preparation, which facilitates their personal endorsement of the task. This kind of extrinsic motivation internalized by the participants shows the same effect in this research as intrinsic motivation in encouraging the participants to gain autonomy in their transition experience. For students who have a strong negative feeling for studying abroad, they demonstrate less autonomy in the pre-departure

preparation and their transition process. I then present that the pre-departure preparation activities conducted by sending and receiving universities, such as bilingual education, early intervention, academic exchange, new assessment practices and culture learning, are useful in general for students' transition. However, its actual usefulness depends on students' motivation and response to what is on offer.

In the final section, I demonstrate that different features on the new campus bring new challenges to all the students. Many factors, such as the '**internet**', '**privacy**' and '**peer support**' can be 'double-edged' in that they can have negative or positive impacts depending upon the student's transition response. Social support and formative assessments are two facilitators for students' transition. Based on their motivation and pre-departure knowledge, my participants develop different strategies to cope with the stress, which are **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction**, and **Avoiding Interaction**. Cross-pattern analysis shows that apart from motivation and pre-departure knowledge, language competence and autonomy influence their choice of different coping strategies, which finally affect the extent to which they become autonomous learners in their transition. Lack of linguistic competence blocks some participants' direct interaction with the new learning environment, and partly causes some students' isolation from the environment. However, participants with lower language competence but high autonomy achieve positive outcomes in the transition, while those whose English is good but with poor self-management ability fail in the transition. Therefore, autonomy is crucial in my participants' transition which greatly influences their academic performances.

Chapter 6 Studying Abroad as a Group

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter tries to understand my participants' intercultural transition experience from a microscopic perspective focusing on individual factors, as well as from a contextual perspective focusing on situational factors. Due to the unique feature of the articulation programme, my participants studied abroad as a group of 50 and came across another group of students, primarily home students in the course at the host university. The interaction experience between these two groups in the class has unavoidably influenced my participants' intercultural transition experience. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the Articulation Programme students' interaction with the existing cohort of students and the impact of their participation on the learning environment. Participants' interaction experience with their flatmates is also explored. This blends the perspectives of home students, other international students and the staff to provide a holistic view on the topic. The chapter first analyses how the home-based students and Chinese students in the same class become two social and psychological groups, Us & Them. Then, it moves on to investigate how their own shared group membership influences their social relations and behaviour in the class. Finally, the current structured intervention to improve students' integration is explored at the university, school, and staff level.

6.2 Formation of Two Groups: Us and Them

6.2.1 Students in Sino-British Class: a *Close* Group on Chinese Campus

Entering into the Southeast China University, students found that they were considered as a **special** group on campus. The Articulation Programme focused on in this research was one of the first programmes in the province. The participants in this study, the 2006 cohort, were the third cohort in the programme. When they were in their last semester in China, the 2004 cohort and the 2005 cohort were studying in the UK for the final year and second

year study, and the 2007 cohort were in their first year on the Chinese campus. The participants had close contact with the 2005 cohort, which was one year above them and often given them information. At the same time, they were also an information source for the 2007 cohort. These students were called '**Students in Sino-British Class**' on campus.

This community was considered as a special group on the Chinese campus. Southeast China University recruits full-time undergraduates through the National Higher Education Entrance Examination. As one of the key universities in China, it normally requires students to pass the first tier of the undergraduate degree admission requirements. However, students on the articulation programme are allowed to register at the second tier standard, which is about 30 points lower than the first. The annual tuition fee of the articulation programme was about four times that of the non-programme students in 2006. The main differences of the two groups of students are shown in Table 6_1.

Table 6_1 Comparison of Articulation Programme Students and Non-programme Students on Chinese Campus

	Articulation Programme Students	Non-programme Students
Admission Requirement (Year 2006)	540 points	570 points
Tuition Fee (Year 2006)	RMB 19,200	RMB 4,600
Duration of the Degree	4 years (2 years on Chinese campus and 2 years abroad)	4 years on Chinese campus
Course Content	Syllabus of the core modules imported from North Britain University and the compulsory modules required by the Chinese Ministry of Education.	Syllabus compiled by the Southeast China University and the compulsory modules required by the Chinese Ministry of Education.
Language of Core Modules Delivery	Bilingual	Chinese
Text Books	Bilingual	Chinese
Teaching Staff	Chinese staff and foreign teachers	Chinese staff
Overlapping	Students who don't want to go abroad can transfer to the non-programme class	

The higher tuition fees and lower admission requirements have influenced non-programme students' opinion on the Programmes students. As these students only stayed on campus for two years, they had been excluded from many of the activities organized by the Student Union. This has been demonstrated by Min Min:

> 'We are close here [in China] because others consider us as a special group. They did better in the National Higher Education Entrance Examination than us. Our tuition fees in China are more than four times higher than theirs. Everywhere we go, they point to us and whisper 'Look, students in Sino-British Class'. In their eyes, we are rich people. The Student Union seldom invite us to take part in their activities, because they think we're leaving soon. Gradually, we only spend time with our own classmates' (Min Min, Female Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

Being considered as a group of special students who were undertaking a foreign course, the Articulation Programme students experienced some kind of discrimination and isolation on campus. This has driven them to become a close group.

> 'I don't have much connection with students outside our group. We're special. Other students will spend their first year in Xianlin Campus, but we stay here. Most of the clubs or organizations are on that campus. So we haven't been involved in many activities. They have some social practice, but we don't have a chance to take part in. In other students' eyes, we are special. Some of my classmates then believe we're special too' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

In the observation in China, all the activities my participants undertook were within the group. There was only one activity, roller skating, observed in the research, which featured members from outside the group. However, those two students were Articulation Programme students in the first year, but transferred to other courses due to financial problems.

6.2.2 'Chinese Students': a *Closed* Group in the Class on British Campus

'Classmates', as a relationship, is one important part in Chinese people's contact, and considered to be a sincere friendship uncontaminated by material things. It is also considered as one powerful factor that will help the person succeed in their future career. In a Chinese classroom, classmates are supposed to help each other with course work, go out to have fun and join in many activities together. Chinese students also expected that in a

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British class, there were supposed to be many British students. Many of them were determined to make British friends in the class. However, the real (maybe cruel) classroom features illustrated in the following section have disappointed them.

In the lectures observed, the Chinese students outnumbered the UK students by a considerable margin. Many Articulation Programme students felt that they were still in China. For example, Ling Ling questioned:

> 'Why don't put us in a normal class? We thought there would be many British students to mix. It's like we move our classroom from China to the UK. That's it' (Ling Ling, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Here the real situation of the class was largely different from Ling Ling's expectation of a normal 'class' in a British university. 'Students in Sino-British Class' on the Chinese campus were addressed as 'Chinese students' on the British campus. They addressed the other group in the class 'British students'.

Compared to the number of Chinese Articulation Programme students, the School of Engineering at North Britain University had fewer home-based students on the course. As Frank mentioned, 'there are numerous different avenues to try to attract more home-based students onto the programme; it's just not popular at the moment'. The Articulation Programme students joined a group of students who had been studying the first year of the programme at North Britain University. There were two international students in the group. Others were home students from all parts of Britain. These students had been studying together for a whole year and had formed their own close group. Jacky was interviewed at the end of his final year. As he reflected, their class culture in the first year was very interactive.

> 'First year, after a few weeks we all started to hang around with each other anyway, then when the assignments came up, you know, 'Oh I've got this working' 'Oh cool…' 'I'll show you how to do it…' and we all sort of bounced ideas off each other. And then you started to get a group work, which you had to work to together, and then you sort of find out that some are better than others and so you tap into their resources and ask them, 'Oh, you're good at this…' and do that sort of stuff. And then you just always sort of work together' (Jacky, British Student).

Before these two groups of students met in the second year on the British campus, their concept of class and classmates were similar: interactive, helping each other and hanging out for fun. Within both of the groups, members interacted as individuals. Similar hobbies or characters drove them together. However, when these two cohorts came into contact more in the same class, things started to change. Their group identities arose when they gradually perceived the differences existing between two groups.

The existing cohort of students did not know that there were going to be a large cohort of Chinese students joining them in the second year. On the first day of the new academic year, they were shocked at seeing many Chinese students sitting in the class.

> 'I didn't expect it, like, I turned up on the first day and there was a whole bunch of Chinese students there and it was a bit of a shock' (Charlie, British Student).

Moving from a small class in the first year to a larger class of about 100, including part-time students, home students felt shocked and overwhelmed by the participation of a 'whole bunch of Chinese' students. They argued that the school should inform them of the change in classroom culture, which has unfortunately not been the case.

> 'It would be nice to be warned, you know, 'Oh in the second year you are joined by a cohort from South China' just to be told about it and so you expect it. It wasn't exactly off-putting or anything in any way, but I suppose it might have been nice to have been told' (William, British Student).

> 'It's quite overwhelming seeing the Chinese students…all it does is kind of keep people grouped into their little individual groups away from the bigger international community group itself' (Jim, British Student).

A lack of preparedness for both groups and an early structured intervention, such as icebreaking activities (see Section 6.3), meant the integration of the two groups in the class was hard to realize, leading to separation and bias. The status of separation and bias strengthened the distinction between in and out-group membership.

6.2.3 Intergroup Bias

6.2.3.1 Geographic Division: 'Front-back' Separation in Class & Competition for Insufficient Resources

Home students found that some of the Chinese students' classroom behaviour had partly influenced their learning. Chinese students always came earlier and sat at the front. When the home students came, there were no seats at the front.

> 'I think the Chinese were quite prompt for lectures and they always come in early, so when we came in there were only the back seats left... If you're at the front you go to the front because you might not understand it so much, and so you're closer to it so that you can see it better and hear better. And maybe if you understood it more, then you make your way back and sit at the back where you understand it and you're just there to sort of pick up anything else that's said, sort of thing. But I think it's kind of in the reverse because we get there on time, not late, but we get there and are forced to go to the back even though we might not understand it' (William, British Student).

As William complained, home students were not late but were 'forced' to sit at the back. When they didn't understand the teaching and needed to sit in the front, they found it was impossible as the seats were always occupied by Chinese students. This kind of loss resulted fighting for insufficient resources in the class, and caused the hostility in the home students (Sherif, 1967). Seats were not the only resource those two groups were fighting for in the large class. Home students felt that they were not able to get enough attention due to the size of the class.

As discussed in Chapter 5, the Articulation Programme students preferred to ask questions right after the class. This habit made home students felt that staff did not have the time and attention for their questions.

> 'If I do want to ask one or two questions myself, maybe something like, for example, maybe I've got a 'yes' 'no' question such as 'Are the labs on this week?' whereas the Chinese students, will sit in the front and then will quickly sort of ambush the lecturer and you can't ask the very basic question because the lecturer is too busy dealing with queries' (Max, British Student).

Furthermore, some considerations made by the staff to facilitate the initial transition of my participants had caused some complaints from other students in the class.

'Most of the modules are continued from the first year and the Chinese students don't understand what's going on. He has to tell us past information from last year. It's very strange to me. I've got all the notes at home and I understand what's going on, but the Chinese don't, because he just repeats the first year. That's why some English left the class' (Nina, International Student from Kuwait).

The existing cohort felt that the repetition of past information was unnecessary for them, which made them lose interest. Therefore, attendance went down.

Students who had paid full tuition fees for their university study complained, and questioned the coherence of the teaching for the Programme students.

'We don't mind revising some stuff and then learn some new stuff. It would bother me if we had to put new work on hold and then rush the new work to hurry up and get it finished because the Chinese weren't up to speed. It wouldn't bother me if the tuition was free, but if I'm paying £3,000 a year… What would be best is if, at the end of the first year, we both learnt exactly the same things, so when the Chinese students come over everything is sort of, you know, we learn all the same things' (William, British Student).

William demonstrated the expectation of a full-tuition fee payer of the service quality the university has provided. This was the same for the Chinese students. Both sides considered themselves as customers of the university and had high expectations of their education experiences. Both groups were disappointed at the newly immerging classroom features. Competition for insufficient resources in this large class worsened this kind of negative feeling and caused hostility between two groups. The following discussion on different questioning behaviour shows how it became a differential between these groups and invisibly split the class.

6.2.3.2 Invisible Division: Different Questioning Behaviour in Class
In the interviews, home students showed their doubts of why Chinese students preferred to 'ambush the lecturers' after class, but seldom answered questions in the class. As discussed in Chapter 5, staff in the North Britain University tended to keep the lecture more interactive. They had the impression that Chinese students were quiet, shy and less interactive, which linked to the presumption that 'they seem quite

passive in the class, but obedient' (Frank, British Staff Member). Home students shared the same opinion:

> 'I don't know whether they do it in China, a lecturer will say 'Oh, it's one of two things. Who thinks it's this one?' and some of the class put up their hands, and then he'll say 'Right, who thinks it's the other one?' and the rest will put their hands up. The Chinese don't participate in that. ...I don't know if they are scared to answer or they just don't see the concept. ...I wouldn't worry about that because I give silly answers all the time. They might be afraid' (William, British Student).

Meanwhile, Chinese students noticed that British students were 'noisy' and 'high' in the class.

> 'British students are noisy in the class. It seems that they are always very high. When the teachers ask a question, they shout back the answers quickly without going through their mind' (Xiao Yu, Chinese Student, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Although there were some participants who picked up the classroom culture quickly, they interacted with staff in a different way.

> 'I normally sit in the first row and answer the questions often. But I won't shout as loudly as the British students. To be frank, some of the questions are not challenge enough. You're like doing a favour for the teachers' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

> 'Here, the class atmosphere is easy. You can call teachers' names and ask them to come to your seat and ask them questions. I do that sometimes. When I know the answers, I say it out. My voice is not very loud. It's OK. You know you're right' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Students, 3rd Interview).

This different questioning behaviour has made the classroom dynamic a conflict. Home students appealed for a more interactive class, and more debate and engagement involving every student, while the Chinese group seemed to be unwilling to cooperate and reluctant to be involved.

> 'They pick up really well and they had stuff before we did, working it out. But I think it would help if they interacted in class more. It would be nice to have debates in some of the more interactive classes, with them, and involve everyone. Because it always seems like there's a quiet area and then the lecturer, after a while, tried to incorporate the Chinese people, but then ends up coming over to one side of the classroom and talking to this side because we interact. So I think they could get more out of it if they interacted more. I think it's just confidence' (Jacky, British Student).

The different questioning behaviour became a great differential between these two groups, which split the class invisibly. The new classroom culture

was created by the participation of the Articulation Programme students and the existing cohort as well. Both groups have to adapt to the new culture.

> 'Definitely in the classroom there always seems to be a split of interactivity. We're kind of a chatty group and we all communicate with the lecturer and stuff, but the Chinese I think, I don't know if it's because of the language or if it's because of feeling a bit shy, that they don't sort of interact very much, they sort of write everything down but keep to themselves. A few of them have actually progressed to interacting a lot, but some of them stay in the corner and keep to themselves. But we are quite loud and will say anything and we treat the lecturer like a friend really (Jacky, British Student).

The splitting situation in the class was strengthened by the communication barriers which will be discussed in the following section.

6.2.3.3 Visible Differential: Double- language Barriers

As discussed in the previous chapter, some Chinese students asked their friends sitting beside them if they did not understand the teaching. This partly caused more noise in the class and complaints from the students. The problem was exacerbated by the larger class size. Chinese students communicated with each other in Chinese. They didn't speak English, because it was 'comfortable' (Yan Yan), 'natural' (Xiao Yong) and 'just it is' (Xiao Jie). Within the group, all of their communication was in Chinese, sometimes even in their dialect if they are from the same city. Counting the numbers of the Chinese students, the dominant language in the class has become Chinese instead of English. Even the lecturers sometimes felt powerless in the workshops.

> 'In my workshop, all of them are Chinese and that is one of my concerns … I don't understand what they are talking about because they are discussing in Chinese, all the time, during the two hours, unless I am speaking to them' (Ben, British Staff Member).

This dominant atmosphere of the Chinese language made some of the home students felt 'vulnerable', 'irritated' and 'frustrated'.

> 'I think if they are speaking in English it wouldn't bother me as much as if they're speaking Chinese. I don't know why. Sometimes when they're speaking Chinese you think, 'Are they talking about us?' and you never know. I think people feel vulnerable when they don't know what someone is saying' (William, British Student).

'Oh well, they're just chatting but they are also chatting in Chinese, so even if I wanted to listen, I couldn't, because all I could hear was Chinese... It's just a bit irritating that you can't kind of join in, I guess... it can be frustrating in a way, because if you want to ask someone something then you just feel like you can't because you don't speak their language' (Charlie, British Student).

In the above quotations, both William and Charlie were not annoyed by Chinese students' chatting but their chatting in Chinese, a language they did not know. William felt vulnerable as he thought people might be talking about him. Meanwhile, being unable to participate in the conversation irritated Charlie and made him frustrated. What Charlie mentioned in the last sentence about the language barrier stopped him asking questions to the Chinese group. This shows that the language barrier and separation in the class could influence students' learning.

'The home students at the back are chatting. Don't know what they're doing. I never cut in. Sometimes the staff tell jokes. I don't understand. How do I know it's a joke? The English students will laugh loudly. Then they tell jokes back and the teacher laughs as well' (Xiao Dong, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Xiao Dong, who adopted Direct Interaction coping strategy in interacting with staff (mostly after class) and helped his classmates, such as Xiao Yu with his study a lot, found it was difficult to cut into the interaction between staff and the UK students. Language barrier might be a possible reason that contributed to the silence in the class; however, the divided atmosphere could be the main reason that has blocked students' participation in the interaction among home students themselves or between home students and staff.

Meanwhile, the habit of speaking Chinese in the class has prevented the Articulation Programme students' integration with other students in the class. The language barrier in this Chinese dominant class was not just the host language of English, but Chinese as well. It was hard to say which language was more powerful in this setting. This **double-language barrier** has hindered the peer learning in class. As Joe, an international student from Nigeria, mentioned:

'I really don't get on well, because half of the class really don't understand me. The majority of the class are Chinese. When you don't know something and you keep studying over and over and you still don't get it, you need someone to pull you through. And if

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you can't get your hands on the teacher then you need to find a student who can help you, and there the language barriers comes up again' (Joe, International Student from Nigeria).

English is the official language in Nigeria. Joe did not have a problem with English. The majority of the class were Chinese and they preferred to communicate in Chinese. This made Joe felt that he was outside the circle. Therefore, the participation of this large cohort of Chinese students has influenced the learning context of their peers in the class.

6.2.3.4 Division between 'Us' and 'Them' and the Impact on Learning
Gradually, both of the groups found that there was a great divide in the class.

> 'In the class, British students didn't talk to us and we didn't talk to them. It's weird as we are like two separated parts but sitting in the same class' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

> 'There is quite a large divide in the class. There was a lot more of them than there was of us. And there wasn't much integration… It is a bit 'us and them' and it's very separate. There are a lot of Chinese students on the course and I don't know a single person' (Max, British Student).

Both Xiao Ming and Max described the separation between the existing cohort and the new cohort. They started to categorize themselves into 'Us' and 'Them'. 18 months after studying in the same class, Max still didn't know a single person from the Chinese group. Xiao Ming felt weird about the division in the same class. This was not what he had expected in China. It also conflicted with his concept of a normal class, where peers could integrate and help each other. His English was competent enough in communication with British people as he did in the Direct Interaction with the academic staff. However, his direct interaction with his British peers was blocked by the divide in the class. This is the same case with Yan Yan:

> 'Whenever I come across a problem, I'll ask my classmates from Southeast China University. Have you noticed anybody talking to them [home students] in the class?' (Yan Yan, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

The separation in the class has driven the two groups to be closer and closer within themselves.

> 'The situation has probably brought together the home students who we were with in the first year; we're all sort of quite a close group now' (Jacky, British Student).

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Charlie, William, Jacky and Max were interviewed in the second term of their final year, at which point they had studied with Chinese students for 18 months. There was some mixing, but the integration was still not optimistic.

> 'Now it's like a bit more mixed, but not to the extent where you could say it was completely mixed. It's still like a group of home students and a group of Chinese students...It still feels like there's a divide but it's not like an unapproachable divide. Whereas before, in the second year it would be like, especially at the start, it would be a direct split between the two' (Charlie, British Student).

The separation in the class has disappointed the Chinese students who expected to make friends with home students when they were in China. Integration with the home students was what they had pictured in their minds. Home students on the other hand had not had the same expectations and such a strong desire as the Chinese students. Many of them took the engineering course to find a job in the near future. Students, like Jim and Max, had to take a loan from the government to cover their tuition fees. They still required part-time jobs to support themselves financially. In contrast, all the Articulation Programme students received full financial support from their parents. It was unnecessary for them to find a part-time job. They could spend most of their spare time on their study, while home students could not.

> 'It's all right for them, they'll come into the lecture and don't understand anything, go home and read a book, where we English students, we finish University and basically most of us have got jobs so we go home, get changed and go to work. I don't know many of the international students that have got jobs here... The English students, we need to worry about the financial side. ... Coming to University, a lot of students need to get part-time jobs' (Jim, home student).

The financial pressure made Jim concentrate as much as possible on his study during his hours at university, as he had to go to work after school. There was no extra time for him to make friends with a new group of Chinese students. They were not as disappointed as the Chinese students with the separation in the class.

The consequence of this segregation was not only forming into two groups, but affecting students' learning in the class. William, who wanted help from the Chinese students, felt it was difficult to break the ice.

> 'I mean, there are groups… We're doing a project. You have to write a code and programme this little box, and some Chinese

students have it working, and we don't at the minute, for some reason, we can't figure out way, but it seems awkward to sort of ask if theirs is working and what they did about that, because we've never spoken to them before' (William, British Student).

Because of the separation, William has never spoken to the Chinese students. Therefore, he felt awkward to ask for help from strangers, which should not be the case as they had studied together for a whole year by the time I interviewed him. Peer learning was constrained within groups. Intergroup peer learning was seldom observed in the study.

Group work provided further evidence of the impact of the separation between the two groups. For the module EN0213, Project Design, students were asked to form groups of five to six to conduct group work. Students chose their own groups. Apart from one group with Joe, all the Chinese students were with their previous classmates, and so were the home students.

> 'Our project supervisor and he told us to organise ourselves in a group of 4, but, because there was 5 home students in the class, well, four from England and one person from Bahrain, we all worked together for the first year so there was five of us together and we just stuck together. So we basically chose our friends' (Max, British Student).

Max chose his group members within the existing cohort. Through working in the first year, they knew each other very well. His friends were in the group. The unbalanced number of the two groups and the language barrier made the home students worry that they might be left out in the group discussion, which can be shown in the following quotations.

> 'Because there's more Chinese, if they said 'Right, we're going to have groups of three, two Chinese and one English, and then straight away the English person is in the minority, and they would possibly speak Chinese and the English person would be left out, and things like that' (William, British Students).

> 'If I was the only English person and the rest were all Chinese, then I would feel intimidated because I know they all speak Chinese to each other and I have got a strong accent and they might struggle to understand me. I feel that they would probably speak Chinese to each other a lot and I wouldn't be able to get as much out of a group who are speaking a language that I can't understand...I wouldn't be able to participate as much' (Max, British Student).

This difficulty has been verified by the past experience of staff.

> 'I know in the past as well, sometimes when a UK student has been by himself in a group of Chinese students, they found it difficult because the Chinese students speak Chinese to each other and the UK student feels a bit excluded. Unfortunately, there are numerous different avenues to try to attract more home based students onto the programme, it's just not popular at the moment. For the Chinese students it's a bit unfortunate because there aren't sufficient home based students for them to be able to mix with' (Frank, British Staff Member).

As Frank mentioned, the imbalance in class made the group project difficult. He was concerned that if UK students and Chinese students were assigned to the same group by staff, it might make the former group feel excluded. On one hand staff welcomed the enrolment of more Chinese students on the course as it made a great contribution to the finances of the school and the strong academic background of Chinese students could benefit the learning and teaching in the class. On the other hand, staff were concerned over the current segregation in the class. Ben, another staff member, pointed out his concern of the division and the importance of integration between the groups of students in class.

> 'I don't think the class has much mixing. We have to, as a University and the School, start to address this. Somehow, we need to break that barrier. It's very important because we want British students to know about other countries. And also, I find that some of the Chinese students have a very strong understanding of technical topics. Some of the home students are possibly slightly weak on these. So, if we can mix them, hopefully that creates a result in benefiting both [groups] to have a better result and better group at the end of the year. I am really concerned about this because we should break the barriers between backgrounds, religion, colour and everything, and start to learn in the organisation that everyone could actually participate to work together for the benefit of everyone, somehow' (Ben, British Staff Member).

Both groups were more worried about their academic performance in the group project. They have concerns over working with members of the other group. Home students worried that language limitation would prevent them working effectively and pull down their grade.

> 'We choose our own groups. So if the lecturer says 'Choose your own groups' then the Chinese choose their own and the English choose theirs, and you might argue that's bad because it prevents integration, but if… obviously some of the Chinese speak really good English but some of them are very limited, so if I was put with someone who barely spoke English and had that little

translator that they have all the time for every word they are saying, and I wasn't able to work effectively and got a lower grade then that would be mad' (William, British Student).

William, here, worried that the English competence of the Chinese students might hold up the communication in the team and affect the effectiveness of the work to be done, which might lead to a lower grade. For Chinese students, apart from the language barrier, they also worried that their unfamiliarity with the home students' academic performance might undermine their group score too.

'It's fine if we could have a British student member, but we won't cry for it. And we really don't know who studies well, who doesn't. We have to consider our score. We know our classmates very well after two years' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 2ⁿᵈ Interview).

This unfamiliarity between each group hindered the possibility of facilitating intergroup integration through academic group work. No structured intervention has been done to enable the groups to understand each other better. Evidence of a willingness to know each other was found in this research, but the division in the class held this up. For instance, in the final year, Jacky, one of the home students, wanted to join the Chinese students for group work, but due to the segregation, he did not know how to break the circle.

'I think it would be better to mix the groups up though. For instance, this year, I wouldn't have minded working with one or two of the Chinese people. But, I didn't get a chance to. We had a group of 4, and the assignment came out for three. So it was either going to be three and one or two and two, but the workload was for three. And so in the end there was a three and a one, so I said I didn't mind going and working with someone else, so I was going to work with a Chinese person just to sort of bridge the gap. But we ended up working two and two. So even though we had more work, we decided to do that. But for other group work, I was willing to work with any of the Chinese people. I thought they were all in groups themselves though so I didn't know how to go up and be like, 'Can I work with you?' (Jacky, British Student).

Jacky's group ended up working in two groups of two, instead of three. They would rather to take more work than go outside of the group to work with Chinese students. Jacky himself was willing to work with some Chinese students, but found they were too close and made it hard for him to join in. He did not know how to go up and ask to break into the circle.

Some Chinese students worried about being criticized by other group members if they approached the other group, as Xiao Qiang illustrated:

> 'It's impossible for you to keep on talking to home students, because my previous classmates will think I'm strange. You have studied and lived with the group for two years. How can you break away from them and sit with white people? Even white people might think, "what's wrong with this guy? Why didn't he get along well with his group?" So I seldom talk to them' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Jacky's and Xiao Qiang's quotations show that the worries in both groups have dragged them back to their own groups, in spite of their tentative motivations to work or talk together. In addition, the consequence of the separation in the class has not only affected students' learning, but the Chinese students' attitude towards the Articulation Programme, which will be presented in the following section.

6.2.3.5 Studying Abroad as a Group: Advantage or Disadvantage?
The separation in the class failed to meet the Articulation Programme students' expectation to mix with home students and make friends with them. This disappointment triggered their questioning of the unique feature of the programme: studying abroad as a large group. In the interviews in China, all of the students believed that it was a big advantage of the programme.

When parents encouraged their children to undertake the programme, they worried more about their children's safety and security in another country. Studying abroad with a group of classmates who knew each other very well reassured their parents about their children's safety. Students agreed with their parents' opinions. Unanimously, they took studying abroad as a group as a great advantage of taking the programme. A representative comment is shown below:

> 'It's safer to join in this course. Going abroad alone will be lonely, with no one to look after me. We will help each other' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 1st Interview).

The difficulties in integration they predicted were mainly from the outside of the group, such as race discrimination, bullying and untruthfully reports on China. None of them predicted that their close relationship, a kind of bond, could affect their integration with British people and the culture. Classmates, parents, friends and lecturers were the four sources participants mentioned

in their first interviews to whom they would turn for help when they came across problems in China. Their classmates, part of their support network, came with them to the UK and this greatly facilitated their transition at the early stage.

> 'I thought I might not adapt in a strange environment. But these two months past, I find everything is OK. I didn't feel there were many things that were inconvenient. After all, I have so many classmates around me. Things I don't understand, I can ask my classmates in Chinese. I haven't started missing home, but I can't imagine what I would do if I had come alone' (Ling Ling, Female Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Initially, students talked about the benefits of helping each other in daily life, discussing academic problems in their native language, overcoming loneliness, and providing a familiar and trustable circle they could rely on. There were seen as the main advantages of coming as a group. Later on, their views changed when they found that the *close* group had become a *closed* group and it was very hard to break out of the circle as shown in the above sections. Xiao Qiang, who believed coming as a group was an advantage for his study abroad, changed his views after the first academic year of study in the UK.

> 'I chose the programme because our parents think it's safe coming as a group. Before I left China, I thought we would make English friends when we arrived in England as it is full of English people. But it's not the case. Wherever we go, we're a group, a small collective group, we are wired in. In the class, the majority are Chinese. The majority are from our own class in China. We come earlier and sit in the front, while other students come later and sit at the back with their first year classmates. We are two different groups. I think it is the Chinese who isolate the home students' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Xiao Qiang's experience is different from some of the findings in other research that international students are squeezed and isolated on the campus by the home students. The large number of their group has given them the power and influence to have impact on other groups. The imbalanced number of Chinese students over home students partly led to separation in the class and hindered their establishment of friendship networks.

> 'Coming as a group was very helpful at the beginning. I could turn to my classmates whenever I had problems. But, gradually, I found it was hard for us to make friends with home students or

students from other countries. We isolate ourselves. It seems that other students think we are a closed group. For instance, home students have got to know those Indian students, but not us. I guess they are scared because we are such a large group' (Ling Ling, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

What Ling Ling noticed here is that it is easier for students who come to the UK individually to make friends with home students. The size of their group has made the home students feel 'scared' about making friends with them. This is also verified by home students:

'It's probably the size of the group; it would probably be easier if there were less. I think that's probably one of the main reasons' (William, British Student).

'It's not that Chinese people I wouldn't approach, or I would hope that they didn't feel that they couldn't approach me, it's just that when, say, Mo came from Bahrain and he came on his own so he doesn't speak Arabic to anyone except for Hassan who he met in the second year, and now a few more who have come from individual places, whereas… Because obviously, he wouldn't just want to sit there on his own, so he has to speak English to you, and you can't speak his language so you have to speak back' (Charlie, British Student).

The example given by Charlie above shows that international students who come individually have to speak English to integrate with other students in class. The space around these international students gave home students the chances to go to talk with them on one hand, while on the other hand they could also go towards home students when they wanted friends. However, the Articulation Programme students have already had their own friends to rely on.

'When there's only one, say, Indian student, then they are more likely to talk, whereas when you do have a group that already knows each other and maybe even for two years, then they don't need to speak to other people because they've got their own friends' (William, British Student).

Other international students in class have integrated with home students both within the class and also outside the university, as shown by Max:

'Other international students have integrated very easily with the home students. Some of them we've known from the first year and some we've met since then, and they have integrated very well with us and we're good friends and we socialise outside of University, whereas there's been no outside of University integration between the English and the Chinese, whereas we

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have integrated with people from Greece and Bahrain' (Max, British Student).

International students who came individually expressed their worries about the Chinese students. It was hard for them to mix with the Chinese group as well.

> 'They are into themselves. I know they are so scared about mixing up. They want to be together, you don't get them alone or you can't get in between them. It's always safer to be with people you know. In a foreign country, you have to accept you can socialise and that's the point. You can't come to England and leave England and not make any friends' (Joe, International Student from Nigeria).

A lack of friendship with home students and other international students in class meant Chinese students gradually confined themselves to a closed circle. Some students were trying to escape from the group. Ying Ying was a distinctive example. She had a high expectation to make English friends and improve her English when she was in China. The separation in class had greatly disappointed her. What makes it worse is that, although she also applied for accommodation to live with home students, she was dispatched to a flat shared with three other Chinese classmates. They went everywhere together. Ying Ying found her English had not improved as they spoke Chinese together.

> 'We four go everywhere together and speak Chinese all the day! I feel I'm still in China in the class. All the people surrounding you are your classmates in China! My English hasn't improved! What about two years later when I go back to China? I can't speak proper English. I will be embarrassed to tell people I have been studied in the UK. I also feel embarrassed now to go out social with English students without taking my flatmates with me. We tell each other where we are and what we are doing all the time' (Ying Ying, Chinese Student, 2nd Interview).

Ying Ying was reluctant to confine herself in the Chinese circle and intended to make friends with local students. However, she felt embarrassed to act individually. Her own closed group culture has blocked her Direct Interaction with the home students. She did not want to hurt the feelings of her flatmates and let them feel she was not getting along well with her group. It was hard to her to leave the monoculture group to join the large international group.

For students who chose **Indirect Interaction** coping strategy to survive in the academic environment, lacking of opportunities to make friends with home students is also disappointing. As Xiao Yong has argued:

> 'I think the disadvantage of this programme is coming as a large group. Except for some very good students, most of us are still in this group. We don't have much contact with students outside the group. It's better to come here individually or in a group of 5 or 6 in this respect. I have a friend who came here himself. I found he has integrated in the English society very well. He didn't have many Chinese around him, which has forced him to get along with English people. I have a cousin who wants to join the programme. I told him not to. He'd better apply to a university himself rather than coming as a group' (Xiao Yong, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

The existing cohort at this point was more multicultural as some of the international students had joined them. Meanwhile the Chinese students group was still monocultural (seven Chinese students from another Chinese university joined them). Under this circumstance, the identities of the Chinese student group and home students group were highlighted unconsciously. The advantage here has changed into a disadvantage which has hindered the Chinese students' integration with home and other international students in class.

> 'It is very hard for such a large group to mix with other British students. I think this is the biggest disadvantage of this kind of programme. I wouldn't choose it if I knew it. My overseas study is lack of something' (Xiao Qiang, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Like Xiao Qiang has shown above, the Articulation Programme students were very disappointed with the division in class. They felt something was missing in their overseas study. This requires concern from the school, university, staff, and the programme facilitators. How to create an integrated multinational class deserves attention from all stake-holders. This should also be a warning for both universities who are aiming to run a successful articulation programme. The current practices that have been developed to encourage integration in the class and university are presented in the following section.

6.3 Current Practice of Intergroup Contact

6.3.1 Structured Intervention by the University

Many activities to encourage international students' integration into the local society have been conducted at the university level. For example, to facilitate international students' settling down in the UK, Student Services at North Britain University had a team of international advisers to give students advice on their visa, jobs, study, and some day-to-day problems, such as personal, consumer, safety and cultural issues. They also organized some social activities to involve international students, such as 'Friends International' which recruited volunteers with at least one year learning experience at the university to provide training on cultural awareness, communication and interpersonal skills. These volunteers became buddies with one to two international students who were newly arrived in the UK. This was a great opportunity to help new international students make friends with students from all over the world and adjust to the new environment. However, no evidence was found about the participation in the 'Friends International' activity in this study.

The Student Union also organised 'Student Community Action' to encourage all students to make a difference in the local community through student-led volunteering projects. Among the participants, Min Min, Ling Ling and Li Li joined in the Student Community Action group and did a lot of volunteer work, such as cleaning the beach, telling stories to children and organizing parties for disabled people. They won the university award for their contribution in volunteer work. Li Li was appointed to be a team leader in a student-led volunteer project.

> 'The group members were from different courses. We learned a lot from each other. We went to clean the beaches and farms. I really enjoyed it. Our team organised a Christmas party for children. I sent emails to others. So I have to force myself to practise English and get to know other people' (Li Li, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Through actively participating in volunteer work, some students started to enlarge their friendship circle, improve their English and learn from other students. Another practice was trying to create culturally mixed

accommodation. Some students, such as Xiao Hua and Li Li, have made friends with and through their flatmates.

> 'My flatmates are from America, France and Ukraine. They ask me a lot about Chinese culture. I feel a sense of achievement. Sometimes they help me to dice the meat. We're getting on well with each other now' (Li Li, Female Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Li Li's flatmates were international students from other countries, who were interested in Chinese culture. This has given them a common topic. Li Li gained a sense of achievement through promoting her own national culture which was valued by the flatmates. The integration with her flatmates became an important channel for her to integrate with other students outside the group.

Xiao Hua's experience was clearly outstanding. He became friends with his flatmates, with whom he went to pubs, parties and played football. He was also invited to a flatmate's home and spent the Christmas holiday with his family. Through these flatmates, he made more friends. He attributed his success to international accommodation.

> 'Those days were wonderful. I didn't meet any Chinese. At the Christmas dinner, all his family members, his grandparents, uncles, aunties were all there. They were very warm to me. I brought some Chinese gifts. His grandpa had a company in Thailand. They have many arts from Thailand and China. He asked me to explain the meaning of the Chinese idiom 'Da Peng Zhan Chi' [A roc spreads its wings]. I explained it to him word by word. This experience is very precious. I can proudly say that nobody else has the same experience... No matter how much money you give me, I won't trade my accommodation' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Culturally mixed accommodation enabled Xiao Hua to experience more English culture than other students. Another important reason was his active attitude. He shared tips on getting along well with his flatmates.

> 'At the start, we didn't talk much. Just 'hello' or 'bye'. One day, I said 'we, Chinese, invite you to dinner'. After our first dinner, we became familiar immediately. They might think that we are very easy going as we invite them to dinner. We clean the kitchen up each time we used it. They said, 'you Chinese are very polite'. Now they often cook pasta and make pizza for me. When their friends come, they will introduce me to them. I get to know more friends in this way...We watch TV or play PC games after dinner... When there is some problem, we always say 'that's all right. It's

OK.' Every problem will be solved...We play football together, where I know many other guys...They asked me to go to pub and I went! In Halloween Party, I put hair wax on my hair, pulled it up, painted my face white and drew a large red scar. I was very uncomfortable at the beginning as I was the only Chinese there. Later, I got used to it. People saw me and said 'Chinese, cool' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

From the quotation above, we can see some reasons that contribute to Xiao Hua's successful integration with his flatmates apart from their culturally mixed accommodation. First, he took the initiative to talk to home students, which made them feel he was not shy, but very easy going. Second, he used strategies, such as cooking Chinese food for his flatmates. In a nice and friendly atmosphere, their distance was shortened. Last but not the least, he and his flatmates shared the same hobbies, such as watching TV, playing PC games and playing football. Similar to Li Li's experience, these gave them a common ground or a reason to talk.

Once friendship is built up, it will help Chinese students break the language barrier.

'They were very warm and encouraged me constantly, 'keep talking, keep talking'. My flat mates have studied French, Spanish or Latin at school. They know it's not easy to learn a foreign language. They said language needs practicing all the time. They told me, 'we will help you'....Don't care too much about your face. Sometimes you feel this word might be wrong. Don't worry, say it out. British students will say, 'pardon?'. Then you could say, 'I don't quite understand this. Maybe I can spell it to you'. Sometimes, I spell it on the electronic dictionary on my mobile and show it to him. When you spell it, he will say, 'oh, it is this'. Then he will tell you the meaning of the word... They are very friendly. They won't think you're a trouble...Gradually, you'll learn more words. Don't be shy. Once shy, you'll be shy next time. I speak it out every time. Don't be afraid. Say it out and you won't feel it's a barrier next time' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Here, Xiao Hua demonstrated how encouragement, empathy and friendship from the home students helped him to overcome the 'face' problem and language issue. These factors are essential in Xiao Hua's successful Direct Interaction with his the local students. Without these, integration is unlikely to happen. From the following example we can see this is a necessary condition for a successful integration. Xiao Ming and one of his classmates

stayed with three British flatmates. They tried to approach these home students on their own initiative, but felt very frustrated by their 'cold' reaction.

> 'We suggested going out for dinner or having a party. British students refused us. They said they were busy. We cooked Chinese dish for them, but they didn't eat. Those dishes are things what we're good at and very clean. They are what British students can accept, not Chicken feet, but they don't accept. We gave them pretty Chinese gifts, but they just had a look and put it aside carelessly. Our enthusiasm was poured down. One of them likes watching movie, so we want to invite her to go to watch 007 or High School Music, but there won't be any chance, because they're very cold. They three are a close group' (Xiao Ming, Male Chinese Students, 3rd Interview).

Xiao Ming has all the grounds for Xiao Hua's success in integration with British flatmates: he lives in a culturally mixed accommodation; he takes the initiative to talk to his flatmates; he uses some strategies, such as giving Chinese gifts and cooking Chinese food (clean and culturally accepted), and they share the same hobby (watching movies). However, his flatmates' 'cold' and 'careless' responses to his active gesture failed the communication. His intention to interact with the home students directly is blocked by the negative attitude of the interlocutors. Those three home students formed a close group in the dormitory. There is no 'encouragement, sympathy and friendship' shown in Xiao Hua's experience. Xiao Ming's experience shows that some of the home students are not ready yet for intercultural communication, due to the lack of preparation for developing intercultural competence. Simply being exposed to a culturally mixed environment, such as accommodation, does not definitely lead to cross-cultural communication or intergroup integration. More structured interventions are required to be conducted in the halls. Some people may attribute the failure of integration to the language barrier. Here, I need to point out that his score in IELTS was 7.0 before he came to the UK and the second is 8.0 in the final year. If IELTS is under the criticism that it cannot represent international students' language competence, then his academic achievement (1st class in his degree, 'ADM Prize for best final year project' and 'IET Prize for best overall student performance'), and his employment at a Hilton Hotel might show how advanced his language competence is. Xiao Ming later got to know more about the British society through his colleagues in Hilton.

Xiao Jie, who has adopted Avoiding Interaction strategy in his study, made friends on internet through playing PC games:

> 'I don't have many chances to practice English during the day. But I play Warcraft, a PC game developed by an American company, Blizzard. I chat with the group member in English. Most of the other group members are foreigners. I made some friends there. They are from different countries. We use English to communicate. To tell you the truth, most of my English was learned online' (Xiao Jie, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Outside the class, students like Xiao Hua and Li Li have made friends through volunteer activities or their accommodation. However, both of them complained that there was not any integration with home students in the class as described in the above section. The practices of intergroup contact at school level are discussed in the following section.

6.3.2 Structured Intervention by the School

At school level, no particular effort has been made to facilitate the integration in the class, except a football match which was held in the middle of the first term. This took place when some staff realized that the social disintegration and unfamiliarity amongst students in this multinational class was having a negative effect on peer learning. They organized the football match.

> 'I play quite a lot of football so I arranged a few games of football against the students last year and they seemed to mix quite well. Half Chinese and half English students' (Eric, British Staff Member).

This kind of structured contact between host and international students can benefit international students' experience (Quintrell and Westwood, 1994) and the mutual contact will also benefit the home students (Montgomery and McDowell, 2004). As Jim, the English student suggested:

> 'That's when the ice started to break, and a lot of the students started talking and things like that. With those three turning up, they will realise that we're not evil devils that are going to kill them and we are just a group of lads. The lad that came to the match last year, Lee, his English name, I still talk to him when I see him around the University' (Jim, Home Student).

Integration has helped peer learning in the class.

> 'In my group lab, all of them are Chinese, so when you do the labs together, someone asks me and I ask someone and it makes it easier' (Nina, International Student from Kuwait).

'I played football with some of them. They know me and always say hello to me. Last time in the lab, some students didn't know how to do the experiment. I showed them how to do it. Then we got to know each other. Although I could not name them, we do say hello to each other' (Xiao Hua, Male Chinese Student, 3rd Interview).

Studying with Chinese students enabled Jim to reflect on his past learning experiences and this highlighted a gap between high school and Engineering education at university level, a potential obstacle to young people studying Engineering. The percentage failure rate on Jim's course was high. Jim blamed it personally on the education system itself.

'Without going too much into it, there's a gap between University, college, college and school. From school to college, there's a gap in what people should be learning, and then from college to University there is a gap…there is such a big gap between what they learn in college for Maths to what they learn at University for Maths. There is a big, huge jump and that big jump puts a lot of people off, and unless they want to actually push themselves' (Jim, Home Student).

Studying with Chinese students, Jim made comparisons between the learning process of the two groups of students and attributed the high failure rate to the education system itself in the UK. He reflected on how to improve the standards of maths teaching in secondary schools and colleges in the UK. This shows that one of the impacts of the influx of Chinese students is to enable home students to reflect on their own experience of education.

However, only a few of them went to the football match and due to heavy workload, staff did not have enough time to organize this kind of structured activities. At the end of the first academic year there was still not much integration. When I encouraged students to discuss why separation had developed, some useful suggestions were given by the students.

First, students suggested that the icebreaking activities should be conducted at the start of the academic year. As presented in Section 6.2.2, the existing cohort did not know that a large group of Chinese students were going to join them. There were also no activities organised by the school to let the two cohorts to introduce themselves. There was no bridge when they came to the river. The gap was there without remedies to shorten it.

'Obviously, we are all doing Engineering so I'm sure we all have an interest in that, and I'm sure there are common interests among the group… It's just that we don't know...They've got no reason to speak to each other. And I know that sounds a bit strange, but what I would do is, when they first come over, don't have the first week of lectures, have the first week sort of team building, exercises, general sort of games where everyone gets involved and then if you sort of had to… If we had to speak to the Chinese and they had to speak to us and it happened, then we'd know a few names so when we go on for lectures and we've got assignments and things then we'd probably speak to people and say 'Oh, how's that going?' whereas if we go into a lecture and all the Chinese sat together and the English sat together, there's never really any reason for them to speak to each other' (William, British Student).

William pointed out that the one of the barriers that hindered their integration was a lack of contact. Students did not know their 'common ground'. Common ground identified through individual contact could help students to overcome segregation and the language barrier in the communication. As Charlie has pointed out:

'The main reason that there is no integration, I think it's because, obviously, all the Chinese people, they are in a different country and they are just together. I think a lot of the reason that the home students are put off is because they don't speak English, they speak Chinese to each other and it's like a barrier, because obviously unless we speak Chinese we can't interact, so if there was individual contact then people would find common ground and would start to talk and then it wouldn't matter if Chinese people spoke Chinese to each other because you could approach then. Now, We don't know what we have in common, we don't know what everyone is like and they don't know what we're like, and that kind of thing' (Charlie, British Student).

This group of students, whatever their nationalities, are Engineering students. This can be their common ingroup identity. The division by Chinese or British can be blurred if the common ingroup identity could be developed. The structured intervention, which should start as early as possible, can give both groups a reason to talk through team work and find a common ground. This kind of common ground will compensate for the existing language barrier.

Integration in the class enhances learning, which can benefit both groups. Jacky demonstrated how the two groups could learn from each other's strong points and make up for their own deficiencies in their studies. The exchange of ideas could lead to better solutions to questions.

'I think it would be a better experience because you get over that sort of thing at the start, and then you sort of create a rapport and you would be able to tap into each other's resources, like for instance, report writing or something like that, and different things that they are good at and I'm good at. And probably it would be slightly better, because the way that the home students go towards things, it could be completely different to the way Chinese students do. So having one of each sort of, you could bounce ideas off each other and then find the ultimate way of doing it' (Jacky, British Student).

Integration within the class can also help both groups to develop their intercultural competence.

'One of the best things about being at a University where there is a lot of international students is that you can learn about other people as well and how things like that go on. They have their ways of learning and we've got ours and you might come up with something better so… It's quite nice to actually get along with some of them and see how they do things and also try and pass on to the students on the English side' (Jim, Home Student).

Home students were willing to integrate with international students in the globalized learning environment. In the interviews, they asked me a lot of questions about Chinese students. Such as why did they choose the course? How were they educated in China? Are their tuition fees a lot more than they are in China? Is there much interaction between teachers and students in China? What are their future plans after graduation? Are there a lot of jobs waiting for them in china? These questions, which could have been answered by Chinese students directly, could be evidence that there was still not much integration after 18 months' study in the same classroom. This could also be evidence that home students were willing to get to know the Chinese students.

As presented in Chapter 5, making friends with home students was the Articulation Programme students' expectation while they were in China. Both sides had the willingness to know each other, which was a great contradiction with the current segregation in the class. The responsibility might be half and half. The school, argued by home students from a customer perspective, should take more responsibility in promoting integration.

'I don't think it's their fault that they don't integrate and it's just as much our fault as theirs, if anyone was to blame. It's just the

School needs to do something if they really care. I don't see why they would but, at the end of the day, everyone is paying, they've got their money; that's fine! [Laughs]. But if they'd wanted to chat, I guess the school could organise something and then that's a way of making it less daunting' (Charlie, British Student).

Apart from the school, staff could also have taken some actions to integrate the students in their teaching. This will be discussed in the following section.

6.3.3 Structured Intervention by the Staff

Considering the large size of the classroom, some actions could be done by the staff in their teaching to facilitate integration. As Max suggested below, staff could arrange seating to change the current 'front-back' division in the class and design some games for students to introduce themselves.

'That might be a good idea, a way of maybe for the first couple of lecture that maybe some sort of seating arrangement so you're deliberately not sitting next to someone you know, and also yes maybe some games would be a good idea where you all introduce yourself' (Max, British Student).

Changing the classroom to be more interactive between students, rather than just between teachers and students, might get everyone talking.

'In class, you could just get everyone talking. And like a professor, he turns the place into a forum rather than a lecture. He'll put something on the board and then get everyone talking and doing this and that. That's quite good because at the end everyone is shouting at each other because everyone has different opinions so it gets, you know... It's like when you meet anyone for the first time, you have to get everyone moving and talking and mixing up otherwise people will just stay in their set groups' (Charlie, British Student).

Group assignments and lab work, which enable students to have more individual contact, might help.

'They've asked us for help but haven't asked to join the group or anything, but, they have asked 'Oh, have you got this?' and I think we've asked them a few times and they've helped us. I think it's because there's more group assignment this year than last. So yes, that helps' (Jacky, British Student).

Students hoped to improve integration in a low-stake learning environment. The preference of 'no grades relying on it' illustrated why the group project discussed in Section 6.2.3.4 did not work to facilitate the integration.

'And so big puzzles that you have to sort and problems that they have to solve in groups and things like that. … I mean, things like

that would get people talking, and obviously it's fun, there's no grades relying on it so you're not worried in case someone doesn't pull their weight and things like that, and just things like that would be interesting and it gives you an opportunity to get to know people... When you start to think about the grades…Yes, you don't want anyone to drag you down...' (William, British Student).

Group work could also be designed to combine the different strengths of each group member, which can foster 'listening' in the group. With each member's contribution, this can be successfully accomplished.

'You need to have games at the start. Or you could do quizzes, like, where you have to get into groups with some English and some Chinese and there'll be questions that maybe sometimes on the English know and sometimes only the Chinese know. And then at least the English will listen to the answers and the Chinese will listen to the answers, so they are learning a little bit about the other cultures that way. I really do think that if you did have some games and things, a reason to talk to each other, then after that it would be so much easier because you have spoken to them before' (William, British Student).

The quotations presented above show vividly how active home students' attitudes are towards integration with international students. They welcome integration, but due to lack of opportunities, they could not find a reason to break the ice and talk to the Chinese. In fact, owing to the increasing position of Chinese economy, this kind of contact would be more valued.

'There're not many people that realise… They still think that the Western world, like, America and Europe is going to be the bigger industrial nations forever, and it's not. China probably will be in a few years. So it would be better to have more integration and to become friends with some of them so we do have contacts' (William, British Student).

Students also suggested going to China to meet the Chinese students before their coming to the UK. This interaction in China will be taken in the environment where Chinese students feel comfortable. Home students will also get information about Chinese students' previous learning experience.

'So maybe something like, over the Easter holiday maybe, in the first year, the English students go over to China and maybe even sit in a few lectures over there, and then you would also get interaction with them where they are comfortable, and then when they come over here, we might possibly know them a bit better. A lot of people would be up for that, would be willing to do it, especially if they could do some classes in there as well. I think a lot of students would love that; you get to see some Chinese Culture, you get to see various places and you get to do some

teaching ourselves or at least give a few lectures. And in some of the lectures, I think a lot of people would absolutely love that. I know if I was offered it, I would certainly have taken it' (Max, British Student).

When Chinese students come to the UK, both of the groups will then have somebody they know. They will not be strangers.

'That would be good because you come back and you would know the person and you would keep in touch, and then when they come back then you would meet up, and I think it would be better for them as well because then when they come over they're not strangers' (Jacky, British Student).

One example from Chinese students might support the possible results of the above suggestion. Min Min and Ping Ping went to a workshop held in Germany, where they worked in teams with students from the UK, France and Germany. One home student, Jason went there too. After one week's study, they got to know each other. When they came back, through Jason, Min Min and Ping Ping started to know some of the other home students in the class.

6.4 Conclusions

Being considered as special on the Chinese campus, the Articulation Programme students formed into a close group while studying in China. When coming to the English campus, they came across another group of students, primarily home students in the class. The unexpected meeting of two groups resulted in a long period of watching and comparing. Within this period no structured interventions were conducted to facilitate integration. Competition for insufficient resources, such as seating and the attention of the staff, caused hostility between the two groups. Home students felt threatened by the presence of such a large cohort of Chinese students, twice their group size. The large number of the Chinese group in the class has given students the power and influence to add impact on the learning environment and hindered students' establishment of friendship networks. Some students have tried to break the circle, but were dragged back to their own group.

The differences in languages and previous learning experience, such as questioning behaviour, have become the value differentials these students

used to distinguish between two groups. They gradually perceive themselves in two contrasting groups: 'Us' and 'Them'. Their social identities arose in their valuation of the differentials between the ingroup and outgroup. They were familiar with the behaviour of their ingroup members. The unfamiliar outgroup members were attributed by their personality or their nationalities: 'British' or 'Chinese', rather than as a response to changing circumstances (Bochner, 1982, pp.20-21). The divide in the class has hindered the learning in class.

Integration with home and other students was expected by the Articulation Programme students. However, due to the unbalanced number of Chinese students and home students in class and the insufficient help from the school, a visible divide formed. This unexpected learning environment in the class has made students question the structure of the Articulation Programme. Studying abroad as a group, which used to be considered as a facilitator to their study in the UK before leaving China, has hindered the Programme students' integration with the existing cohort in the class. The *close* group on the Chinese campus has changed into a *closed* group on the British campus. This research finds international students who travel abroad individually are easier to integrate with home students than students travelling as a group. The space around these international students gives the home students the opportunity to sit down and start talking. They will also go towards home students as they need friends. The Articulation Programme students were wired into their monocultural circle and had relied largely on their own group members.

Participants' outside classroom experiences showed that structured interventions, such as 'Student Community Action', could help students enlarge their friendship circle and aid the transition to the new environment. Culturally mixed accommodation is a controversial place for international students to make friends with home students. Simply being exposed to this kind of environment doesn't necessary lead to successful intercultural communication or intergroup integration. The correct attitude from both sides toward intercultural communication is necessary for a successful integration. The encouragement, empathy and friendship given by home students can

facilitate international students to overcome their language deficiency and participate successfully in communication. Meanwhile, language deficiency is not a definite factor that blocks the communication which is largely depend on the attitudes of both sides. How they respond is crucial in the integration. Therefore, structured interventions to promote the intercultural communication and the intercultural competence of all students are required in a culturally mixed environment, both inside and outside the class. This chapter also identified that structured interventions by the school and staff should be conducted at the beginning of the contact. A low-stake learning environment is argued to be effective in promoting integration, as students prefer group work with no grade attached. How to create an integrated multinational class deserves attention from all stake-holders. Running a successful articulation programme should take the experiences of all students into consideration.

Chapter 7 Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This final chapter consists of two parts. The first part provides a critical discussion on the findings presented in the previous two chapters by relating them with the existing literatures. It first explores the connection of personal factors－motivation, pre-departure preparation, language competence, and autonomy－with the transition process. The functions of social factors in transition are then discussed. The chapter then moves on to discuss the participants' interaction as a group with the existing cohort in the class. Finally, the impact of their transition on the teaching and learning contexts at both universities is discussed. The second part of this chapter first answers the research question by providing a conclusion from the evidence collected from the study. The contribution to knowledge is stated, followed by implications for practice and recommendations for stakeholders. An agenda for further research is suggested at the end.

7.2 Individual Transition Experience: Different Journeys and Different Outcomes

7.2.1 Model of Transition

Evidence found in this research has supported Burnett and Gardner's (2006) claim that the existing models of international students' transition experience cannot cover the individual complexities that constitute any sojourner's path of acculturation. My participants have experienced different journeys during their transition from Southeast China University to North Britain University. The outcomes of their transition experiences are different, which challenges the 'happy-ending' presumed in the existing intercultural development models.

Oberg's (1960) cultural shock theory gives a final stage of complete adjustment; Lysgaard's (1955) U-shaped curve theory shows a better integration into the foreign community; Kim's (2001) stress-adaptation-growth

model suggests that stress can promote transition in a positive way; and the developmental models reviewed in the above section all presume that the individual sojourners will move to integration, double-swing or internalisation. Findings of my research suggest that these ideas are too optimistic. Not all participants move to the stage of *integration*, *personal growth*, *double-swing*, *independence* or *internalisation* argued in these models. In contrast, some of the students achieved quite negative outcomes at the end.

Figure 7_1 Transition in the Third Space (TTS): Intercultural Transition Experience of Articulation Programme Students
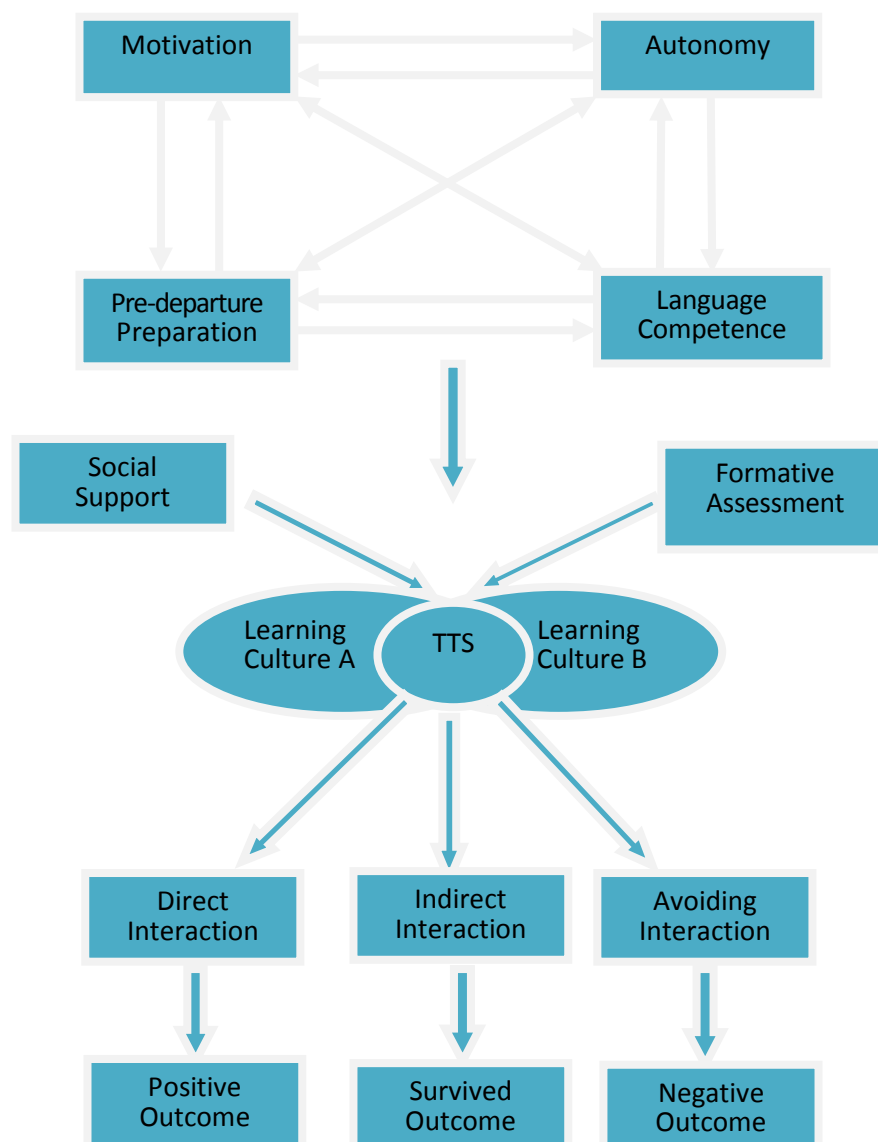
*TTS: Transition in the Third Space

Figure 7_1 demonstrates a model that primarily emerged from the academic environment based on the model presented on p.159 (see Figure 5_2). The

model shows that the Articulation Programme students' transition experience is an individual journey which depends largely on autonomy guided by their personal agency. They responded differently to the changes in their transition from the Chinese campus (Learning Culture A) to the British campus (Learning Culture B). In the process, they constructed their own third space when being confronted with a new learning environment (Feng, 2009). This third space is unique and located somewhere different for each learner (*ibid.*), and 'will make different sense at different times' (Kramsch, 1993, cited in Feng, 2009, p.75). In the process of transition in the third space, the three broad response categories identified in this research represent three key types of experience within my participants' group and are presented in terms of **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction** and **Avoiding Interaction**. They responded differently to contextual changes in their transition process driven by various level of autonomy. When looking at the social environment, there are some variations away from the model. One example is Xiao Ming's frustration in making friends with his UK flatmates no matter how hard he has tried to interact directly with them. This has demonstrated that the empathy, encouragement and support from the other interlocutor are important in facilitating international students' transition. Ying Ying's own closed group culture has blocked her Direct Interaction with the home students. However, Xiao Jie who has gradually avoided the interaction with the learning environment made friends on internet through team working in PC games. These variations indicate that the social environment is more complex than the academic environment and would require a further study.

The Articulation Programme students' transition experiences are closely related to motivation, pre-departure preparation, language competence, autonomy, social support and formative assessment practices. These factors are reciprocally related. The impact of these personal and social factors on my participants' transition experiences will be discussed in the following sections.

7.2.2 Motivation in Transition

In general, my research supports the findings of Chirkov *et al.* (2007) that international students who are self-determined in their decision to study

abroad achieve more positive outcomes in their transition abroad compared to those who are driven by non-self-determined reasons. My participants who perceived studying abroad as an interesting and enjoyable journey demonstrate great autonomy in the process of transition. Participants who understand the benefit of studying abroad on their future career accept studying abroad as personally important. Thus, they transformed external regulation into true self-regulation and internalized the extrinsic motivation. This kind of internalization was facilitated by pre-departure preparation which aimed to increase students' competence in the transition. Their transition process is also autonomously driven and leads to positive outcomes.

The results confirm the arguments of self-determination theory (Ryan and Deci, 2000) that intrinsic motivation, as well as internalized extrinsic motivation, can result in high-quality learning and creativity. My research also matches the findings of Ryan and Connell (1989), whose research demonstrates that positive coping strategies are more likely to be adopted by these students. Strong evidence lends support to the argument of Koestner and Losier (2002) that intrinsic and identified regulation can generate positive outcomes and successful adaptation to school transitions. Therefore, the open attitude and willingness to encounter both life and learning in Britain is the main pre-requisite for overseas students' successful study abroad (Gill, 2005).

Participants whose studying abroad is pushed by their decisive parents demonstrate less autonomy in their transition process. These students feel incompetent to interact with the new learning environment while studying abroad and thus unlikely to internalize their extrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2002). Some of them, like Fang Fang and Xiao Jie, tried to avoid interaction completely. Their transition is accompanied by more anxiety, frustrations and even failures. The results agree with Koestner and Losier's (2002) arguments that introjections place students at risk when negotiating important developmental transition. Heightened psychological distress is connected to their transition (*ibid.*), as found in Fang Fang's case. In line with self-determination theory, these students, overly controlled by their parents,

exhibit less initiative towards their study abroad and learn less well than those who are autonomously driven.

Evidence from this research endorses Ryan and Deci's (2000) argument that support for competence and autonomy facilitates the internalisation of students' extrinsic motivation. Pre-departure preparation is an effective method of competence support, as well as a personal resource development for living abroad, lending power to my participants and enabling them to build up their confidence and autonomy. It has facilitated my participants' to internalize the extrinsic motivation by improving their competence to cope with the changes in the new learning environment. Therefore, participants who have intrinsic motivation or internalized extrinsic motivation show great autonomy in their active attitude towards pre-departure preparation for the new learning environment. Participants who have negative feelings towards studying abroad show much less autonomy in pre-departure preparation than students who intend to stay longer in the UK to either continue their course or find a job. They follow the routines of the preparation activities led by teachers, but are reluctant to do extra work. These students are more likely to accept 'positive feedback' from the previous students about how easy life will be in the UK. How to prepare these students' study abroad needs further attention for programme educators on both sides.

7.2.3 Pre-departure Preparation in Transition

The findings of this research have supported the argument in the existing literature that pre-departure knowledge is crucial for sojourners' smooth transition abroad (Alred, 2003; Tsang, 2001; Black, 1988). The predictability of the new situation and students' anticipatory familiarity have been increased by well-designed preparation activities conducted by sending and receiving universities, and this has also reduced the uncertainty facing my participants (Tsang, 2001). This, in a sense, has also enhanced their readiness and ability to be open and flexible in a new learning environment (Alred, 2003). Evidence shown in this research matches the findings of Zhou, Topping and Jindal-Snape (2009) which identified that pre-departure preparations can help Chinese international students' successful adaptation to the UK educational system. My research also supports the findings of Gill

(2005, p.232) that a lack of preparation for academic culture and norms in British universities will lead overseas Chinese students to face challenges in the transition.

Bilingual education conducted in Southeast China University reflects the country's longing for *Zhuanye Waiyu Fuhexing Rencai* (talents with integrated skills in specialisation and a foreign language) in order to compete in the globalized world (Feng, 2005, p.540). It also demonstrates that English teaching in China has moved from pure linguistics to teaching professional knowledge through the media of English and Chinese. This has become a selling point for Chinese-English cooperative programmes and a way to make China's education system more competitive. As presented in Chapter 5, the practices in the current programme have been conducted unevenly due to the language competence of the lecturers, attitudes towards bilingual education and the contents of the subjects. However, evidence has shown that this approach can be an effective way to prepare students' studying abroad. Teaching in English and Chinese has built a bridge between English terminology and Chinese concepts. Disciplinary knowledge and language skills are obtained simultaneously. This preparation facilitates students to overcome the initial difficulties in academic language in class.

Early intervention aims to prepare students academically, linguistically and psychologically for their further study in the UK, and has ameliorated students' transition experience. Exposure to the authentic learning activities provided by staff from the receiving university has given students a chance to become familiar with approaches to teaching and learning and the requirements of UK education before their departure. This research argues that education transition is a mutual adaptation which is experienced by all the stakeholders in the transition process. Interaction between students and British staff before departure is a two-way preparation for both sides. This evidence supports Zhou and Todman's (2008) argument that international students' transition experience can be viewed as a reciprocal adaptation process between them and the staff at the host university. Another advantage of cooperative programmes as such is the academic exchange between sending and receiving universities. The evidence shows that these

efforts have facilitated my participants' transition abroad. The exchange of information at staff level makes the four years' teaching more coherent, which is a way of building an invisible bridge for Chinese students' transition.

Students' cultural capital is exemplified by becoming familiar with the new environment. Through cultural study before their departure, students become familiar with the signs or cues that might potentially lead to anxiety in the new environment abroad. The environment might be new, but it is no longer totally strange. This highlights the importance of preparation before departure. Sojourners are supposed to learn cultural differences in social interaction, such as language, non-verbal communication, rules, etc. to fulfil their mission effectively abroad (Argyle, 1982, pp.63-69). Therefore, students coming from a globalized society are bombarded with information about different countries, especially those they intend to pursue their study in. For transnational programme students, a naivety of the host culture is unlikely to be true, as their intercultural contact starts in their study in the home country. The visiting of academic staff from the host country, language preparation with native-speakers, internet surfing and feedback from relatives or friends abroad all exposed students to intercultural contact. Therefore, we cannot put them in an ethnocentric position even at the start of their transition experience. Chinese students on articulation programmes may experience the same difficulties that other international students face in their transitional stage. However, the cultural, linguistic and academic challenges faced by such students may have been decreased by the closing of the 'cultural gap' between their home context and the new context. Similarly, the closing of the 'language gap' and the 'academic gap' due to pre-departure preparation may also have an impact.

7.2.4 Language Competence and Autonomy in Transition

Different features on the new campus, classroom practices, and assessment requirements create new challenges for all students. Driven by different levels of autonomy, my participants developed different strategies to cope with stress, which are **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction**, and **Avoiding Interaction**. These coping strategies finally affected the extent to which they became autonomous learners in their transition. Among these

three groups, students who took **Direct Interaction** strategies to cope with the changes and demands in the new learning environment have high levels of confidence in their ability to accomplish the learning abroad and produce desirable outcomes (Bandura, 1997). They demonstrated high resilience towards the highs and lows in the transition and believed that consequences are under their own personal control. Facing the distractions of easy access to the **Internet** and more **privacy** in accommodation, students in the first group showed high self-management skills. **Peer support** was a facilitator in their transition. When Xiao Qiang could not understand the teaching, he went to the staff for feedback to improve his learning. The challenges stimulated him to think of new strategies to enhance his abilities to cope with difficulties, and thus triggered his development and learning (Brooker, 2008, p.7). However, students in other groups, such as Xiao Yu and Xiao Jie, attributed this to the unsupportive attitude and the laziness of the staff.

This research partly supports the argument that second language competency will influence international students' acculturation experience (Duru and Poyrazli, 2007; Lee, Koeske and Sales, 2004; Yeh and Inose, 2003; Poyrazli *et al*., 2002; Mori, 2000). Language competence does have a connection with transition. Participants with higher language competence show a willingness to ask for help, meet new people and participate in class discussions which, as proved by Duru and Poyrazli (2007), will reduce the level of their acculturative stress. Xiao Yu and Xiao Yong chose **Indirect Interaction** due to their lack of confidence in language. This supports MacIntyre's (1995) theory on recursive relations within anxiety, cognition, and behaviour. Lack of linguistic competence caused them stress, which on the other hand affects these students' second language acquisition by blocking direct interaction with the learning environment. Fang Fang and Xiao Jie retracted gradually when confronting language problems, e.g. Fang Fang's experience in Student Services and Xiao Yu's with academic staff.

However, participants with lower language competence, but high autonomy, are observed to choose **Direct Interaction** strategies. For example, although Xiao Qiang's English was not good, he still tried to communicate with staff via drawings and formulas. His deficiency in language did not hinder his

taking **Direct Interaction**, which becomes a way for him to improve his language instead. Participants, like Xiao Feng, who spoke very good English, chose **Avoiding Interaction**, because of a lack of autonomy. When he did not find teachers at the office, he just gave up. This research argues that the language barrier is not the most significant problem for my participants, which conflicts with Mori's (2000) and Smalley's (1963) viewpoints. Instead, the sojourner's autonomy is crucial in their transition, and greatly influences their academic performance.

7.2.5 Social Support in Transition

This research has found that social support is a facilitator for students' successful transition, which is consistent with the arguments of existing literature (Brown, 2009; Montgomery and McDowell, 2009; Duru and Poyrazli, 2007; Ye, 2006; Lee, Koeske and Sales, 2004; Yeh and Inose, 2003; Tsang, 2001; Searle and Ward, 1990; Adelman, 1988; Berry *et al.*, 1987; Bochner 1982). It helped my participants' coping with uncertainty and enhanced their perceived mastery and control (Adelman, 1988). This was particularly true for those who were weak in English and adopted **Indirect Interaction** strategies to cope with changes in the new environment. Compared with students using **Avoiding Interaction**, these students have higher connectedness and are more willing to seek help from other group members. This increased their social connections with social and academic environments and decreased their acculturative stress (Duru and Poyrazli, 2007; Lee and Robbins, 1998).

Consistent with Furnham and Bochner's (1982) international students' friendship pattern theories, a conational network is the most important social network in my participants' transition experience. The unique feature of the articulation programme, studying abroad as a group, binds the compatriot group together. Their conational network is largely within their own group formed in China. Therefore, it is more monocultural compared with other non-programme Chinese overseas students. This research, on one hand, finds that support from the conational group is the main effective source of support for Articulation Programme students at the initial stage. This supports the findings of Gill's (2007) and Li, Chen and Duanmu's (2010) studies. On the other hand, this research identifies that as time passed

participants, especially those adopting **Direct Interaction** strategies, built up their secondary network: bonds with host nationals, and a third network: multicultural friendship relationships. Thus, conational support becomes less dominant. They have various network resources to dealing with the difficulties in their transition. Meanwhile, those who adopted **Indirect Interaction** strategies still rely largely on the compatriot group. They only have part of the resources: their Chinese classmates. To support these students, I agree with Bochner's (1982) argument that conational contacts should not be 'administratively interfered with, regulated against, obstructed, or sneered at' as they have served a very important function in international students' study transition. Those who adopt **Avoiding Interaction** strategies misused this kind of support, which verifies the arguments that co-national relationships can be harmful (Ward, Bochner and Furnham, 2001), associated with more acculturative stress (Poyrazli *et al.*, 2004), and freeze international students' worldviews (Kosic *et al.*, 2004). Being indulgent and confined in this kind of monoculture limited these students' socialisation with the outside world.

The bicultural network and the multicultural circle can be easily found in those students who adopt **Direct Interaction** coping strategies. Their interactions with academic staff, working colleagues, flatmates, and volunteers at the Student Union etc., have provided them with various channels to set up bonds with host nationals. Through direct interaction with the environment, participants built up various contacts with native or international contacts, such as Xiao Ming's relationship with his colleagues, Min Min's relationship with the volunteers, and Xiao Hua's relationship with his flatmates and football team players. These contacts enabled them to develop local networks, understand local cultures and acquire social skills. This facilitated their sociocultural adjustment process (Li and Gasser, 2005), helped overcome the initial challenges (Elsey, 1990; Gill, 2007) and alleviated their psychological adjustment (Kashima and Loh, 2006).

However, this research, as well as studies in the existing literature (Gu, Schweisfurth and Day, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2007; Volet and Ang, 1998), has found that it is not easy for international

students to make friends with host nationals. For instance, in this research, the multicultural classroom could have been an ideal place to set up these networks, but failed to be so due to the separation situation presented in Chapter 6. Internationally mixed accommodation, in Xiao Ming's case, also failed to be a place for students to get to know each other and build long-standing cross-cultural friendships, which has also been argued by the study of Bochner, Hutnik and Furnham (1985). Therefore, my research argues that simple exposure to a culturally-mixed environment cannot foster the intercultural competence and integration of international and home students. This has echoed the findings of Brown (2009), whose research does not uphold the claim of Hofstede (1991) that the presence of international visitors can foster cultural awareness in the host society.

Therefore, both sending and receiving universities and schools involved in the articulation programmes should take more responsibility to help Articulation Programme students build up bonds with members of the host and other international cultures. In this research, although the receiving university had set up specific arrangements, such as international advisors to provide social support and facilitate sojourners' settlement in the new environment as argued by Tsang (2001), these arrangements have not reached their full potential. For instance, Fang Fang did not go to see the international advisors until she failed the academic year. Therefore, universities have to bear in mind that some taken-for-granted methods may not be effective. Personalized support is argued to give special help to students who are facing difficult transition.

7.2.6 Formative Assessment in Transition
The existing literature has suggested that international students under transition suffer a lot of stress from academic challenges in the host university (Sovic, 2008; Ying, 2005). Evidence found in this research supports the argument in the literature review that formative assessment can be a way to nurture students' transition by helping them cope with the challenges. The large proportion of formative assessment in the six modules (EN0213, EN0214, EN0215, EN0216, EN0217 and EN0219) has transformed Yan Yan, Ling Ling and Li Li from students who 'cram' for

examinations to those who work hard on their learning during the term, which facilitates their success in the transition. This supports Hussey and Smith's (2010) assertion that increasing proportions of formative assessment can be a guide to facilitate students' transfer from surface learning to deep learning, and is a means to monitor their transition. For students who are less autonomous in their learning, like my participants adopting **Avoiding Interaction**, this is more important. More can be done to facilitate Articulation Programme students' transition by assessment. The module of Project Design (EN0213) is an example which illustrates this argument.

First, the assessment task is an extension of the design course students had in the last semester in China. Students were looking forward to continuing such interesting tasks in the UK. Therefore, the connectivity between these two assessment practices is bridged in the transnational articulation programme. Second, it is less risky compared with examinations, and has reduced students' stress. Being asked to write three reports and give one presentation together, students have opportunities to learn and make improvement. Third, it pays attention to the process rather than the results. During the learning, timely feedback was provided at weekly workshops. This not only benefits both teaching and learning (Biggs, 2003), but also avoids the problem of examinations: which are too late for early feedback (Light and Cox, 2001). Timely feedback also enabled my participants to identify gaps by comparing their current performance with the assessment standards (Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006; Carless, 2003). Finally, as the only module that assesses students' attendance, it becomes a means to monitor the transition of my participants, especially those with low self-management ability. For instance, Fang Fang and Xiao Jie, who have been absent from many classes, went to each of the workshops and made contributions to their group project. Considering these students' previous learning experience in China, this kind of assessment acted as a bridge for their transition abroad.

International students, especially those coming from collectivist societies, are connected closely with a concern about plagiarism in Western universities (Ryan, 2000). Chinese learners have been described as passive and rote learners, adopting surface learning styles, relying largely on mechanical

memorisation without understanding and lacking creativity and original thinking (Ramburuth and McCormick, 2001). These are all considered by western scholars as low-level cognitive learning styles. As Feng (2009) has warned, these essentialist or reductionist views of culture are context dependent and cannot be generalized to all students. The nature of collectivist culture in China may have changed due to the 'One-Child Family Policy' and the independent and creative education in the last decade. It might not be appropriate to view 'Chinese International Students' as a fixed term nor ignore the country's fast developing situation as well as the change in the sojourners' attributes before their arrival. Understanding international students' transition experience through their national cultures or cultures of learning will lead to the tendency of stereotyping individuals (Holliday, 2010; Montgomery, 2010; Feng, 2009; Tian, 2008; Gieve and Clark, 2005; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Stephens, 1997).

Evidence in some studies (see Montgomery 2009; Peacock and Harrison, 2009) demonstrates how these stereotypes could influence students' integration in class to a certain extent. For example Montgomery's (2009) study shows that there is remaining evidence of negative stereotypes and prejudice about Chinese students, such as poor language competence and reluctance to contribute to group discussion. These opinions have prevented the formation of multicultural group work in her study. Peacock and Harrison (2009) also observed a specific issue of interaction between British students and Chinese students who were viewed to be 'the most culturally distant, to be the most likely to exhibit self-excluding behaviours, to have the poorest language skills, and to share the fewest cultural reference points' (p.507).

Not all 'Chinese students' observed in my study share the above features. Taking a microscope perspective on my participants' transition experience individually, I found my participants, especially those who adopt **Direct Interaction** coping strategies, responded well to the new requirements of assessment practices in the host university. They demonstrated great ability to be independent and critical in their learning. The authentic assessment practices in both universities helped the students to link the knowledge they have learned in the class to real life practice. Their so-called passive and

cure-seeking behaviours have changed, which demonstrates that students' learning behaviours are not fixed, as described in the culture of learning. They can be changed in the same 'culture', but by the different practices. It is largely up to how staff carry out their teaching and assessment practices.

7.3 Studying Abroad as a Group

Evidence from this research shows that the transition of this group of students is unavoidably affected by the unique feature of the articulation programme: studying abroad as a group. Their group formed earlier when being considered as a special group on the Chinese campus. As '**Students in Sino-British Class'**, they received a certain degree of discrimination and isolation on campus, which drove them to become a close group. When these students arrived at the English campus, they came across an existing cohort of students in class. These two groups generated their own social identity through interaction. 'Chinese students' and 'British Students' became what they called each other. The following sections will critically discuss the findings presented in Chapter 6.

7.3.1 Us and Them: Unavoidable?

Consistent with Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981) and Self-Categorization Theory (Turner *et al.*, 1987), evidence in this research shows that without proper intervention by the school and staff, the interaction between these two cohorts in the same class results in two social and psychological groups: Us & Them. Neither the sending nor the receiving universities inform their students about the possible change of classroom culture, which leads to their quite negative feeling about their first meeting in the class. Being 'shocked' and 'overwhelmed' by the presence of the 'whole bunch of Chinese' sitting in the front, the existing cohort (predominantly British) felt 'vulnerable', 'irritated' and 'frustrated' in the newly merged classroom. This supports the argument of Bochner (1982) that cross-cultural contact can be either a threatening or an enhancing experience.

> 'It will be threatening if the other person is regarded as a deindividuated outsider intruding on a group's established territory, undermining the values and diluting the cultural identity of its member. The contact can also be enhancing, if the other person is regarded as a different but interesting individual, whose presence does not constitute a territorial infringement but instead an

opportunity to learn something about the world at large' (Bochner, 1982, p.37).

In the classroom of the present research, the group of Chinese students are numerically large, but home students are the dominant cultural group considering they are consistent with the host culture in the university and country. The dominant cultural group always feel threatened by the presence of cultural minority groups whose size increases (Nesdale and Todd, 1998, p.1201). Evidence from this study supports Peacock and Harrison's (2009) findings that where the ratio of international students is higher, less interaction between UK students and international students are observed. Work groups tend to crystallise around national and language groupings (*ibid.*).

This Chinese-dominant classroom was also not in keeping with the Articulation Programme students' expectation, and caused their feeling of being disappointed with the programme and their study abroad. These negative feelings were worsened by the competition for insufficient resources in this large and culturally dramatically changed classroom, such as seating and attention from the staff. This supports the experiment results of Sherif (1967) that the competition for insufficient resources will cause hostility between groups. Findings from this research demonstrate that the group of Articulation Programme students took in other Chinese students in the class, while the existing cohort, dominantly home students moving on from the first year, took in students who repeated the second year as well as international students from outside China (the Chinese students' group still outnumbered the British students dramatically). Their cooperation in class, such as the assessment of the Group Project (EN0213), was conducted within their own groups. Therefore, the formation of groups not only influences the choice of friends, but also increases the solidarity and cooperativeness within each group (Sherif, 1967).

Group work is mainly conducted monoculturally due to segregation in the class and the lack of structured intervention by staff. It failed to be an opportunity to prepare students to function in an international and inter-cultural context (De Vita, 2002; Volet and Ang, 1998; Knight and de Wit,

1995). I am reluctant to attribute the 'monocultural' phenomenon to 'culture'. My participants and the existing cohort chose their group members from their own group. As the group of my participants are all from China, their academic groups are indeed 'monocultural'. However, the existing cohort, although mainly British, was more diverse in culture. They have students from other countries. Nina, a female student from Kuwait, was in a group with home students. Her group members are students who repeated the second year. These students knew each other very well and were willing to work together. Therefore, a lack of enough contact should be blamed for the 'monocultural' phenomenon. 'Culture' should not be over-emphasized in understanding the segregation in intercultural group work.

The 'front-back' seating shows a visible geographic division in the class. The different classroom behaviours in asking and answering questions split the two groups invisibly. The double-language barriers in the class have hindered the peer learning in the class. These meaningful differences between the ingroup and the outgroup was perceived by the groups of students as the important attributes or common experience shared by their ingroup members, and contributed to the generalisation of their group identities (Schmitt, Spears and Branscombe, 2003). Once this social categorization is done, the tendency for in-group favouritism and out-group derogation is evident (Hewstone, Rubin and Willis, 2002). When the group characteristics are prominent, individuals categorise themselves and others in terms of their belonging to groups and interact on intergroup behaviour rather than an interpersonal level (Byram, 2008).

Here, the findings support Gaertner and Dovidio's (1986) argument that seating is a factor in reducing group bias. Their research shows that manipulation of the seating arrangement can reduce group bias through changing group representations. Therefore, at the beginning of the academic year, staff could integrate the groups by arranging them in a mixed seating pattern. Poor group dynamics in the class can cause these students to become anxious, which leads to worry and rumination in answering questions in a second language (MacIntyre, 1995). The splitting situation is strengthened by the obstacle of communication: double-language barriers.

As Byram (2008) argues, the presence of another language is one indicator of group difference, which accentuates the presence of group characteristics. The power of the number of the Chinese group in the class results in two main languages in the class: Chinese and English. Home students described their feeling as being intimidated by when surrounded by the Chinese language, even within their own country (the UK). For the existing cohort, not knowing the strangers' language and their perspectives caused anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst, 2005).

Evidence from this study suggests that international students who travel abroad individually are easier to integrate with home students than students travelling as a group. It is easier for the host nationals to accept them. This matches the findings of Zhou and Todman (2008) that students coming in a group have fewer chances to learn about a different culture and practice less in English than students coming individually. The possible reason might be that contact would appear to be best promoted in an unequal ration condition, and members of a minority group experience significantly more contact than members of equal-sized groups (Nesdale and Todd, 1998, p.1210). This could partly explain the in-group and out-group distinction theories which are closely related to individuated-deindividuated distinction. As Bochner (1982, p.35) has pointed out, 'deindividuated persons tend to be treated less favourably than individuated ones'. Hypothetically, out-group members are more deindividuated than members of the in-group, which leads to the further hypothesis that individuating the out-group members could reduce discrimination against them (Bochner, 1982, p.13). Decategorization allows members of each group to perceive each other as separate individuals and enhance integration.

Compared with home students, separation in the class was more disappointing for the Chinese students, especially those who had high expectations to make friends with British students, even when they were in their home country. For home students, they have their own life, friends, and family members in their country. The motivation for their taking the Engineering course is to find a job. Some of the home students I interviewed borrowed loans from the government and had to do a part-time job after

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class. There is no luxury of time for them to hang out with the Articulation Programme students who have a lot of spare time. Making friends with international students is not their 'centre of gravity' in their social lives and motivations (Montgomery, 2010), and is limited by their economic situation.

However, the separation in class does have an impact on the learning of both sides. A student's most important teacher is often another student (Chickering and Reisser, 1993). Both groups do not know how to break the ice to ask for help. Peer learning has been constrained within their own groups, as well as the group work required by some modules. In this class, both of their classmates' relationships are incomplete due to the isolation of two groups. This might affect their self-confidence, as some of them feel uneasy sitting in a class in such a manner. The helplessness in breaking the circle shows the gap in the pre-departure preparation. Currently, it has involved the Chinese Articulation Programme students and the British staff. The current situation asks educators and policy-makers to engage the existing cohort, mostly home students, in the process as well. As an influential part of the class, the preparation for this cohort's readiness in communicating with new-comers will not only have impact on the Articulation Programme students' transition experience, but also the success of the programme as a whole. The increasing tuition fees paid by home students require universities to take care of their benefits as customers as well.

Both the Articulation Programme students and the existing cohort demonstrate willingness to know each other, which is a great contradiction to the current segregation in the class. Both groups show their understanding of the benefit of integration on their learning experience and future career. However, due to the reasons discussed in the above section, they are still wired into their own group. They argued from the customer perspective that the school should take more responsibility in promoting integration (see also Peacock and Harrison, 2009). A lack of preparedness for both groups and early structured intervention, such as icebreaking activities, means the integration of the two groups in the class is hard to realize, leading to separation and bias. The status of separation and bias strengthened the distinction between in and out-group membership. This research cannot

predict that with proper preparation and structured activities, the 'Us' and 'Them' phenomenon can be avoided. It might be a hypothesis for future research. However, the possible solutions discussed in the following section can be implemented by transnational articulation programmes in the future.

7.3.2 How to Create the 'We'

7.3.2.1 Developing Common Ingroup Identity

As discussed in Chapter 3, Gaertner and Dovidio's (2000) Common Ingroup Identity Model based on the idea of recategorization of different groups into one group might be useful in diminishing the discrimination between groups in this research. My participants, Sino-British Articulation Programme students, and the existing cohort (dominantly home students) share a common superordinate category (Engineering students on the same campus). Gaertner and Dovidio (2000, p.48) propose that increasing the salience of existing common superordinate memberships, such as a school or introducing factors like common goals, can achieve common ingroup identity. Once this kind of identity is perceived, more positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are believed to develop toward the former outgroup members (*ibid.*). Within this positive context, more elaborate and personalized impressions will soon develop, which initiates a second route to achieving reduced bias (*ibid.*). Setting up a common ingroup identity can make both sides feel part of the community and thus enhance their commitment to the university, as suggested by the findings of Dovidio *et al.* (2001, p.177). They are more willing to recommend the university to others and have higher intention to complete their degree at that university (Snider and Dovidio, 1996, cited in Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000, p.140). By expanding the inclusiveness of one's ingroup to include students who would otherwise be considered as outgroup members, the perceptions of the memberships can be transformed from subordinate 'Us' and 'Them' to a more inclusive superordinate 'We' (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000; Gaertner, Dovidio and Bachman, 1996). The likelihood of positive interracial behaviours is supposed to be increased, and the intergroup attitudes (prejudice), cognition (stereotypes) and behaviour (discrimination) can be decreased (Dovidio *et al.*, 2001).

In the process of transforming the perceptions of the memberships from subordinate 'Us' and 'Them' to a more inclusive superordinate 'We' (Gaertner, Dovidio and Bachman, 1996; Gaertner and Dovidio, 2000), we cannot presume that the distinction of two groups will vanish completely. 'The distinction between "us" and "them" can be blurred which results in a stage where people become partially "them", i.e. incorporate some of "their" characteristics without however losing their own ethnic identity' (Bochner, 1982, p.37). Considering the fact that the Articulation Programme students have been in a close group for two years, it is impossible for them to abandon their own group identity completely. Therefore, they could keep their identity as 'Sino-British Articulation Programme Students' while developing the Common Ingroup Identity with the existing cohort as 'Engineering Students' on the same campus. During the process, personalised intergroup interactions should be encouraged for them to know each other individually. Activities suggested by the student interviewees in this research demonstrate that building a low-stake learning environment in which collaborative group work can be conducted will facilitate cooperative intergroup interactions.

7.3.2.2 Building a Low-Stake Learning Environment

Cross-cultural group work is expected to promote the integration of international students and host nationals in a multicultural class. This has been proved by several studies (see Mills *et al.*, 2007). However, in the current study, home students worried that international students' language limitations could prevent them working effectively and pull down their grade, while international students also worried that a lack of familiarity with the home students' academic performance might undermine their group score too. These barriers prevent them from stepping forward to get to know the other group. Other studies (see Peacock and Harrison, 2009; Volet and Ang, 1998) have also identified the same phenomena.

This research finds that when students are assessed by group work, the desire to have a mixed-culture group is given lower priority than academic performance. This has supported the argument of Montgomery (2009) that low stakes assessment environments created by formative assessment can

exert a positive influence on students' perceptions of intercultural group work. Peacock and Harrison (2009) also found that home students prefer to work in monocultural groups because they are worried that their final mark might be compromised by the challenges of a multicultural group. Data in this research shows that both groups have the same concerns about working with students from other groups (rather than simply being divided by nationality). Both sides worried that a lack of familiarity with each other's past performance and the language barrier will prevent effective group work and pull down their grade. Unbalanced numbers make the minority group (not Chinese in this case) feel intimidated and excluded. It is a kind of protection for them to form their own group to conduct group projects. Therefore, this research argues that structured interventions should be taken as early as possible to enable students to get to know each other. As Bochner (1982, p.20) has commented, 'the better we get to know other people the more do we come to regard them as we regard ourselves'. Without this, the unfamiliarity between each group will hinder the possibility of facilitating intergroup integration through academic group work. Research also finds that this kind of cooperation should be a series of activities to produce a cumulative effect rather than a one-off event (Sherif, 1967). This can explain how the effort some staff members went to in this research, such as setting up football matches, has produced a very weak effect.

Comparatively speaking, my participants have achieved more positive outcomes than their counterparts in their group work, with 14 out of 50 Articulation Programme students achieving over 70% in the group project. Students' final assessment results also show that the standard of the course has improved due to the Chinese students' participation in it (see Section 5.5). This can provide very strong evidence to dismiss the concern that the presence of international students might reduce academic standards at the host university (See Devos, 2003). My participants' positive achievement in the group project can be the evidence to remove the stereotypes that may act as barriers to the development of educationally rich and rewarding inter-cultural interactions via multicultural group work (De Vita, 2002, p.159). Therefore, more effective design of group work should be conducted to enable students to perceive the strength of working in multicultural groups.

This will eliminate their concerns about the complexities of working with students from different countries and improve their intercultural competence. How to build a low-stake learning environment through formative assessment to enhance integration in a multicultural class deserves attention in future study.

In the process of reducing intergroup bias, enhancing intercultural competence can be an additional facilitator.

7.3.2.3 Enhancing Intercultural Competence

Students will have intercultural experience when they meet others from different social groups with different values, beliefs and behaviours (Byram, 2008, p.206). Studying in a multicultural environment could be a valuable opportunity for students to develop intercultural competence. My participants' social experience in the new learning environment shows that their attendance as a group arouses group awareness in the existing cohort as well. In the sudden culturally changed environment, their socialisation in the class whilst acting as groups provides them with a sense of security and enhances favouritism towards insider group members (Tajfel, 1981). This formation of in-groups also provides opportunities for experience of otherness－other groups' cultures including their conventions, beliefs, values and behaviours (Alred, Byram and Fleming, 2003). Therefore, the intergroup encounter experience encourages students to question the given conventions and values within their group and will lead students to become 'intercultural' (*ibid*.).

However, experience alone is not enough. As Alred, Byram and Fleming (2003, p.4) have pointed out, the experience of otherness only creates a potential for questioning the taken-for-granted aspects of one's own self and environment, but being intercultural requires more than that:

> 'It is the capacity to reflect on the relationships among groups and the experience of those relationships. It is both the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyse the experience and act upon the insights into self and other which the analysis brings' (Alred, Byram and Fleming, 2003, p.4).

Therefore, apart from experience, reflection, analysis and action are also necessary. Although there is some evidence that students experienced some

level of the intercultural experience, the defensive attitudes towards each other in the classroom hindered the potential for students' integration and their cultivation of the ability to reflect on the relationships among groups and the experience of those relationships.

The findings of this research are in line with the study of Savicki (2008) in suggesting that adequate preparation is necessary for learners' intercultural competence. Findings in this research demonstrate that both the Articulation Programme students and the existing cohort have a high level of interest to get to know each other, but a low level of knowledge and skills to do so. Essential knowledge and skills are necessary to function effectively in this multicultural class. As Volet and Ang (1998) have argued, successful intercultural contact can only be achieved if both parties are prepared to make it work. They point out that universities should take a social responsibility to develop students' intercultural adaptability through creating suitable learning environments. Currently, the pre-departure preparation has not included the home students, whose attitude and competence in participating in the communication is crucial for enhancing the integration in the class and on campus.

Therefore intercultural competence education should be one important part of the preparation for both parties in the Articulation Programme. Being interculturally competent can help them to break the ice, move out of their circles and become integrated. As Byram (2008, p.69) has pointed out, acting interculturally requires both group members to be willing to suspend the deeper values acquired in early socialisation in order to understand and empathise with the values of others that are incompatible with one's own. Universities on both sides should provide training to the students to have the ability to become intercultural speakers, who are 'aware of cultural similarities and differences', and can 'act as mediator between two or more cultures, two or more sets of beliefs, values and behaviours' (Byram, 2008, p.75). Currently, the pre-departure preparation has included some parts of cultural learning to appreciate the similarity and differences between British and Chinese culture. One aim of English language teaching is to increase the intercultural communicative competence. However, consistent and

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holistic training on intercultural competence has not been conducted. The circumstance of excluding the existing cohort from this preparation has made the demand more urgent. Structured intervention enhancing intergroup integration can also be carried out as a way of education to promote a sense of interculturality (Alred, Byram and Fleming, 2003). More encouragement on reflection, analysis and action should be included in education, by which an intercultural competence can be enhanced (*ibid.*).

7.4 Transition and the Impact on the Teaching and Learning Context at Two Campuses

7.4.1 Impact on the Teaching Practices

The transition experience of the Chinese Articulation Programme students and the intention to facilitate this transition has impacted on both universities, making the two teaching and learning contexts more connected. As presented in Chapter 2, the Articulation Programme, as one of the formats in Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS), is encouraged by the Chinese government to provide the introduction of high quality education resources from cooperative universities abroad. Southeast China University takes this as a way to extend their international cooperation and thus improve their teaching and research. North Britain University also values the Articulation Programme students' contribution to their revenue and the internationalization of their university culture. Therefore, both universities start to link with each other closely at an academic level. The exchange of information at a staff level makes the four years' teaching more coherent, which is a way of building an invisible bridge for Chinese students' transition. Teaching and learning has become more internationalized in both universities

In agreement with Zhou and Todman (2008), evidence from this research shows that participants' transition experience has an impact on the teaching at the host university. The presence of this large cohort of Chinese students has also motivated some of the academic staff to modify their teaching to adjust to their learning, not only because of their weak points but because of their strengths as well. Both staff and students adjusted their teaching and

learning strategies in the process of adaptation, which resulted in gains for both parties (*ibid.*).

7.4.2 Impact on Peer Learning

The current research also adds a new dimension to Zhou and Todman's (2008) work by including the perspectives of home students and other international students to triangulate findings. The impact on peer learning is an important finding. The adjustment conducted by British staff to support Articulation Programme students' transition has caused some complaints from the other students in class. The social disintegration and unfamiliarity amongst students at the initial stage has hindered the peer learning. Figure 5_1 shown on p.158 demonstrates that there is a great academic divide in the class. The academic performance of the full-time home students is not as good as their Chinese counterparts. It is hard to say that the negative outcome is caused by the participation of the Chinese Articulation Programme students, which has greatly changed their classroom culture. A further study is required to explore the phenomenon. Studying with Chinese students enables home students to reflect on past learning experiences and this highlights a gap among secondary school, college and university education, which could be a potential obstacle to young people studying Engineering. This verifies the argument of Lam's (2006) research in Hong Kong that sojourners' adaption process is a reciprocal adjustment between them and their local counter-parts. These findings remind us that we should never overlook the impact of sojourners on local people and local culture (Byram and Feng, 2006).

All in all, the strength of the large group culture has influenced the teaching and learning practices in the UK partner university, which has meant that change also occurred in the host context. Instead of passively adapting to the learning culture in the UK, the large group of Chinese students, who have become the majority in the classroom, actively influence the teaching and learning practices in the university. Thus, international students are no longer being seen as a source of income generation and as problematic, but as 'a source of cultural capital and intentional diversity, enriching the learning experience both for home students and for one other, expanding staff

horizons, building a more powerful learning community and thus deepening the HE experience as a whole' (Brown and Jones, 2007, p.2). Therefore, where there are carefully planned and well-designed bridging programmes, change becomes a two-way process.

7.5 Conclusions

7.5.1 Answers to the Research Question

This study aims to explore transnational Articulation Programme students' transition experience between the educational context in China and the UK, with the objective to investigate the factors that have influenced students' transition and the impact of students' transition on the educational context in both Chinese and UK higher education institutions. The main research question of this study is: **How do Chinese Articulation Programme students experience their transitional stage from China to the UK?**

This research argues that international students' transition experience is a complex journey and cannot be oversimplified by any of the existing models. Understanding their transition experience from the perspectives of national cultural theory or culture of learning theory is more likely to fall into the trap of stereotyping. Therefore, a microscopic perspective focusing on individual factors together with a contextual perspective focusing on situational factors are suggested to make a better understanding of their intercultural transition. The findings indicate that Articulation Programme students' transition experience is an individual process, in which they construct their own third space in confronting changes in the new learning environment. The process of transition is influenced by their personal factors, such as motivation for studying abroad, pre-departure preparation, language competence and autonomy, as well as situational factors, such as social support and formative assessment practices. Autonomy was identified as more crucial in transition than language competence. In their different responses to the new learning environment, three broad categories that represent the key types of experience were identified: **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction**, and **Avoiding Interaction**. Many factors, such as 'Internet', 'Privacy' and 'Peer support', can be 'double-edged' in that they can have negative or positive impacts depending upon the student's transition response.

These students' transition experience has great impact on the learning environment. A lack of proper interventions at the initial stage, the competition for insufficient resources, double-language barriers and the different questioning behaviour in the class lead these two groups of students to self-categorize themselves into 'Us' and 'Them'. The separation in the class has a negative impact on the peer learning in the class. Both groups demonstrate a willingness to integrate with each other. Therefore, developing a low-stake learning environment, enhancing intercultural competence and developing Common Ingroup Identity (Engineering students on campus in this case) are suggested to promote integration in class. The transition experience of the Chinese Articulation Programme students and the intention to facilitate this transition have impacted on both universities, making the two teaching and learning contexts more connected and internationalized. The exchange of information at staff level makes the four years' teaching more coherent, and is a way of building an invisible bridge for Chinese students' transition.

7.5.2 Contribution to Knowledge

This study has made contributions to the existing knowledge in the following facets:

First, it focuses on the intercultural transition experience of Transnational Articulation Programme students, which is an under-studied area due to the complexity of the new phenomenon of Transnational Higher Education. The findings have implications for global cooperation as such not confined to China and the UK.

Second, it advanced the understanding of international students' transition experience by extending the scope of perspectives from international students only to other stakeholders in the process, such as home students, parents, academic staff and administrative staff at both universities. The intention of including various voices in the study is to provide a comprehensive and holistic understanding of the phenomenon by triangulating the themes generated from the grounded data.

Third, this study pays attention to the process by propelling the research time range forward to the last semester in China. 15 months' fieldwork in China and the UK provides educators on both sides with an in-depth analysis of the learning experience of the Articulation Programme students including their motivation and pre-departure preparation.

Fourth, the unique feature of the Articulation Programme, i.e. studying abroad as a group, provides a precious chance for intercultural research to explore the interaction with home students and the impact of a large cohort of Chinese students on the teaching and learning environment on the host university. The findings generated in this research contribute to the existing knowledge which focuses on the international students' transition individually.

Fifth, the diversities in my participants' transition experiences challenge the cultural stereotype posed on the homogeneous address of Chinese students abroad. Their different coping strategies presented in **Direct Interaction**, **Indirect Interaction**, and **Avoiding Interaction**, lend strong support to my argument that the transition experience is not culturally determined, but depends largely on students' autonomy, guided by their personal agency. Situational factors, such as social support and formative assessment practices, can facilitate their transition, but their usefulness depends on students' autonomy and response to what is on offer.

Finally, it developed a conceptual model of intercultural transition grounded in the theories of motivation, autonomy, second language learning, intercultural competence, and social identity to provide an explanation of the process of transition. This model includes both personal and social dimensions in which the social groups operate in China and the UK. It is not just about how individuals make the transition experience, but considers the broader social context and the wider material context. This detailed explanatory model is situated in the day-to-day lived experience of students and staff, rather than relying on a small number of structural variables to explain and model the learning experience.

7.5.3 Implications for Practices and Recommendations for Future Research

This research portrayed a comprehensive picture of the Articulation Programme students' experience in their transitional stage from China to the UK. The findings provided some useful suggestions for policy makers and teaching staff on how to bridge the two stages of teaching and learning effectively and how to successfully facilitate students' transition. The stakeholders in the transition experience can benefit from the findings generated from this study.

For students undergoing intercultural transition through Transnational Higher Education programmes, it is suggested they think clearly before making the decision on studying abroad. They should ask themselves whether it is in line with their interests or benefits their future. Their willingness to take the action and their confidence in performing the tasks are very important. Meanwhile, the pre-departure preparation should be given great attention in order to generate familiarity with the academic culture of the partner university, build up language and cultural competence, and also develop psychological confidence to cope with the challenges in the transition. They are suggested to make direct interaction with the new learning environment and demonstrate high autonomy in their interaction when studying overseas. In the class, they should take initiative to integrate with other students and avoid bonding with their own group all the time. Enlarging their group circle to include everybody and improving intercultural competence will be helpful for the integration.

For home students at the receiving university, they are suggested to understand the benefits of studying in a multinational classroom. To improve the integration in the class, they need to take initiative to talk to and work with the international students, improve their intercultural competence to become a better interlocutor for international students, and thus become a global citizen. Meanwhile, it is important for them to suspend the stereotypes depicted in the media or traditional ideology on international students and get to know these students individually.

For the two staff teams involved in the transnational cooperation, they are suggested to adjust teaching practices to facilitate students' transition. For instance, the staff at the sending universities could make full use of the academic exchange to become familiar with the teaching and learning practices at the receiving universities. They are suggested to understand students' future development at the secondary stage abroad and increase the percentage of formative assessment in teaching. The staff at the receiving universities are suggested to take more responsibility in students' pre-departure preparation. They can conduct a whole process of teaching, including assessment practices, to become more familiar with students' previous learning experience. Both teams work together to make the four years' teaching more coherent. In facilitating the integration in a multi-cultural class, staff at the host universities can conduct structured interventions, such as mixing seating, building in time for group discussion, and producing a low-stake assessment environment to support students to perform group work in mixed cultures.

For policy-makers at both universities, they are suggested to provide more opportunities for academic exchange. For instance, they could design cooperative modules for two teams of staff to lecture together. This might be more helpful for the two staff teams to become familiar with each other's teaching practices. Collaborative research projects could also be conducted to improve the quality of the cooperation. In promoting the integration in the class, both organizations are suggested to include intercultural competence education in their courses. They could also design some modules to involve both of the groups in the first year. New ways of group work could be carried out to facilitate the distance cooperation. For instance, this could include making full use of the E-learning Portal. Also, steps could be taken to allocate each Articulation Programme students an account as soon as they enrol in the programme in their home country and set up a space on the Portal for the two groups of students and staff to exchange information.

Three issues have been identified for future research.

- How to prepare students to study abroad, especially those who are under difficult transition?

- How to build a low-stake learning environment through formative assessment to enhance integration in a multicultural class?

- How to create the inclusive 'We' by proper preparation and structured activities in a class with a high ratio of international students?

Although this research has tried to discuss the above issues based on the relevant theories, it did not give systematic suggestions due to the lack of empirical evidence. Related studies could be done to extend this research.

7.5.4 Final Remarks

Against the background that transnational cooperation in higher education is becoming increasingly common in this globalised world, my study invites the attention to focus on the intercultural transition of the Articulation Programme students with the purpose to improve the teaching in Transnational Higher Education and enhance learning for all. It demonstrates that the transition is a complex journey that everybody undertakes. It can trigger development as well as demolish confidence. The consequences of the transition are various and depend on factors in personal and social dimensions. My research encourages studies examining the journeys of transition to take a microscopic perspective focusing on individual factors together with a contextual perspective focusing on situational factors to avoid the trap of stereotyping caused by the perspective of national cultural theory or culture of learning theory.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Sample Letter for Directors of Organizations with Chinese Version

<div align="center">(University Letterhead Paper)</div>

Dear President xxx,

My name is Junxia Hou, a PhD student in Education Studies at Northumbria University in the UK. I am writing to ask for your permission to carry out my PhD research project in your university. The project is funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University.

I am aiming to produce an overview of the students' learning experience in Sino-British transnational education programmes. I will be researching the kind of difficulties and challenges students come across and what kinds of factors improve or affect their study. This research aims to give some useful suggestions for teaching practices in the UK and China. Please see the attached information sheet for details.

I am going to spend some time with your staff and students, participating in their teaching and learning processes as well as daily activities on campus, followed by some individual and group interviews. I also hope to see students' essays or blogs if they are willing to allow this. I will not start the research before getting your consent.

The participation of students and staff is voluntary. The data I collect will only be used in this research project. Confidentiality and anonymity will be strictly guaranteed to participants and the university settings. The project has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee in the School of Health, Community and Education Studies at Northumbria University. I have full Criminal Records Bureau clearance in the UK and China.

I will be very grateful for your support. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk) or my supervisors, Professor Liz McDowell (liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk) and Dr. Catherine Montgomery (c.montgomery@unn.ac.uk).

Yours Sincerely,

Junxia Hou

尊敬的 xxx 院长：

您好！

我叫侯俊霞，是英国诺森比亚大学教育学专业博士研究生，这次写信是想请您允许我到贵院进行博士课题的研究。这项课题由诺大教学质量研究中心资助，主要是了解一下对外合作办学项目学生在国内和国外的学习情况，看看学生在学习中会遇到哪些困难和挑战，有哪些因素促进或者影响了他们的学习效果。希望我的研究能够给合作项目的国内国外教学提出一些有用的建议。详细内容请参见课题信息表。

我打算到学校与老师和学生一起学习和生活一段时间，之后还会做一些个人和小组采访。有兴趣的同学，还可以将自己的随笔或者博客和我一起分享。在没有获得您的同意之前，我不会进行任何研究。师生们自愿参与研究活动，他们的个人信息及与我交流的内容，都会以匿名方式安全保存，不会告诉其他任何人。同时收集到的信息仅用于这项研究课题。在论文中，也不会提及其真实姓名和学校名称。这项研究课题已经获得诺大健康、社区和教育学院研究伦理委员会的批准，我个人也通过了中英双方的无犯罪记录审查。

能得到您的大力支持， 我十分感激。也欢迎您与我或者两位导师：丽兹·迈克道尔教授和凯瑟琳·曼特格莫瑞博士直接联系， 我们的联系方式如下：

电话：0044-191-2274646（英国）；0086-13939987943（中国）

邮箱：junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk，liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk, C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

此致

敬礼

侯俊霞

二 OO 八年 X 月 X 日

Appendix II Information Sheet for Organizations and Academic Staff with Chinese Version

(University Letterhead Paper)

Information about the Research

What is this research project about and what are the aims?

The proposed title of this research is **Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes**. It will produce an overview of students' learning experience in Sino-British transnational education programmes. The researcher will be researching what kind of difficulties and challenges students come across and what kind of factors improve or affect their study. This research aims to give some useful suggestions for teaching practices in the UK and China and help students to reflect on their transnational learning processes.

Who is the researcher and who is the sponsor?

The researcher, Junxia Hou, is a PhD student in Education Studies at Northumbria University in the UK. Her English name is Jessie. This is a research project for her doctoral degree. The project is funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University.

How will the data be collected?

The researcher is going to spend some time with the staff and students, participating in their teaching and learning processes as well as daily activities on campus, followed by some individual and group interviews. She is also hope to see students' essays or blogs if they are willing to allow this. Only with participants' permission can she video them or tape-record their conversations.

What will happen to the data that is gathered?

The data will be analysed and be part of the researcher's thesis. Data collected from the participants will be used for this research only and assessed by the researcher exclusively. In the process of writing the thesis, the researcher will assure participants of anonymity (their names will not be attached to the data when it is presented) and confidentiality (The researcher will hold the data in confidence and will not disclose their personal data and the university settings to others without the permission).

How the data will be stored during and after the project has completed?

Data will be held by the researcher safely and be accessed by her exclusively. The computer and laptop used for analysing data will be protected by usernames and

passwords. The hard copies of data will be locked in a filing cabinet. When the research project finishes, the data will be destroyed completely after 5 years.

How will the research report be disseminated?

The data will be used for the researcher's thesis. She might present the results at conferences and publish relevant articles in peer-reviewed journals or other equally reputable publication. All of the publications will strictly guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality to the participants and the university settings.

What is the Data Protection Act 1998 and what rights do participants have under the Act?

The Data Protection Act 1998 is an act which came into force in the UK in 2000. It protects participants' personal data held by others from disclosure to a third party without their permission. The person who will collect or store participants' personal data has an obligation to let them know the purpose for which it is being collected and how it shall be used. Under the Act, participants have the rights to withdraw their permission at any time, ask to access the information at any time and know whom to contact and how.

Whom to contact for further details of the research project?

If you have other questions about this study, please feel free to get contact with Junxia Hou or her supervisors, Professor Liz McDowell and Dr. Catherine Montgomery. Their contact details are:

   Tel: 0044-191-2274646（UK）；0086-13939987943（China）

   Email: junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk，liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk,

      C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

   Address: CETL Hub and Offices, Northumbria University

      Ellison Building, Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

      NE1 8ST

Whom to contact if you are not satisfied with the research?

In the event that you have any cause for complaint please contact Professor Charlotte Clarke, the Associate Dean (Research) of the School of Health, Community and Education Studies at Northumbria University. Her contact details are:

   Tel: 0044- 191- 215 6044

   Email: charlotte.clarke@unn.ac.uk

   Address : Northumbria University, 2nd Floor, 'E' Block

      Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne

      NE7 7XA

课题信息表

课题内容和目的

课题拟定的题目是**中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历**。课题的目的在于了解对外合作办学项目学生在国内和国外的学习情况。研究人员想要知道学生在学习中会遇到哪些困难和挑战，有哪些因素促进或者影响了他们的学习效果。希望这一研究能够给合作项目的国内国外教学提出一些有用的建议，也能够帮助学生思考总结自己在合作项目中的学习过程

研究人员信息和资助机构信息

课题负责人叫侯俊霞，是英国诺森比亚大学教育学专业博士研究生，英文名字为杰西。该研究是她的博士毕业论文课题，并且获得诺大教学质量研究中心资助。

信息收集方法

侯俊霞会到学校和老师学生学习生活一段时间，之后还打算做一些个人和小组采访。如果学生感兴趣的话，还可以把他们的随笔或者博客和她一起分享。研究中，在没有获得参与者同意之前，她不会进行录音或者录像。

信息用途

侯俊霞会对信息进行分析，然后完成毕业论文。这些信息仅仅会用于这项研究，并且由她独自保存。学校、老师和学生的名字不会出现在任何书面材料上。她不会向任何第三方提供参与者的个人信息。

研究期间及研究结束之后，这些信息怎么存储？

研究期间，信息由侯俊霞独自安全保存。计算机，笔记本由密码保护，并且会锁在研究室里。任何个人信息都会由编码代替，匿名保存。项目完成之后五年，所有信息完全销毁。

研究结果发表

除了完成博士论文外，侯俊霞会在学术会议上发表演讲，并且会在学术刊物上发表相关文章。学院和参与者的相关信息不会出现在任何材料上。

《数据保护法案 1998》是什么？参与者都有哪些相关权利？

《数据保护法案 1998》是英国 2000 年开始生效的一部法案。它规定没有参与者的同意，任何持有其个人信息的人不允许偷漏给第三方。收集和保管信息的人有义务让参与者了解收集信息的原因和用途。在这一法案下，参与者可以随时收回同意书，随时得到这些信息，并且清楚联系人和联系方式。

如果想了解更多的信息，可以和谁联系?

您可以和侯俊霞或者她的导师丽兹·迈克道尔教授和凯瑟琳·曼特格莫瑞博士直接联系，她们的联系方式如下：

电话：0044-191-2274646（英国）；0086-13939987943（中国）

邮箱：junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk，liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk,

C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

地址：CETL Hub and Offices

Northumbria University

Ellison Building

Ellison Place

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 8ST

如果对研究不满意，可以和谁联系?

如果对研究不满意，可以向英国诺森比亚大学健康、社区和教育学院负责研究事务的副院长夏洛特·克拉克教授投诉。她的联系方式为：

电话：0044- 191- 215 6044

邮箱：charlotte.clarke@unn.ac.uk

地址： Northumbria University

2nd Floor, 'E' Block', Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne

NE7 7XA

Appendix III Written Consent Form for Organizations with Chinese Version

<div align="right">(University Letterhead Paper)</div>

Consent Form

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes

I agree to Junxia Hou from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle coming to our university to conduct the above research project. I understand that the information gathered will be used only for the purpose set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon Junxia Hou complying with her duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name   _____

Post   _____

Signature_____

Date   _____

同意书

该同意书仅用于以下研究课题：

中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历

我同意英国诺森比亚大学博士研究生侯俊霞到我院进行以上课题研究。收集到的数据仅用于《课题信息表》中所列出的用途。侯俊霞应该遵守《数据保护法案 1998》中的规定，否则我有权收回此同意书。

姓名　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

职务　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

签名　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

日期　　　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix IV Letter for Academic Staff with Chinese Version

Dear XXX,

My name is Junxia Hou, a PhD student in Education Studies at Northumbria University in the UK. I am writing to ask for your permission to carry out my PhD research project in your class. The project is funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University.

I am aiming to produce an overview of the students' learning experience in Sino-British transnational education programmes. I will be researching the kind of difficulties and challenges students come across and what kinds of factors improve or affect their study. This research aims to give some useful suggestions for teaching practices in the UK and China. Please see the attached information sheet for details.

I am going to spend some time with you and your students, participating in your teaching and learning processes as well as daily activities on campus, followed by some individual and group interviews. I also hope to see the students' essays or blogs if they are willing to allow this.

During the research, you may be invited to join in individual interviews. Your participation is voluntary. The interviews will last for about 45 minutes each time. Only with your permission shall I record our conversation for transcribing. In the interview, you can refuse to answer any question, or withdraw at any stage. The data I collect will only be used in this research project. Your personal data will be anonymous and our conversation will be safely preserved. I will not tell anybody else. In my thesis, pseudonyms for persons and settings will be used. The project has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee in the School of Health, Community and Education at Northumbria University. I have full Criminal Records Bureau clearance in the UK and China.

You and your students' university experiences are very useful to my research. I will be very grateful for your support and involvement. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk) or my supervisors, Professor Liz McDowell (liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk) and Dr. Catherine Montgomery (c.montgomery@unn.ac.uk).

Yours Sincerely,

Junxia Hou

邀 请 信

尊敬的 xxx 老师：

您好！

我叫侯俊霞，是英国诺森比亚大学教育学专业博士研究生，这次写信是想请您允许我到您的课堂进行博士课题的研究。这个课题由诺大教学质量研究中心资助，主要是了解一下对外合作办学项目学生在国内和国外的学习情况，看看学生在学习中会遇到哪些困难和挑战，有哪些因素促进或者影响了他们的学习效果。希望我的研究能够给合作项目的国内国外教学提出一些有用的建议。详细内容请参见课题信息表。

我打算到您的课堂和学生一起学习和生活一段时间，之后还会做一些个人和小组采访。有兴趣的同学，还可以将自己的随笔或者博客和我一起分享。在此期间，您可以自愿参加一些采访。访谈每次大约四十五分钟左右，如果允许的话，我会录制谈话的内容，便于纪录和写作。访谈中，您可以拒绝回答任何问题，可以无条件随时退出，不会有任何权益上的损失。

我保证遵守研究伦理原则，保护大家的隐私。收集到的信息仅用于这项研究课题。您和同学们的个人信息及与我交流的内容，我都会以匿名方式安全保存，不会告诉其他任何人。论文中，也不会提及大家的真实姓名和学校名称。研究课题已经获得诺大健康、社区和教育学院研究伦理委员会的批准，我个人也通过了中英双方的无犯罪记录审查。

您和同学们在大学的亲身体验对我的研究非常重要和宝贵。能得到您的积极参与和大力支持， 我十分感激。也欢迎您与我或者两位导师：丽兹·迈克道尔教授和凯瑟琳·曼特格莫瑞博士直接联系， 我们的联系方式如下：

电话：0044-191-2274646（英国）；0086-13939987943（中国）

邮箱：junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk，liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk,
C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

地址：CETL Hub and Offices, Northumbria University, Ellison Building
Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

此致

敬礼

侯俊霞

二 OO 八年 X 月 X 日

Appendix V: Written Consent Form for Academic Staff with Chinese Version

(University Letterhead Paper)

Consent Form

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes

I agree to Junxia Hou from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle coming to my class to conduct the above research project. I understand that the information gathered will be used only for the purpose set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon Junxia Hou complying with her duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name   _____

Signature_____

Date   _____

同意书

该同意书仅用于以下研究课题：

中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历

我同意英国诺森比亚大学博士研究生侯俊霞到我的课堂进行以上课题研究。收集到的数据仅用于《课题信息表》中所列出的用途。侯俊霞必须遵守《数据保护法案 1998》中的规定，否则我有权收回此同意书。

姓名 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

签名 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

日期 ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix VI: Invitation Letter for Students with Chinese Version

<div align="center">(University Letterhead Paper)</div>

Dear All,

My name is Junxia Hou, a PhD student in Education Studies at Northumbria University in the UK. I am writing to invite you to join in my research project. The project is funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University.

I am aiming to produce an overview of your learning experience in Sino-British transnational education programmes. I will try to find out what kind of difficulties and challenges you come across and what kind of factors improve or affect your study. This research aims to give some useful suggestions for teaching practice in China and the UK.

I am going to spend some time with you engaging in your learning processes as well as daily activities on campus, followed by some individual and group interviews. I also hope to see your essays or blogs if you are willing to allow this.

The interviews will last for about 45 minutes each time. Only with your permission shall I record our conversation for transcribing. In the interview, you can refuse to answer any question, or withdraw at any stage. The data I collect will only be used in this research project. Your personal data will be anonymous and our conversation will be safely preserved. I will not tell anybody else. In my thesis, pseudonyms for persons and settings will be used.

The project has been approved by the Research Ethics Committee in the School of Health, Community and Education at Northumbria University. I have full Criminal Records Bureau clearance in the UK and China.

Your personal university experience is very important and precious to my research. I will be very grateful to get your support and involvement. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me (junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk) and my supervisors, Professor Liz McDowell (liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk) and Dr. Catherine Montgomery (c.montgomery@unn.ac.uk).

Best wishes,

Junxia Hou

邀 请 信

亲爱的同学们：

你们好！

我叫侯俊霞，是英国诺森比亚大学教育学专业博士研究生，这次写信是想诚挚地邀请大家参加我正在进行的研究课题。这个课题由诺大教学质量研究中心资助，主要是了解一下对外合作办学项目学生在国内和国外的学习情况，看看大家在学习中会遇到哪些困难和挑战，有哪些因素促进或者影响了大家的学习效果。希望我的研究能够给合作项目的国内国外教学提出一些有用的建议。详细内容请参见课题信息表。

我打算到学校去和大家一起学习生活一段时间，之后还会做一些个人和小组采访。有兴趣的同学，还可以将自己的随笔或者博客和我一起分享。访谈每次大约四十五分钟左右，如果允许的话，我会录制谈话的内容，便于纪录和写作。参加访谈的同学可以拒绝回答任何问题，可以无条件随时退出，不会有任何权益上的损失。我保证遵守研究伦理原则，保护大家的隐私。收集到的信息仅用于这项研究课题。同学们的个人信息及与我交流的内容，我都会以匿名方式安全保存，不会告诉其他任何人。论文中，也不会提及大家的真实姓名和学校名称。研究课题已经获得诺大健康、社区和教育学院研究伦理委员会的批准，我个人也通过了中英双方的无犯罪记录审查。

同学们在大学的亲身体验对我的研究非常重要和宝贵。能得到大家的积极参与和大力支持， 我十分感激。也欢迎大家与我和两位导师：丽兹·迈克道尔教授和凯瑟琳·曼特格莫瑞博士直接联系， 我们的联系方式如下：

电话：0044-191-2274646（英国）；0086-13939987943（中国）

邮箱：junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk，liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk，

C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

地址：CETL Hub and Offices, Northumbria University, Ellison Building

Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

此致

敬礼

侯俊霞

二 OO 八年 X 月 X 日

Appendix VII: Information Sheet for Students with Chinese Version

(University Letterhead Paper)

Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide to become the participant or not, you need to have a full understanding of the research and what will involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and talk to others about it if you want. Please do not hesitate to get contact with the researcher if there is anything that is unclear.

What is this research project about and what are the aims?

The proposed title of this research is **Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes**. It will produce an overview of students' learning experience in Sino-British transnational education programmes. The researcher is trying to find out what kind of difficulties and challenges my classmates and I come across and what kinds of factors improve or affect our study. This research intends to give some useful suggestions to the teaching practices in China and the UK as well as help us to reflect on our transnational learning processes. The findings of this study are expected to benefit future students by improving teaching practices in bridge modules, providing effective guidance before studying abroad and facilitating their overcoming the cultural, personal, pedagogical and psychological challenges in the transition learning period.

Who is the researcher and who is the sponsor?

The researcher, Junxia Hou, is a PhD student in Education Studies at Northumbria University in the UK. Her English name is Jessie. This is a research project for her doctoral degree. The project is funded by the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University.

Why have I been asked?

I am one of the undergraduates enrolled in a Sino-UK programme. My experience will be very important and precious to this research.

What am I being asked to do?

I am being asked to become a participant in this research and give the consent by signing the written consent form if I am willing to take part in.

What information will I provide?

I will provide information on my experience in China and the UK (if I will go there later).

What happens if I do not want to participate?

It is up to me to decide. If I do not want to participate, I will not sign the consent form. This will not affect my education.

What would happen if I agree and then change my mind?

Even if I have signed the consent form, I can still contact Jessie to remove my consent. I can withdraw the research at any stage without giving a reason. The data collected from me individually will be destroyed if I wish.

How will the data be collected?

Jessie will spend about 9 months with us by engaging her into our learning processes as well as daily activities, followed by some individual and group interviews. I can also share my essays or blogs if I am willing to. Only with my permission can she video me and record our conversations.

Interviews will be carried out during our last semester in China, at the beginning of our first semester, and after the first examination week in England respectively. Approximately, each of the individual interviews will last for 45 minutes and the group interviews will last for one and half hours. With my consent, Jessie might use some of my essays and blogs related to my learning experience during the transition stage as narrative data, but she must assure me of anonymity and confidentiality.

Video will be used to record the classroom and institutional environment without any individual information. Before videoing the class, Jessie will get the permission of the whole class and lecturers by inviting us to give consent verbally on video tape as well as fill in the written consent form.

What will happen to the data that is gathered?

The data will be analysed and be part of Jessie's thesis. Data collected from me will be used for this research only and assessed by Jessie exclusively. She will not tell others what I have said. In the process of writing the thesis, Jessie will assure me of anonymity (my name will not be attached to the data when it is presented) and confidentiality (Jessie will hold my data in confidence and will not disclose my personal data to others without my permission).

How the data will be stored during and after the project has completed?

Data will be held by Jessie safely and be accessed by her exclusively. Data stored will be anonymous. When the research project finishes, the data will be destroyed completely after 5 years.

How will the research report be disseminated?

The data will be used for Jessie's thesis. She might present the results at conferences and publish relevant articles in peer-reviewed journals or other equally reputable publication. All of the publications will strictly guarantee the anonymity and confidentiality to me. Jessie might show some of the video data at conference presentations. Image and sound processing techniques will be applied before the presentations to ensure our confidentiality and anonymity.

What is the Data Protection Act 1998 and what rights do I have under the Act?

The Data Protection Act 1998 is an act which came into force in the UK in 2000. It protects my personal data held by others from disclosure to a third party without my permission. The person who will collect or store my personal data has an obligation to let me know the purpose for which it is being collected and how it shall be used. Under the Act, I have the rights to withdraw my permission at any time, ask to access the information at any time and know whom to contact and how.

Who do I contact if I want to ask more questions about the study?

If I have other questions about this study, I can get contact with Jessie or her supervisors, Professor Liz McDowell and Dr. Catherine Montgomery. Their contact details are:

Tel: 0044-191-2274646（UK）；0086-13939987943（China）

Email: junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk，liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk,

C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

Address: CETL Hub and Offices, Northumbria University, Ellison Building

Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, NE1 8ST

Who do I contact if I am not satisfied with the research?

In the event that you have any cause for complaint please contact Professor Charlotte Clarke, the Associate Dean the Associate Dean (Research) of the School of Health, Community and Education Studies at Northumbria University. Her contact details are:

Tel: 0044- 191- 215 6044   Email: charlotte.clarke@unn.ac.uk

Address : Northumbria University, 2nd Floor, 'E' Block, Coach Lane Campus

Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7XA

课题信息表

我受邀请参加一项研究课题，在决定是否加入之前，我需要对这项课题进行全面了解，认真阅读相关信息。我可以和其他人对此进行讨论。如果有不清楚的地方，我也可以提问。

课题内容和目的

课题拟定的题目是**中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历**。课题的目的在于了解对外合作办学项目学生在国内和国外的学习情况。研究人员想要知道我和同学在学习中会遇到哪些困难和挑战，有哪些因素促进或者影响了我们的学习效果。希望这一研究能够给合作项目的国内国外教学提出一些有用的建议，也能够帮助我思考总结自己在合作项目中的学习过程。这项研究还可以通过改进连接课程，提供出国前有效辅导等方法，帮助以后的学生克服在过渡时期遇到的文化、教育、心理和自身等方面的问题。

研究人员信息和资助机构信息

课题负责人叫侯俊霞，是英国诺森比亚大学教育学专业博士研究生，英文名字为杰西。该研究是她的博士毕业论文课题，并且获得诺大教学质量研究中心资助。

为什么需要我的支持

我是中英对外合作办学项目的学生，我的经验对这项研究十分重要和宝贵。

我需要做什么

我受邀请参加这一课题，如果我愿意的话，可以填写同意书。

我可以提供哪方面的信息

我可以提供自己在这一项目中的学习生活体会。如果下学期我会到英国去留学的话，也可以在那里谈谈自己在国外的学习生活感受。

如果我不愿意参加，怎么办？

如果我不愿意参加，可以不填写同意书，我的学习不会受到任何影响。

如果我原来同意了，后来又改变主意了怎么办？

即使我填写了同意书，也可以和杰西联系，收回同意书。我可以无条件退出研究。我可以决定是否删除已经提供的个人相关信息。

信息收集方法

杰西会和我们学习生活大约九个月，之后还打算做一些个人和小组采访。如果我有兴趣，还可以把我的随笔或者博客和她一起分享。在没有获得我的同意之前，她不会对我进行录音或者录像。杰西会在我们国内最后一个学期结束前，英国第一个学期刚开始和第一个考试周结束后，对我们中的一些同学分别进行三次个人访谈。同时，她还会分别组织两次小组访谈。个人访谈大约持续 45 分钟，小组访谈为一个半小时

左右。征得我的同意，她也许会使用我在过渡时期的文章和博客来做课题研究，但是必须保护我的个人隐私。录像资料用来记录教室和学校的环境，不涉及个人信息。在拍摄课堂教学时，杰西会征得我们和老师的口头及书面同意。

这些信息用来做什么

杰西需要对这些信息进行分析，然后完成毕业论文。这些信息仅仅会用于这项研究，并且由杰西独自保存。我的名字不会出现在任何书面材料上。杰西负责为我保密，她不允许告诉其他任何人我们谈话的内容。没有我的同意，任何第三方不会知道我提供的信息。

研究期间及研究结束之后，这些信息怎么存储？

研究期间，信息由杰西独自安全保存。任何个人信息都会由编码代替，匿名保存。项目完成后五年，所有信息完全销毁。

研究结果如何发表？

数据用来帮助杰西完成她的博士论文。她会在学术会议上发表演讲，并且会在学术刊物上发表相关文章。我的个人信息不会出现在任何材料上。征得我的同意后，杰西可能会在学术会议上使用录像资料，但是她必须采用图像和声音处理技术来保护我的隐私。

《数据保护法案 1998》是什么？我都有哪些相关权利？

《数据保护法案 1998》是英国 2000 年开始生效的一部法案。它规定没有我的同意，任何持有我个人信息的人不允许偷漏给第三方。收集和保管信息的人有义务让我了解收集信息的原因和用途。在这一法案下，我可以随时收回同意书，随时得到这些信息的内容，并且清楚联系人和联系方式。

如果我想了解更多的信息，可以和谁联系？

我可以和杰西或者她的导师丽兹·迈克道尔教授和凯瑟琳·曼特格莫瑞博士直接联系，她们的联系方式如下：

电话：0044-191-2274646（英国）；0086-13939987943（中国）

邮箱：junxia.hou@unn.ac.uk;liz.mcdowell@unn.ac.uk; C.montgomery@unn.ac.uk

地址：CETL Hub and Offices, Northumbria University, Ellison Building,

Ellison Place, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8ST

如果我对研究不满意，可以和谁联系？

如果我对研究不满意，可以向英国诺森比亚大学健康、社区和教育学院负责研究事务的副院长夏洛特·克拉克教授投诉。她的联系方式为：

电话：0044- 191- 215 6044　邮箱：charlotte.clarke@unn.ac.uk

地址：2nd Floor, 'E' Block, Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7XA

Appendix VIII: Consent Form for Students Participating in the Observation with Chinese Version

<div align="right">(University Letterhead Paper)</div>

Consent Form

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

Research Title: <u>Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes</u>

I agree to Junxia Hou from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle to take part in my classroom activities and daily activities on campus. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon Junxia Hou complying with her duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of the study ☐

I have had the chance to ask questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can withdraw at any time if I change my mind and this will not affect my education ☐

I know that my name and details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any printed documents. ☐

I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

同意书

该同意书仅用于以下研究课题：

中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历

我同意英国诺森比亚大学博士研究生侯俊霞到学校进行以上课题研究，她将加入到我的课堂和校园学习生活中。收集到的数据仅用于《课题信息表》中所列出的用途。侯俊霞必须遵守《数据保护法案 1998》中的规定，否则我有权收回此同意书。

我已经阅读了《课题信息表》，并且明白了这项研究的目的。　　　☐

我有机会就这项研究的内容进行提问，并且得到了满意的回答。　　☐

我清楚我的参与是自愿的。我可以无条件随时退出，我的学习不会因此受到影响。

☐

我知道我的名字和其他个人信息都会被安全保存，不会出现在任何书面材料上。

☐

我同意加入这项研究。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　☐

参加者签名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

研究者签名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix IX: Consent Form for Participants in the Interviews with Chinese Version

(University Letterhead Paper)

Consent Form

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

Research Title: Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes

I agree to Junxia Hou from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and processing this information on me. I understand that this information will be used only for the purpose(s) set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon Junxia Hou complying with her duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of the study   ☐

I have had the chance to ask questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction   ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can withdraw at any time if I change my mind and this will not affect my education   ☐

I know that my name and details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any printed documents   ☐

I agree to be interviewed   ☐

I am happy for my conversation to be tape-recorded   ☐

Participant's Signature

_____

Researcher's Signature

_____

同意书

该同意书仅用于以下研究课题：

中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历

我同意英国诺森比亚大学博士研究生侯俊霞对我进行相关信息的收集。收集到的数据仅用于《课题信息表》中所列出的用途。侯俊霞必须遵守《数据保护法案 1998》中的规定，否则我有权收回此同意书。

我已经阅读了《课题信息表》，并且明白了这项研究的目的。   ☐

我有机会就这项研究的内容进行提问，并且得到了满意的回答。   ☐

我清楚我的参与是自愿的。我可以无条件随时退出，我的学习不会因此受到影响。

    ☐

我知道我的名字和其他个人信息都会被安全保存，不会出现在任何书面材料上。

    ☐

我同意加入这次访谈。   ☐

我同意对访谈内容进行录音。   ☐

参加者签名：_____

研究者签名：_____

Appendix X: Consent Form for Allowing Being Videoed in the Observation with Chinese Version

<div align="right">(University Letterhead Paper)</div>

Consent Form

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

Research Title: Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes

Researcher: Junxia Hou

I agree to Junxia Hou from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and processing this information on me. I understand that the information gathered will be used only for the purpose set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon Junxia Hou complying with her duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of the study ☐

I have had the chance to ask questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can withdraw at any time if I change my mind and this will not affect my education ☐

I know that my name, images and other personal details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any printed documents. ☐

I know the researcher might show some of the video data at conference presentations. She will use image and sound processing techniques to protect my confidentiality and anonymity. I agree the researcher to use the data via conferences. ☐

I agree to be videoed. ☐

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature

_____

同意书

该同意书仅用于以下研究课题：

中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历

我同意英国诺森比亚大学博士研究生侯俊霞对我进行相关信息的收集。收集到的数据仅用于《课题信息表》中所列出的用途。侯俊霞必须遵守《数据保护法案 1998》中的规定，否则我有权收回此同意书。

我已经阅读了《课题信息表》，并且明白了这项研究的目的。　　　　　▢

我有机会就这项研究的内容进行提问，并且得到了满意的回答。　　　▢

我清楚我的参与是自愿的。我可以无条件随时退出，我的学习不会因此受到影响。

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　▢

我知道我的名字，个人影像和其他信息都会被安全保存，不会出现在任何书面材料上。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　▢

我知道研究人员可能会在学术会议上使用这些录像资料，她会采用图像和声音处理技术来保护我的隐私。我同意侯俊霞在会议上使用这些录像资料　　　▢

我同意被录像。　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　▢

参加者签名：　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

研究者签名：　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix XI: Consent Form for Allowing to Share Essays and Blogs with Chinese Version

(University Letterhead Paper)

Consent Form

This information will be held and processed for the following purpose(s):

Research Title: Learning in Transition: Students' Experience in Sino-British Cooperative Education Programmes

Researcher: Junxia Hou

I agree to Junxia Hou from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle recording and processing this information on me. I understand that the information gathered will be used only for the purpose set out in the information sheet supplied to me, and my consent is conditional upon Junxia Hou complying with her duties and obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.

I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of the study ☐

I have had the chance to ask questions about the study and these have been answered to my satisfaction ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can withdraw at any time if I change my mind and this will not affect my education ☐

I know that my name and other personal details will be kept confidential and will not appear in any printed documents. ☐

I agree the researcher use my essays/blogs as research data. ☐

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

同意书

该同意书仅用于以下研究课题：

中英合作办学项目学生在过渡时期的学习经历

我同意英国诺森比亚大学博士研究生侯俊霞对我进行相关信息的收集。收集到的数据仅用于《课题信息表》中所列出的用途。侯俊霞必须遵守《数据保护法案 1998》中的规定，否则我有权收回此同意书。

我已经阅读了《课题信息表》，并且明白了这项研究的目的。　　　□

我有机会就这项研究的内容进行提问，并且得到了满意的回答。　　□

我清楚我的参与是自愿的。我可以无条件随时退出，我的学习不会因此受到影响。

□

我知道我的名字和其他信息都会被安全保存，不会出现在任何书面材料上。

□

我同意研究人员使用我的文章/博客作为研究数据。　　□

参加者签名：_____

研究者签名：_____

Appendix XII Demographical Profiles of the Participants

Name Code	Anonym	Gender	Age Group	Nationality	Course*
M01	Xiao Ming	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M02	Xiao Dong	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M03	Xiao Qiang	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M04	Xiao Yu	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M05	Xiao Jie	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M06	Xiao Hua	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M07	Xiao Yong	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
M08	Xiao Feng	Male	20-22	Chinese	EEE
F01	Ling Ling	Female	20-22	Chinese	CEE
F02	Ping Ping	Female	20-22	Chinese	EEE
F03	Yan Yan	Female	20-22	Chinese	EEE
F04	Juan Juan	Female	20-22	Chinese	EEE
F05	Min Min	Female	20-22	Chinese	EEE
F06	Li Li	Female	20-22	Chinese	EEE
F07	Ying Ying	Female	20-22	Chinese	CEE
F08	Fang Fang	Female	20-22	Chinese	CEE
H01	Jim	Male	23-25	British	EEE
H02	Joe	Male	23-25	Nigeria	EEE
H03	Nina	Female	23-25	Kuwaiti	EEE
H04	William	Male	20-22	British	CEE
H05	Charlie	Male	20-22	British	CEE
H06	Max	Male	23-25	British	CEE
H07	Jacky	Male	23-25	British	CEE

Table XII_1 Demographical Profiles of Students Participants in the Interview

* EEE: BEng (Hons) Electrical and Electronic Engineering;

CEE: BEng (Hons) Communication and Electronic Engineering

Name Code	Anonym	Gender	Nationality	Job Title
CS01	Tao	Male	Chinese	Academic staff & Personal tutor
CS02	Lin	Female	Chinese	Academic staff
CS03	Sheng	Male	Chinese	Academic staff
CS04	Qing	Female	Chinese	Academic staff
CS05	Bin	Male	Chinese	Academic staff
CS06	Zheng	Male	Chinese	Academic staff
CS07	Xin	Female	Chinese	Academic staff
CS08	Mei	Female	Chinese	Academic staff
CS09	David	Male	Australian	Academic staff
CS10	Ming	Male	Chinese	Administrative staff
BS01	Frank	Male	British	Academic staff & Personal tutor
BS02	Simon	Male	British	Academic staff
BS03	Eric	Male	British	Academic staff
BS04	Tom	Male	British	Academic staff
BS05	Colin	Male	British	Academic staff
BS06	Louise	Male	British	Academic staff
BS07	Ben	Male	British	Academic staff
BS08	John	Male	British	Administrative staff
CP01	Mr. Wang	Male	Chinese	Xiao Feng's father
CP02	Mr. Li	Male	Chinese	Juan Juan's father

Table XII_2 Demographical Profiles of Staff and Parents Participants in the Interview

Appendix XIII Interview Questions

<u>**Interview questions for 16 key informants**</u>

First-round:

- **Why did you choose the programme?**
- **How did you learn in high school?**
- **How was your transition from high school to the university here?**
- **How do you manage your study in the university?**
- **What are your expectations of studying abroad**
- **How are you preparing for your studying abroad?**
- **How do you feel now about the oncoming study in the UK?**
- **What's your plan after you get the degree in the UK?**
- **If you started from the first day in the university, what would you do differently?**

Second-round:

- **How do you feel about your study at North Britain University?**
- **How is the life here different from what you expected in China?**
- **How do you getting along with your classmates from Southeast China University?**
- **How are you getting along with other students in the class?**
- **How are you getting along with your flatmates?**
- **In our first interview, you were worried/excited about…; how do you feel now?**
- **How is your pre-departure preparation help your transition in the UK?**
- **In my observations, I noticed …; Why is that?**
- **If you were in the first two years in the Southeast China University, what would you do differently for your preparation?**

Third-round:

- **How were your final examinations?**

- **How did you prepare for them?**
- **How are the assessment practices here different from those you had in Southeast China University?**
- **In our first/second interview, you were worried/excited about…; how do you feel now?**
- **In my observations, I noticed …; why is that?**
- **How do you feel about your transition overall?**

Interview questions for the existing cohort at North Britain University

- **How was your study in the first year at the University?**
- **How did you get along with your classmates then?**
- **How do you feel studying with a large group of Chinese students?**
- **How do you feel the classroom culture has changed?**
- **Why is there segregation? How do you feel about it?**
- **In my observations, I noticed…; why is that?**
- **How do you think the staff/School/University could do to improve the learning experience for all the students in the class?**

Interview questions for staff at Southeast China University

- **How long have you been teaching Articulation Programme students?**
- **How is your teaching different from the teaching of non-programme students?**
- **How do you think of the bilingual education in the course?**
- **What do you know about your students' future study abroad?**
- **How do you prepare these students for their study abroad?**
- **How do you interact with your students in/outside the class?**
- **How do you feel the cooperation between two teaching staff teams, Chinese and British?**

- **In my observations, I noticed…; why is that?**

Interview questions for staff at North Britain University

- **How long have you been teaching Chinese Articulation Programme students? What's your impression of this group of students?**
- **In this class, Chinese Articulation Programme students outnumbered home students greatly. Will this affect your teaching? In which ways?**
- **What do you know about your students' past learning experience at Southeast China University?**
- **How do you think of their preparation before coming to the UK?**
- **How do you interact with your students in/outside the class?**
- **How do you feel the cooperation between two teaching staff teams, British and Chinese?**
- **In my observations, I noticed…; why is that?**
- **How do you think the staff/School/University could do to improve the learning experience for all the students in the class?**

Interview questions for parents

- **Why did you let your son/daughter choose this programme?**
- **What do you think is the advantage/disadvantage of programmes like this?**
- **How do you feel about your son/daughter's transition from Southeast China University to North Britain University?**
- **What do you think has contributed to your son/daughter's success/difficult position?**
- **How do you think the staff/School/University/parents could do improve your son/daughter's learning experience?**

Appendix XIV Sample of Observation Notes and Diary

Inside Class Activities

- **Lectures**

Date	09/10/2008	Time	11.00am-1.00pm	Place	EB A103
Subject	E0219 Distributed Circuit				
Settings	This module is for B. Eng. Hons. Communications & Electronic Engineering students. It will be delivered by 2 lecturers.				
Observation	There're 16 students in this class. 11 Chinese students. 6 from our group. Today's topic is Transmission Lines. The first part contains a lot of formula derivation. During the class, Articulation Programme students felt difficult in understanding it. YY: didn't learn it before. Hard to understand. F08: Please lend me your mathematics book after class. YY. Some home students also felt the topic is challenging. They asked for 10-minute break. The lecturer said: the driest bit has past. If we have a break, we'll carry on to 11.55. If we don't, we'll carry on till 11.40. Which one do you prefer? Home students: carry on. *Lecturers always give options to students: keep going or have a break. Students are willing to leave school earlier. So they normally ask for keep going. Lecturers might lack of an opportunity to communicate with students and answer their questions. In China, students ask questions during the 10 minutes break. Each session lasts for 45 minutes, then university bell will ring to remind lecturers to have a break.* In the second part, Mr. S asked students to do some exercise. Foreign students finished early using calculators. Some Chinese students list out the steps, but couldn't give the answer because they didn't have calculators. YY: I don't understand most of the words, but I understand the contents. *I know 'transmittion'. I know 'line'. But I don't know what 'transmittion line' is. I can understand every word, but don't understand the contents.* Foreign students are active in the class. YY: I don't understand why they're so high in the class. Some of them even sang in the seminar! It seems that they're really enjoying their learning.				

Date	09/10/2008	Time	14.00-16.00	Place	EB E004
Subject	EN0216				
Settings	More than 100 students. Large lecture.				
Observation	Both foreign students and Chinese students chat a lot during the class. The lecture didn't say anything. *Do the lecturers here in England have the same power as the lecturers in China? What're their roles in the institution/ in the heart of students/ in themselves/in their own native culture? What's the relationship between lecturers and students in different contexts? Just teaching and learning?* Part time students sit in the front. Nj students sit in the middle. Other students sit in the back. Foreign students are really high. They are teasing each other in the class. Other students laugh at their jokes. Chinese students turned around looking at them wandering what happened. Some foreign students start to make and fly paper planes at the back of the classroom. One Chinese student received one plane and threw it back. They started CHATTING---the first time in my observation. Some common things like experience in childhood can break the ice. While other students were chatting, M01 was reading the hand-outs carefully. One foreign student asks if they can apply for the course representative. The tutor said yes and asked: any volunteer? One foreign student stood up and shouted out his name. Chinese students didn't get a clue. I explained to M01 what it is. He put up his hands as well. He told me "I can have a chance to communicate with the lecturer more". He did that in China too. He volunteered to be the assistant for the foreign teachers in Nanjing and had more chance to communicate with foreigners and practice his English. (*He creates opportunities himself*). The foreign students who became course rep. laughed and chat a lot during the class making a lot of noisy. In China, they have module reps who should be a model in the subject, at least behave himself/herself very well in the class.				
Reflection	I used to be the top student in the class. But here, I couldn't understand the lecture. I feel I'm not smart, although I know that my role is not a student, but a researcher, an observer and a reflector. I still don't feel that easy in the class. Students are also observing me to see what I'm doing and what I've written down. Duplex Roll in the observation: observer & observed.				

- **Workshops**

Date	10/10/2008	Time	11.00am-1.00pm	Place	EB E201
Subject	EN 0213 Workshop				
Settings	Students formed into groups of 4-5 members and were required to design a product.				

Observation	Lecturer: you have to decide what type of company yours is. Design some kind of product that your company wants to develop. Something can benefit you. You need to choose the right technology, right skill, right budget and right facilities. The group leader will write the minutes of the meeting. It's a serious business. Make business plan. Produce sth. You can sell and make profits. Turn yourself from a student that only cares about passing examinations and obtaining the degree to become a good engineer which the employers want to hire you.
	 All the students are Chinese. They discuss in Chinese.
	 First, the name of their company.
	 F03: F02's group wants to use 'Fantasy'
	 M06: not good. What about 'Goal'. First, it means victory and passion. Second, British like using it. In the food match, the presenter always shouts: Goal ~ ~~~ it can last for a long time.
	 Others: Innovation
	       Miracle
	       Myth
	       Newcastle-united
	       Cool
	 F06's group:
	 We choose 'Dawn'. Begin of the day. Go smoothly. Well begun is half done. We're going to go to the street to do market evaluation asking people what kind of products they want.
	
	 What are the lecturers' expectations when they start lecturing students? Have this group of students meet their expectations?				

Date	24/10/2008	Time	11.00am-1.00pm	Place	EB E201
Subject	E0213 Workshop				
Lecturer	SM				
Settings	This is the third workshop they have. Last week, they made a decision on what kind of product they're going to produce.				
Observation	F03: our company's name is INNO-TEC which stands for innovation technology. We're going to produce switching mode voltage stabilizer to increase the electricity utilization. Lecturer asked students to consider Codes of Conduct which is an agreement about different responsibilities between members. He hopes students take themselves as responsible engineer and engage themselves in the team work. In order to prepare students for their forthcoming group assessment, each group should draw up agreed standards of behaviour and group interactions. Each group should sign the document and use in to ensure effective management of the group.				

He gave an example:

The group will meet each week on: …………The group will appoint a chair at each discussion. Each member of the group has agreed to undertake……hours work before each meeting. All group members will ensure each member is treated with respect and dignity. Signatures/Dates

F06's group is going to develop an electric cooker with new timer to save energy.

M07's group is going to design a solar cell traffic light. Lecturer suggests them to discuss the reason why they want to design this in their report. Client's requirement. Specification. Market. Literature review---to select the best way to develop the product.

M01's group is going to develop an automatic kitchen ventilator. They name their product: FSK---fantastic smoke killer. They're discussing which country should become their priority: England or China

M01: if we're going to sell it in China, we are worried the lecturer might not know the specification of the ventilator. It may be difficult to communicate with him.

XH: but if we take England as the main market, we don't know if the demand

They asked me if every family has a smoke killer. I told them about what I have seen. I think British people seldom fry food. They use oven and microwave a lot. When they make Sunday dinner, they boil the vegetable. It's common for every family to have a ventilator in the kitchen, but not the smoke killer.

They're going to make a survey in the street and make the decision later.

M01 asked what his duty should be. As every other group member has their own specific task, he is not sure if he should concentrate the organising and manage work.

Other group members thought highly of him. L said they are the top group in the workshop who're very organised and initiative. They borrowed books from the library to see how to do an engineering group project. F02 is responsible for writing the minutes. M04 is assigned to write the product specific.

M08's group is organised too.

F03: advertisement, risk analysis; M06: product specification

Xx: client's requirement, market demand, customer

M03: profit and market survey, cost analysis

Ctd: competitor analysis.

Chat with the lecturer:

'I don't know if they can understand me or not. They were discussing in Chinese. I don't know their problems. If they talk in English, I can join in their discussion and help them. Maybe I should make a rule for English discussion only. Charge ten p each time for breaking the rule. I'll be rich. Haha.

- **Tutorial**

Date	31/10/2008	Time	15.00-16.00	Place	PB S3
Subject	EN216 Seminar Digital Tutorial 2 --- Karnauph Maps				
Lecturer	PM				
Settings	18 Chinese students, 1 Foreign student				
Observation	The name list of registration is organised by students' family names. No.1 to no. 9 are all foreign students, while from 10 to 18 are all Chinese students. No.69 to 96 are Chinese students too. The tutor divided them into several workshops according to their position on the name list (need to check with Peter). No wonder, there're unanimously Chinese students in one workshop. John repeatedly asked the students to take things down and revise the notes later instead of sitting there idling around. CTD and CY called: John. John. They pointed out one mistake he made on the whiteboard.				

- **Group meeting**

Date	30/10/2008	Time	16.00-16.30	Place	EB E304?
Subject	Group meeting E213				
Students	M01's group				
Settings	Students are asked to meet twice a week for the group work, one in class, one after class. M01's group meet at 4pm every Thursday.				
Observation	M01 summed up every member's work this week who have reported him by email. Then he introduced next week's tasks. M01 said he will make WBS and show it to the group members tomorrow at the workshop. YL will focus on Risk assessment. M01 borrowed a book on risk assessment from the library and lent it to YL. F02 will work out the cost. M01 asked YL and F02 to keep in touch and exchange information as risk and cost are influencing each other. His speech is English-Chinese mixed. The group carried out the discussion in front of a computer. They showed the information collected on line. They will add me to their online chatting group.				

- **E-Learning Portal**

Date	29/09/2008	Time	14.00-16.00	Place	CETL Hub
Subject	E-learning Portal				
Students	YL and WY				
Settings	YL called at noon and asked if Charlie could help her to solve the problems of her laptop. She and WY came to CETL at 14.00pm. I showed them to CETL hub and sat while enjoying the hot chocolate.				
Observation	YL: do you know where I can use Microwave at noon. We pack our lunch, but it will be cold. Food here is always cold. For instance, sandwiches. I				

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	don't like it.
	WY mentioned that something was wrong with her Uni email. She didn't receive the enrolment letter as well as other letters from P. Now students like LM who received the emails forward them to the other students in their QQ group chatting room.
	YL and WY said they haven't log onto the ELP and check the hand-outs for tomorrow. I showed them how to log in and obtained WY's agreement to download the hand-outs from her account.
	E-learning Portal: contains learning and teaching materials and links to outside resources which is also a communication system providing facilities like email function, discussion boards for asynchronous communication as well as chat for synchronous communication.
	Students log into their account of ElP and find the courses in which they are enrolled and the names of the instructors. Under each course, there are sessions of Announcements, Module Information, Module Schedule, Staff Information, Module Documents, Assessment and Reading. Staff put up their teaching hand-outs before lectures for students to download and do prepare study.
	Students haven't recognized the importance of ElP and even never heard of it before. They didn't use it in China.

Outclass Activities

Canteen

Date	02/10/2008	Time	12.40pm-13.20pm	Place	Castle
Subject	Lunch				
Students	F04, M06, F03, F02, M07 & YF				
Settings	I went to Castle for lunch after observing the module EN215. The lecturer didn't have a break during two sessions. So we left earlier.				
Observation	Met M06 and F04 who bought rice and meat source. M06 complains: 'So expensive. 3.5 pounds for such a small portion of rice and a little source. I'll savour every mouthful of it.' F02 & F03 shared one packet of sandwiches which cost them £1.8. M07 bought a piece of pork, chips and a tin of diet coke. He couldn't use the knife and fork very well. The pork was hard to cut. F02 suggested him to bite it directly. YF bought chicken and chips which cost him £4.6. He didn't like it very much. Said he started to miss home. He came from Nan Tong. When in Nanjing, he seldom missed home because it's close. He and M07 asked, 'if we don't have exams during the exam week, do we still have classes?' I said 'possibly not'. They said they might go back home for Chinese New Year which comes earlier this year. YF has a brother who is in high school and his parents stayed at home alone. They really missed him.				

- **Break**

Date	02/10/2008	Time	13.55		Place	Outside EB E004
Subject	Before the Class					
Students	LM, XZ and XY					
Settings	Students had lunch and waited for next class.					
Observation	LM: we went to KFC for lunch. Me: how is it? LM: It's OK, but expensive. Me: you can also try "Greggs" which is cheaper. XZ: I have been there. You can buy three sausage rolls at 1 pound. Me: like it? XZ: not as good as 'Xian Bing'. XY: You can buy a loaf of bread. In fact, I went back dorm and just had one. And there're only two days in a week we need to worry about the lunch. Won't be a big deal.					

- **Welcome Fair**

Date	22/09/2008	Time	3.30pm		Place	EB D110
Subject	Welcome Fair					
Students	F05, XY, F06, F01					
Settings	Girls came to see me and saw F05 get a lot of free gifts from Welcome Fair. They were very excited to go to have a look. They came back at 3.30pm.					
Observation	'Students here have very good welfare system. Look, they have so many free gifts and Starbuck Coffee!" "Have some chocolate candies." We shared some which are nice. "What're these?" F06's face flushed. She found some condoms in one bag. "Foreign girls wear very thin clothes. We dare not to put on more. Otherwise, they may think we're old-fashioned." "They wear much less at night. We don't go out at night. We think it's dangerous." "Can we ask lecturers questions during the break?" "How many words should we write for the dissertation" F06: The English we learned is not the same as the English used here. For example, I know what is 'top' and what is 'up', but I don't know what is 'top-up'. F05: I'll try to get first class, and then move on to PhD, otherwise, I'm afraid I couldn't find some to marry ☺ F06: Two French roommates speak French between themselves, but talk to us in English. XY: I've been spending too much time on cooking. Our classmates come to our flat for dinner. We go to theirs as well. We play cards. F06: How to write a CV? How to get my NI number?					

- **Worries**

Date	22/09/2008	Time	3.00pm	Place	EB D110
Subject	Group and individual				
Students	F06				
Settings	F06 sent me a message on MSN yesterday asking me how to get access to E-learning Portal. We made an appointment at 2pm at CETL. Early in morning, she phoned me asking me to have an individual chat with her before my meeting with her former roommates. While other girls staying at the welcome fair, she came back earlier and we had a chat in D110 at CETL.				
Observation	She told me about her concern of the relationship among her and her former roommates. "We used to go everywhere together in NJ, attending class, dinning, having shower, shopping etc. as we lived in the same room. Before our coming to England, we thought it was such a nice thing to have your classmates around you when you're in a foreign country. However, when we got here, we found it was not the case. We went out as a group. Other students think we're very close. They don't want to walk to us. It's very hard to make a foreign friend which I really want to. I'm thinking maybe we can go to join activities individually, and then come back to share our experiences together. But I'm worried that if I prompt this suggestion, my former roommates will think I'm abandoning them and not a really friend. I think other girls also have the feeling. JXY said we four are like Siamese twins.				

Date	22/09/2008	Time	1.30pm	Place	EB D110
Subject	Group and individual				
Students	F05				
Settings	F05 called into my office at lunch time and had a chat with me.				
Observation	She went to Student Union for the Welcome Fair and brought a lot of bags full of free gifts. 'Staff there are very nice to me giving me different gifts.' She also has the concern about joining activities individually. "I personally think we should know more people outside our group. We hang out together every day. We don't have chance to practice our English. This is a side effect of our coming abroad as a group."				

- **Halloween**

Date	31/11/2008	time	12.20pm	place	EB E201
Subject	Halloween Party				
Students	M06, F03				
Observation	M06: there will be a Halloween Party in our flat today. My roommate invited me to join in. I'll be there. F03: I won't take party in. I found that they're always noisy. M06: my roommates teach me how to cook spaghetti which is nice. I'm planning to cycle to London. Any suggestions? Me: Good Luck. M06: that's how my roommate said to me.				

- **Dinner**

Date	25/10/2008	time	12.45-15.00	place	M02's Flat
Subject	Dinner				
Students	M02, YY, WY				
Observation	Called M02 early in the morning to change the appointment to 12.30. He waited for me at the new bridge. It was very windy. We went to his accommodation which was near the Millennium Bridge. It was an old building. 5 students live in one flat. Each of them has their own bedroom. They share the kitchen, bathroom and toilets. YY and WY had got there. They were cooking in the kitchen. YY received an operation several days ago. M02 and M06 sent him to General Hospital, but were informed that they couldn't do the operation. They transferred him to Freeman Hospital by taxi. YY thought the service there was great. They gave him 3 free meals every day.				

WY lived in another accommodation. She mentioned that F08 was not very well these days. She couldn't fall in sleep at night and didn't get up for school in the morning. WY picked up hand-outs for her. She was like this since she was in NJ as she preferred to study very hard only before the exams. It worked in NJ. What about here? WY also mentioned that when she first came, she was eager to practice English and tried every opportunity to talk to people. But gradually, she just felt bored. She didn't feel her English had been improved. M02 didn't agree. He believed that they had to try harder to achieve satisfaction. YY came earlier for summer school. He said the summer school was very helpful. Although they didn't learn much grammar, the lecturers encouraged them to talk. The classroom environment was fantastic. Students communicated with each other and interacted with lecturers actively. He was asked to write a 1200-word essay which he had learned a lot from. How to organize the essay and how to do the reference were very important. M02 and WY haven't got an idea about reference.

M02 said that he is getting lost now. He is very busy as the group leader of his group. He is worried about every detail too much and preferred to do everything by himself. YY suggested him to engage every group member into the project and let them do their best. Otherwise he will be too exhausted.

Lunch was ready at 1.30pm. Steamed fish, fried pepper with potatoes, fried pig heart, mushroom soup, and crashed cucumber. Over lunch, they had a discussion on whether to find an emplacement or not. WY thought it will take a lot of time and the result may not be positive. In that case, she would rather concentrate on her study. She is not keen on Masters course as she believes one year Masters study won't help a lot. M02 and YY intended to move on to Master course. All the students said they were very tired after each class. They had to be fully concentrated during the class, because it was delivered in English. One second's slip of mind will make them lose the clue. WY: many modules delivered by different lecturers alternatively. Sometimes I don't know which notes to bring. I asked her whether she had checked the ElP and downloaded the teaching plane. She said she didn't look through it. On my way back, M02 asked me how to get scholarship. He'll try his best.

Appendix XV Sample of Participants' Diary and Online Blog
Blog

- **Life within the first two months**

憋了 2 个月。。。我很好。。。没有一天 3 点之前睡过觉。 2008-11-14 08:42 |

没有人问我过的好不好
现实与目标哪个更重要
一分一秒一路奔跑
烦恼一点也没有少
总有人像我辛苦走这遭
孤独与喝彩其实都需要
成败得失谁能预料
热血注定要燃烧
世间自有公道付出总有回报
说到不如做到要做就做最好
世间自有公道付出总有回报
说到不如做到要做就做最好
步步高

 小时候经常听。。现在觉得很需要这首歌的力量。。。挺住。2 个月了。。。

虽然自己很是喜欢漂泊，总是想着浪迹天涯。。。

奋斗的日子一天是一天。。。

混的很好。。真的很好。。很敢跟他们说话，一点不紧张了。现在随意的可以跟他们用脏话开玩笑了。

随意的晚上 9 点跟着一帮老外们去踢室内足球，12 点跟着一帮去酒吧。

2 点多回来了，把耽误的时间补回来，学习。

虽然总是一帮金黄头发里面挺着胸膛的立着一耸黑头发，

虽然总是一帮白色皮肤里面冒出着证明是中国人的黄皮肤。

当然，只是为了适应，只是为了跟他们少些所谓的文化差异。

不想让他们觉得我们中国人只是会学习成绩名列前茅的乖宝宝。笑着我们是中国独特高考制度下出来的低能。

只是想证明：我们不仅比你们学习好，我们还比你们会玩。

现在他们真的说："YOU'RE REALLY A COOL GUY."

.you sun of bitch.等老子学了你们的东西，将来带着我们社会主义挣光你们的钱~。

挺住！...

最朴实的一句:"加油。中国人，加油！"

- **Something confused in the communication with the natives**

真的有些无法回答。。。嘿嘿。。。喝喝 2008-11-30 13:42 | (分类:默认分类)

最近弄了个曼联的苹果锁装在我的 P1 上面。。。。老师看到了，很奇怪的说了一句：
Oh.it's MANCHESTER UNITED.why u're not supported in ur country's national team...u'd
better put the picture of them instead of this Man United...我一时无语
了。。。。。。。。。。。。。。。。。。。回答到：i definitely support my
national team...but,i don't want to see their pictures, not to mention that i'll take the
picture as a background picture of my mobile....

老师完全不懂:U support it ,why u don't want it.....

真的有些无法叙述了。。。我：......sooory,it's complicated.......国足的一片凄凉真叫人无
语。。。

宿舍公寓坐落在球场脚下。。。厨房做饭天天瞻仰着**公园球场。。。**的成绩的确近
好些年来一塌糊涂了。。。记得刚来的时候，我穿着个曼联的小 T 恤在宿舍里晃，迎面
来了一群和活蹦乱跳的白黑的小喜鹊们...也是住这个宿舍里的。。。很热情的去打招
呼。。。开始很热情。。。后来。。。他们的眼光从头发扫到我胸前小红魔的标志的时候，
眼神变了.....：are u supported Man United??u konw it's totally rubbish...开始慌了,真不
晓得如何说下去。。只是记得那件钟爱的曼联再也没敢穿出去过。。。

某日，：what do u think of Owen....?满以为这样问的满投其所好。。。接下来。。

：what？actually ,he is a fucking rubbish...don't mention him any more...

我靠，脑袋里夸欧文的句子全部僵住了，可以想象，讲出来，这帮喜鹊们会把我啄死
掉。。。

晚上去踢室外足球是最爽的，大灯一开，封闭的一排小场。他们带着我来的，就不要我
掏钱了。。。带球过了一个人，直接被后卫一个肘击撂倒.: what the fuck are u doing.我
吼了一句，然后看了一下裁判。：u don't see it?referee.

他竟然看了我一眼，来了句。：anything wrong?。。。

后门的哥们过来拍拍我：Welcome to wild world guy.try to adapt to british football。

我无语，第一次跟他们踢室外的比赛就是这样的。。接下来，给人滑铲差点把腿铲断
掉。。。我日的，一个人趴在场边骂了句：你吗 X 的。人渣，垃圾。。天上还下着雪，
风大的要命，我浑身发凉，觉得异常凄凉。。。都没人来看看我...放眼望去，希望有个中
国的兄弟。。。结果都没有。。。谁会大晚上的零下几度的天穿短裤短袖跟着一帮神经病
的英国足球流氓去踢比赛。。。。趴在场上呻吟了好久，真疼。。。疼的想死的感觉都有
的。

宿舍的兄弟姐妹很好，经常晚上 3，4 点很和谐的在一起聊天一起看电影一起打游戏。PS1 。PS2。PS3。XBOX360。成排的正版电影，游戏。。。。和谐....和谐社会一直维持到每天很晚。。。

不晓得说什么好。说他们玩的多吧，我们学的书有多少本不是翻译的他们.我们学的技术多少是我们自己的。我们天天什么国际奥数拿第一。人家却只拿诺贝尔。我们把人家的 windows，手机等等 N 种系统破解了，做成 N 多个不同版本，把人家的系统分析的头头是道，错误都给人家挑出来用 N 种方案改成完美的。。。人家却只会设计出来...不如咱们改的漂亮。水货手机，电脑等等一些列东西咱们都能破解，却造不出一台。

我们加油...真得不能只加油拿什么国际奥林匹克竞赛的奖。。。真的不能只破解人家的东西...

confused....加油。

崇洋媚外的事情咱们永远不干。踏实的学他们的东西先...

- **Missing home**

伙计，鞋带开了，系上 2009-01-11 03:27 | (分类:默认分类)

伙计，鞋带开了，系上....最近踢球的时候碰到个哥们跟我这么说。。。我先是一愣，这个是中文..又一愣，这个是 XZ 那边的口音。。。我靠，我那个泪都差点蹦出来。。。。难得。。。在**难得碰到家那边的兄弟...想家里的哥们弟们了。。。想了。。。

- **Study hard**

明天会更好。真滴 2009-02-24 05:17 | (分类:默认分类)

最近累的一脸痘痘冒个不停，最近累的感觉洗澡都没个时间，最近累的感觉踢球都觉得得硬挤时间，最近累的从实验室调汇编语言回来栽到在离床 1 米的地方先呼呼睡一觉，最近累的晚上一看手表就 4 点多了，最近累的要哭了。

不过，明天会更好，真滴。。O(∩_∩)O 哈哈~神经病了

- **Status**

08-02-15 20:57 开学咯...ready...

08-07-19 04:03 又是失眠如此而已。。。

08-08-18 01:06 20 天。倒计时了该。。。

08-09-15 21:09 ** i am ready...

08-09-18 04:42 ST **的门口，看着欧文的大海报，晚上，塞着 IPOD，短裤短袖锻炼去。。。疯~~~

08-10-18 22:06 老外喜欢红烧肉。。。。。。

08-10-23 06:12 天天跟着宿舍里的老外们熬夜。。。一群神经病的。

08-10-24 05:20 骑自行车去伦敦。睡大街，吹西北风，喝嘉士伯，寻找 Live Music 的小酒吧。。。。。！

08-11-05 23:43 头发完全遮了眼睛。。。5 点钟睡觉觉。。。熬不住了。。。快

08-11-07 01:38 阳光季节，是拼出来的。。。

08-11-09 20:47 很甩甩滴。。。晃晃悠悠滴半夜从图书馆出来。。。甩甩滴，，，喝喝

08-11-12 21:27 大半夜的，图书馆出来，冻得发抖，唱着彩虹。。。

09-01-10 04:15 实验室真好。。。真暖和。。。在里面过冬了 ya。。。

09-01-15 10:01 国内的哥们姐们弟们妹们都放假回家咯。。。嘿嘿。。。今年是回不去了喝。。。喝

09-01-25 09:34 包饺子，过大年咯~辞旧迎新，心情舒畅~

09-01-26 07:18What a happy new year that i was never expected.! HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA.....

09-02-08 02:22 我爱我滴祖国。。。我爱我的祖国。。。好好学习报效祖国。。。

09-02-15 04:48 跟英国人踢球，谁怕谁。！

09-02-16 20:41 冰敷着伤口，总是憋着一口气。等好了，再去踩你们一群鬼佬。

09-02-24 05:06 明天会更好。真的。。。。真的

09-02-26 04:09 让我们的笑容充满着青春的骄傲！~~真的。

09-02-28 05:29 拉夫堡踢中国人联赛、明天得拿个冠军回来

09-03-01 06:09 最后一场跟华威一帮学商科软蛋踢球。打的真爽。

09-04-04 21:30 开源系统到手，开始学习咧。哈哈

09-04-11 05:46London is awesome

09-04-18 09:19 电机。

09-04-18 09:19 懂原理了啥都不怕

09-04-25 11:26 无所谓成绩。自己人加油

09-05-01 03:43Where is my Chinese input in my laptop. bothered.

09-05-11 22:36Lily Allen is very very awesome. I fancy listening to her now.

09-05-16 07:33 给 CPU 涂了硅胶依然能煮鸡蛋。。。

09-05-18 09:35 生活是好的，但是不容易

09-05-21 05:28 所以，那些还在留学路上的孩子们。加油。坚定的走下去，总有一天，你会发现全世界都是你的！

09-05-24 09:18 呵呵。想想最讨厌的事还是不劳而获的人。

09-05-25 09:23 没啥豪言壮语，对得起自己的理想和父母，朋友的期待。

09-05-26 10:11 2mrow.should get full marks on maths.but have problems with my fucking sleep.6 hours left to the exam. Amen.

09-05-27 02:53 relax. **man. sometimes life needs relaxation ...

09-07-19 09:57 又想跟老师顶嘴了。。。这样不行吧。

09-07-22 10:00 谁来救我。来救我吧。我要死在实验室了。

09-09-04 11:35 我想挣钱，明年开辆车回家。。。

09-09-14 13:54 看了娘一眼，她又要哭，我头一甩鼻子一酸头也不回的进去了就

09-10-09 04:52 我希望在生日那天做出来我的机器人。。。但是。。实现不了了。。。。

Pictures:

- Chinese new year

- Library: 'burning the midnight oil' the day before the submission of their first assignment. (Sk' blog)

- Accommodation & Chinese restaurant nearby (Ping Ping's Blog)

- Halloween party (Ling Ling's Blog)

- Diary

05-03-2008

最近不知道怎么回事，觉得自己很浮躁，自己已经很多天没有静下心来看书了，就是感觉心里空空的。

快要计算机二级考试了，我不知道是自己已有了很大的把握还是自己潜意识里并不怎么重视。明明有很多事可以做，却心里觉得没事做，等到那段时间过去后，又会后悔当时的那种有些放弃的行为。

我不喜欢这样的自己，因为我一直都知道我要比别人付出的多才能追上他们。我不喜欢自我放弃，不喜欢随波逐流，我想要自己操控人生，抓在自己的手里才是最实在的。

我想我应该要继续列计划了，时间多了，人难免会想到把一些事情拖到后面去做，这样永远都会给自己找借口，永远都会觉得时间还有，不必抓紧每一分钟。

说实话，平常我自己会有写东西的习惯，算是一种自我检讨吧。有时也会有一些计划。我不知道怎么了，我很久没有那种踏实的感觉了，老是有一种感觉-----觉得自己再这样下去就会败在这一学期。很多人说这一学期我们拿不到奖学金了，因为学校不会帮我们把钱寄到英国，所以不必那么拼，只要及格就行了。我只有无语了。每个人的想法不同，没有权利去评说别人。在这个很有可能会虚度的学期里，我只有一个目标，那就是保持我以前的状态。

我平常时间可以轮滑，跟***一起跑步，还可去做兼职。现在因为二级，还要参加补习班，还剩一些时间来自习，复习功课。这样应该不会虚度吧。我一直都很怕虚度光阴，因为那会让我觉得很空虚，对不起父母，对不起自己......然后是又一次的郁闷...... 哎......

我都不知道我想要写什么了，很多东西涌进脑子，却发现自己词穷了。真的是难写出现在这种有些后悔有些充满希望又很困惑的心情。

加油！加油！还有这位侯学姐，加油！加油！我们都不能输！ᵔ◡ᵔ!