

A comparative analysis of the student experience of international business studies
programmes at the undergraduate level in three countries:
Taiwan, Germany and the United Kingdom

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the experiences of international students studying in English-medium business programmes in three countries: the United Kingdom, Germany and Taiwan. The purpose of this comparative study is to investigate how the students' identity is constituted in the multicultural business classroom and on the multi-cultural campus, the role in this of cultural components of the curriculum in international business programmes, the ways in which the wider student experience operates in such multi-cultural settings and the implications of each of these facets for teachers and institutional managers.

Inter-/cross-cultural competence is held to be a vital skill that business graduates should be equipped with in order to be capable of working in an increasingly diverse global village, and it is believed that such competence can be developed through frequent communication and negotiation with people from other cultures. Sojourners in this study attempted to negotiate new identities in the multicultural learning environment in the alien context in ways that were strongly influenced by individuals' biographical and life experiences. There were several influential factors in these sojourners' processes of learning and transition, including: interpersonal and intrapersonal factors; motivations for

studying abroad; the nature of the learning environment they encountered; and the settings in which these interactions took place. Holliday's (1994) "small cultures" theory and Wegner's (1998) "communities of practice" are concepts used to help explain sojourners' experiences in terms of where and with whom they interacted, and how this influenced their perception of the learning experience in the international contexts.

The three institutes were selected through the purposive sampling method, with pre-set criteria such as the percentage of courses taught in participants' second or foreign language(s) and the percentage of international students in the student population of the university. The sample of twenty-two student participants was obtained by using opportunistic sampling and snowball sampling methods. The qualitative data set comprised 18 individual interviews, 3 group interviews and 40 diary entries. Data analysis took the form of typological analysis (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies.

One of the main findings of this study is that international students experienced high levels of isolation and marginalisation, which affected their academic confidence and social involvement. The universities concerned were aggressively recruiting international students and making efforts to internationalise curricula, yet the academic and social

support on offer was perceived as narrow and very marginalised.

Keywords: international students, intercultural/cross-cultural competence, small cultures,
communities of practice

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Globalisation is a strong trend evidenced in the world's economy, politics, technologies, education and cultures. International experience and fluency in languages other than one's native language are seen as highly desirable or even necessary for survival, in relation to both the career plans of individuals and the ambitions of nations (Bruch and Barly 1998, p.18). With the growing concept of globalisation, Higher Education is no longer viewed in a strictly national context; instead, it has become internationally oriented. My own country of Taiwan has joined in this process of internationalising Higher Education in the past few decades. After being an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher for nearly ten years, as well as taking a position in the international office in one of the universities in Taiwan, I was inspired to study the strategies that other developing or developed countries adopt in the internationalisation of Higher Education. In this chapter, I will describe my experience of the international recruitment of Higher Education students and how this influenced the research study. Then the reason for conducting a comparative study and the consideration of selecting countries for comparison are described and discussed.

1.1 The original idea for the research

English used to be learnt as a language subject from the age of thirteen in the junior high school in Taiwan. Subsequently, education reform in late 1990s required third graders (aged 10) to start learning English as a language subject. Not until the university level are content courses taught in the medium of English.

Meanwhile, the Taiwan government has made great efforts and has offered great incentives to encourage the internationalisation of Taiwan's universities. One of these is to encourage universities to offer international degree programmes where all courses are taught in English so as to elevate the level of English ability among domestic students as well as to help promote the recruitment of international students. The university in which I worked previously is one of the small number of universities in Taiwan organizing an 'International Programme' in which all the subjects are taught in English throughout at bachelor's, master's as well as doctoral level in various majors. Many other universities recruit students with fluency requirements in Mandarin and classes are instructed in this language (*Study in Taiwan* n.d.). The International Honors Programme at my university was launched in 2005 and attracts students from both Asia (including Japan, the Philippines, and Cambodia) and Europe (including Russia and Poland). Although the school's scholarship programme is very generous (four years with dormitory housing,

free tuition and four years of Mandarin language courses), some Filipino students tend to drop out in the middle of first year of study. Filipino students, who are the strongest national group in my school's English-language international program, view Taiwan as an attractive place to work and believe it offers better opportunities for education than at home; unfortunately, the reality has proved different for some of those students. A major contributory factor is thought to be curricula: Filipino students take more job-oriented courses in high school than the general courses most Taiwanese students take; therefore, most of the freshman courses provided at my university, such as Economics and Business Management, overlap with courses Filipinos have taken at school in their own country. Added to this, even for courses they have not taken before, the high level of Filipino students' English appears to leave them feeling that study at my university is not challenging enough, professors compromising on course content in order to meet other students' language needs. The other factor contributing to Filipino students choosing to drop out seems to be connected to the national education system: the Ministry of Education in Taiwan requires all foreign students to complete twelve years of formal school before coming to university. That is equivalent to the sophomore year in the Philippines; thus, these international students would rather return and complete the last two years of college in the Philippines instead of four years in Taiwan since the experience in Taiwan is not as rich as they had expected.

Another important phenomenon is the relative lack of success of students from Russia who are the second largest non-native population in the university. Although the requirements for entry into the International Program are the same regardless of where students are from, the overall performance of students from the Philippines is very high, while the Russian students perform the worst in terms of academic and general behaviour. Most of the Russian students in my school's programme are seeking second bachelor degrees from Taiwan because they believe they will get better careers after they complete study there. Even though they have already earned bachelor's degrees, their academic performance is not as good as that of other international students. Some of them plagiarised other authors; others cheated during examinations. Professors who teach this mixed-culture group of students who are thus involved in managing a multicultural learning environment have been struggling to provide students from different cultures with a meaningful education. As a result there can be a failure to achieve the goal of internationalising the programme and, in the process, benefiting both local students and international students through opportunities for cultural exchange and cooperative learning.

The aim of the international programme is to internationalise the English learning

environment experienced by local Taiwanese students by immersing them with students from all over the world. With a strong academic rationale driving internationalisation, it is assumed that a large majority of local students who do not have the opportunity to study abroad will nevertheless be able to gain a valuable global perspective through an internationalised education at home. With the university encouraging local students to take some of the courses taught in English and to learn alongside international students, it is not surprising that Taiwanese students appear reluctant to challenge those courses taught in English. Even so, the average scores of Taiwanese students taking the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) and TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) are far behind the students in most countries tested (ETS 2007, p.10).

As a coordinator in the international office, I am also responsible for establishing academic partnerships and exchange student programmes with universities all over the world, an important dimension of which is having various courses in my own institution taught in English. The more English courses a Taiwanese university can provide, the more partnerships one can establish. Furthermore, faculty exchange can be set up through academic partnerships so that the faculty comprises an increasingly pluralistic culture. Ultimately, the recruitment of international students and international staff is held to enhance institutional prestige and is a common criterion of university rankings.

Since I have been supervising this programme and the groups of international students who join it, I have become more and more interested in the frameworks and curricula of such international education worldwide. Taiwan is relatively new to the promotion of the multicultural classroom, as is most of East Asia and the countries of continental Europe. Similar programmes have mushroomed across Europe in the last few years and according to statistics from the two respective national bureaus of Education there are about 650 such degree programs throughout Germany (DAAD, u.d.) and 500 in Italy (*Study in Italy*, u.d.) . Although political or economic issues, such as the economic strength of the country, are not the focal point of this study, they are inevitably relevant to the process of internationalisation of Higher Education. For instance, Germany is known for its advanced automobile technology and Italy for its fine arts; these may be the strategic options that Higher Education institutions choose when shaping their programmes or modules provided within the international programmes. Moreover, the international status of the national language may be one of the factors for a country to attract international students. For example, being fluent in two languages – one's own native language and an international language such as English – helps reinforce an individual's competitiveness in the labour market. This phenomenon probably accounts, in part, for the increasing number of international students who study in China. In 1978 China initiated her reform and opening-up policy; as a result, the total number of international

students in the country had reached 407,000 by 2000 (*China.org.cn*).

Students' motivation to study abroad and choice of destination are two of the issues this study aims to discuss. Another is a comparison of the undergraduate programmes offered to international students between Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries, including the learning experience of these contrasting groups of students. Furthermore, given the different cultures and pedagogical traditions that authors report when comparing Asia to Europe, an unexamined and direct transplant of Western methods onto educational systems in the Far East there might not work well, even where course aims are similar.

1.2 The initial research interest and outlook

Arising from this general set of questions, an immediate consideration that followed was which countries might be suitable for the purpose of comparison in this study. Taiwan is recognised as a major supplier of high-tech goods throughout the world (*Study in Taiwan*, n.d.) and with fast-moving technological development in this thriving and democratic society along with governmental efforts aimed at internationalisation of the Higher Education system, foreign students coming to study in Taiwan have been increasing by 12-15% each year since 2004 (Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Relations, 2009a). Meanwhile, the United Kingdom is one of the most popular Anglophone

countries with a long history of hosting international students. As such, it may be valuable to examine some UK strategies or teaching pedagogies that other countries could consider adopting in order to improve their provision of Higher Education for international students. With regards to a third country for this comparative study, I first targeted those among the top six host countries of international students based on the statistics released by UNESCO (Global Education Digest 2006) and found Germany, France and Japan are the non-Anglophone countries that receive the greatest number of the world's mobile students. Among them, Germany has replaced France as the third most popular destination for studying abroad since 2004. Meanwhile, it is interesting to note that among 19 of the countries in the EU's Socrates-Erasmus programme, the Netherlands and Finland offer 100% English-instructed degree courses, but this does not lead them to attract more international students than Germany. Moreover, similar to Taiwan, the medium of instruction in the English-taught programmes in Germany is a foreign language to both home and host students. In the light of this background data I resolved to investigate the development of international degree programmes in Taiwan and Germany and the strategies used to inform teaching and learning in the multicultural business classrooms in both, compared with those adopted in the UK.

1.2.1 A Brief introduction to internationalisation in the three countries under review

As already mentioned, Taiwan is relatively new to multicultural classrooms in Higher Education. It mainly hosts foreign students who are interested in learning Mandarin at language centres. According to statistics released by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education, there were approximately 12,000 foreign students studying Mandarin at language centres in the country in 2007. In order to promote an international image and attract more foreign students, the Taiwan government has launched several projects in the last decade aimed at improving education quality so as to stimulate the internationalisation of tertiary education. For instance, four government agencies jointly established in 2004 the “Taiwan Scholarship Programme” to encourage outstanding international students to undertake degree programmes in Taiwan (*Study in Taiwan* n.d.). The number of international study programmes in Taiwan Higher Education has been increasing every year, and currently there are approximately 6,400 foreign students studying in one of the 130 English-taught degree programmes on offer (MOE statistics, 2009a). Meanwhile, in the UK, the former Prime Minister, Tony Blair, in June 1999 made recruitment of international students a national priority for his country (Hira 2003, p.919). The UK is in second place with regard to the global market share of international students and the number has been gradually increasing annually in recent years. There were 223,850 international students and a further 106,000 EU students enrolled at UK Higher

Education institutions in 2005-06 (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2008), accounting for more than 13% of the UK's total number of students enrolled in Higher Education. Finally, Germany tends to “attract students from regional European nations or those with socio-cultural or historical ties” (Verbik and Lasanowski 2007, p. 9). In order to attract international students from a wider range of student populations, individual institutions have begun to introduce English as a medium of instruction. Currently, Germany offers about 650 English-taught degree programmes and ranks third on the list of top destinations for students studying outside their home country, after the United States and Britain (EchoWorld, 2002). Nearly 248,000 foreign students studied in Germany in 2006, accounting for 12.5% of Germany's close to two million-strong student population (Verbik and Lasanowski 2007, p. 10).

After the three countries were selected, I decided to study business programmes at the undergraduate level in each nation because business related majors are one of the popular study areas among the 2.7 million students who study outside their home country (OECD 2007, p. 299). The criteria for selecting appropriate business institutions within the three countries for comparison are described in the following section.

1.2.2 The key criteria for selecting international business programmes in the three countries under review

The research aims to: examine the experience of international students studying in multicultural/international classrooms in business programmes that are either solely or partially English medium at the undergraduate level; and discuss how the students' identity is constituted in the multicultural business classroom and the role in this of cultural components of the curriculum in international business courses. Thus, it will be important to select research sites in each country that hosts a distinct group of international students studying for a significant proportion of their programme in a second or foreign language. Moreover, it is expected that, due to the English-language demands made on such students in Taiwan and in Germany, the programmes and/or the institutions in which they are offered will be highly ranked for quality (in teaching and/or research) in the national context. Accordingly, the English case study institution will also be highly ranked in this way in its national setting.

Based on these considerations, initial research aiming at identifying institutions in the target countries that fulfill these criteria proceeded as follows:

The selected university in the UK (hereafter called University B) is located in the

south-west of England and is one of the top 20 business schools in the UK according to several national measures of education quality and standards (e.g. the UK Quality Assurance Agency; the *Times Good University Guide*). The business school of University B hosts approximately 300 international students (including EU students) among the total number of 1,685 business students at undergraduate level (statistics provided by University B via personal contact, 2008).

The selected university in Taiwan (hereafter called *University N**) is a National University located in northern Taiwan and is among the top 10 universities in Taiwan. It was ranked among the top 50 business schools by *UK Financial Times* in 2008. The business school of University N hosts approximately 20 international students among the total number of 400 business students at undergraduate level (statistics provided by University N via personal contact, 2008).

The selected university in Germany (hereafter called *University G*) is located in southwestern Germany and its business school is accredited by several international associations such as AACSB international, the Association of MBA (AMBA) and EFMD (EQUIS). The business school of University G hosts approximately 400 international students among the total number of 4000 business students at

undergraduate level (University G brochure, 2009).

* For reasons which were not communicated to me, University N in Taiwan was not able to cooperate in this study. Thus, University T was chosen as a replacement. Information about University T is described below:

The selected university in Taiwan (hereafter called University T) is a new private university located in northern Taiwan. At the time of the study, the university was less than ten years old and was not as internationally well-known as the other two institutions in the sample; however, with the efforts of all the faculty and students in promoting its teaching and learning quality, as well as its strong drive for internationalisation, the university was upgraded to a comprehensive university in 2006 when it had only a six-year history. This very rapid achievement indicated that University T was being effective in its ambition to step on the global stage against criteria discussed in Chapter 2, such as international student recruitment. Its “International Honour Programme” is the sole programme designed for international students and in 2009 University T hosted 113 international students, the majority of them majoring in Business Management and a very small number majoring in Shipping and Logistics (personal communication with the administrator in the

International Office in University T, 2009). The size of its international student population is smaller than that at University B and University G because the International Honour Programme – a four-year English-medium business degree programme along with four-year Chinese language training programme – is the sole programme designed for international students.

1.2.3 Initial research questions

The initial intention of my study was to deepen understanding of some of the issues concerned with international programmes in Higher Education, such as whether they benefit students, and to gain an insight into the future of such programmes and their likely popularity. At this initial stage I planned to look into four aspects: government policies, curricular designs and teaching pedagogies, intercultural interaction in the multicultural classroom and the impact of the study abroad experience. Thus, the initial research questions were as follows:

- Governmental policies: to what extent can a country benefit from offering good international programs (i.e. skill level, economy)?
- Curricular designs and teaching pedagogies: to what extent can Western

understandings of the internationalisation of education and its associated teaching pedagogies be successfully applied outside Western contexts?

- Intercultural interaction: what are international students' perceptions of the intercultural experiences they encounter in international business programmes?
- The impact of the study abroad experience: to what extent does the study abroad experience influence students' perceptions of how interacting with people from other cultures will shape their future career?

1.3 How the research design evolved

With the initial research questions in mind, I reviewed relevant literature and found that all the three countries and institutions in this study adopted various strategies in increasing the mobility of teachers and students, such as welcoming international faculty and students. In light of the increasing diversity of the learning environment, I intended to investigate whether the curriculum design, teaching pedagogies, learning strategies are being influenced and becoming more diverse.

In terms of teaching pedagogies and learning strategies, a person's learning journey has an impact on his/her attitudes towards the learning experience in the foreign contexts

and some may find it easy to adapt in the new and foreign environment while some may not. Therefore, the concept of biographical and life history approach was included in the methodological consideration to explore how individuals engaged themselves and formed new identities in the learning process in the foreign context. Cultural traditions may also be implanted in the curriculum design and the teaching pedagogies. For example, the economy before World War II had a great influence on German business education (Locke 1985), so the modules offered in University G show many of the traditional traits in which fewer management and more economics-oriented modules were taught. Those aspects will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. In addition to the importance of developing certain skills such as basic business knowledge, computer technology, language skills etc., some researchers suggest that nowadays business students are required to develop intercultural or cross-cultural understanding, which can be cultivated not only in classroom settings but also in social settings outside the classroom. However, several studies (Thomas 2003, Volet 2003, Summers and Volet 2008) found that there is limited interaction between home and host students in the multicultural campuses, which does not help develop students' intercultural competence. This is one of the areas this study aims to investigate. All of above helped reshaping the initial research questions mentioned above in section 1.2.3., and the revised questions are presented in section 3.7.

1.4 The structure of this thesis

Chapter Two begins with the documentary data concerning national policies and strategies for internationalising their Higher Education sectors in the three research countries under review, as well as those of the specific institutions selected for study. It then compares the business curriculum of the three selected Higher Education institutions in the study and discusses whether their current business curricula reflect the common and/or distinctive globalisation components identified in other studies of internationalisation of the business curriculum.

Chapter Three reviews some cultural theories that help researchers to observe, understand and explain the cultural components of multicultural learning settings, such as intercultural competence (Sizoo *et al.* 2007, Bennett 1993, Hoff 2008), individualism *versus* collectivism (e.g. Trompenaars 1993, Hall 1976, Gudykunst *et al.* 1988, Hofstede *et al.* 1990, and Adler 1998), small cultures (Hollidays 1999, Holliday & Kullman 2004) and communities of practice (Wegner 1998). Among these, intercultural competence is seen nowadays as a particularly essential attribute for business graduates who will need to understand and communicate with people from various cultural backgrounds in the global business environment. Meanwhile, a distinction between Western and Eastern

cultures of teaching and learning is portrayed in studies such as those mentioned above as dominant and is widely used to explain cultural differences in behaviour. However, this may over-generalise subtle and detailed components in the context of the multicultural Higher Education. Thus, this study has taken Holliday's concept of 'small cultures' and Wenger's theory of "communities of practice" into consideration also. As such it discusses several of the cultural components of the multicultural business classroom through which teachers and students co-construct their beliefs, values, behaviours, and expectations *via* the process of learning.

At the end of Chapter Three, I discuss the interactions between teachers and students in the three locations, as well as those among students in the classroom and through the social contacts they make in the foreign context where they study. After examining these cultural theories in the relevant literature, the research questions were sharpened and began to suggest the use of specific research instruments. The setting out of these revised research questions concludes Chapter Three.

Chapter Four introduces the methodology used in this qualitative research, including the interpretivists' point of view which focuses on understanding "a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, and thinking" within the social reality

under investigation (Bryman, 2004, p. 14), as well as the comparative methodology which is often integral to international studies. This study adopted in-depth interviews and relied on participants' story-telling. This necessitated listening to participants' sharing of the learning journey that they constructed with others, the researcher attempting to understand how they negotiated and reconstituted their identities through contact with people from other cultures during the period of learning. The study involved 22 participants from 17 countries across three research institutions and the qualitative data set comprised 18 individual interviews, 3 group interviews and 40 diary entries. The details of research instruments and methods, including sampling, interview schedules, pilot interviews, topics of diary entries and the method of analysis, are also discussed in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four presents the results of the data analysis. It opens with the introduction of each participant in the study, as the findings show that individuals' life experiences and biographies influence the way they perceive the world as well as their responses to it. It then proceeds to discuss these various learning journeys based on the analysis of participants' storytelling, including their motivation for studying business abroad, the problems they encountered both academically or socially at the early stage of settling down in the host countries where they were studying, and the teaching pedagogies and

learning strategies they experienced in the host countries, including how they may have been different from those to which they were used to in their home countries. The analysis of participants' intercultural experiences, both inside and outside the classroom, is also reported, including where this is relevant to individuals' national cultures, individuals' biographical experiences and the attitudes of their interlocutors from various cultural backgrounds. At the end of the chapter, the impact of the study abroad experience that participants perceived is discussed. At the time of the research, most of the participants had been living in the host country for one year and had just moved to the second year of university studies; as such, they did not have fully-developed intercultural competence or well-organised future plans as yet.

The final chapter relates the findings of the study to the previous research reviewed and discussed in Chapter Two and Three. In so doing, the study addresses issues relevant to the increasingly diverse learning and working environment of Higher Education through the voice of international students. Some global aspects of learning in Higher Education echo with previous studies; in other respects, resonance with the existing literature is less clear. In particular, the study attempts to fill a gap. This can be described as a “middle ground” between the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism reported by scholars such as Hofstede and Hall, on the one hand, and the small cultures for

understanding the subtle and complex intercultural communication in the context of the multicultural environment reported by Holliday and Wegner, on the other.

CHAPTER TWO: THE RESEARCH CONTEXTS

In recent years, the governments of many European countries have been reducing their direct supervision and control of Higher Education and reshaping it more strongly through target-setting and performance-based funding (Teichler 2004, p. 19). As a result, Higher Education institutions have developed more powerful and strategic managements. One of the strategies many institutions have adopted is to search for financial sources in addition to governmental funding subsidies. The tuition fees that international students bring to a country are thus welcomed as a significant contribution to the finance of institutions as well as to the host country. For example, the United States captures the largest percentage share of the international student market at 28 percent with, in the 1998-99 academic year (Hira 2003, p. 918), an estimated \$13.2 billion contribution from international students spending on education and related services. The United Kingdom is the second largest recipient, hosting 11 percent of the world's mobile students in the academic year 2004-5 (Vickers and Bekhradnia 2007, p. 3) and international students injected approximately £1.39 billion into the UK economy resulting from the tuition fees they paid (*ibid*). Although the Anglophone countries, such as United States, the United Kingdom and Australia are among the countries leading the world in terms of their number of international students, the growth rate of overseas enrollment between 1999

and 2005 was less than that of some non-Anglophone countries that host international students, such as Germany and France (Bain *et al.*, 2006). With more American and British universities being listed at the top of international league tables than any other countries, governments in Europe and Asia are increasingly concerned with university rankings, many universities have tried very hard to improve their performance in such tables so as to increase their market share among international students. In the following sections I will examine these strategies and how universities in the three research contexts have adopted practices designed to place them strongly within a world-class and world-wide education system. After setting out aspects of internationalisation in the development of Higher Education in three research contexts, I will discuss several cultural theories that help identify, understand and explain the cultural components of multicultural learning settings.

2.1 The Internationalisation of Higher Education in the countries under review

One of the OECD reports indicates that knowledge is now recognised amongst the OECD countries “as the driver of productivity and economic growth, leading to a new focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance” (OECD 1996, p. 3). Governments in many countries see the importance of Higher Education systems as a key factor in their response to the knowledge-based economy.

Globalisation processes seem to be “the root cause of changes taking place in Higher Education” (Kritz 2006 , p. 4). Altbach and Knight (2007 cited in Al-Youssef 2009, p.11) defined “globalization” as “the economic, political, and societal forces pushing 21st century Higher Education toward greater international involvement”. Thus, Higher Education institutions have adopted a range of strategies to increase the cross-border flows in respond to the trend of globalization, and those responses were what Altbach and Knight called “internationalisation”. A prominent sign of internationalisation in Higher Education visible today is that more students study abroad - a number that has increased from 1.8 million students studying outside their country of origin in 2000 to 2.7 million in 2007(OECD, 2008). Staff mobility has also risen rapidly and there is a growing interest in: joint/dual degrees providing for structured mobility on the part of students within highly integrated joint study programmes delivered by two or more higher education institutions in different countries (thus, University T in this study has joint/dual degree cooperation with overseas universities in Japan, the USA, and Australia); and in trans-national provision which usually combines the offshore presence of foreign institutions with e-learning (e.g. MIT’s OpenCourseWare and the Open Knowledge Initiative). Moreover, it is not only the popular study-abroad destination countries that make efforts in internationalising Higher Education; the governments in other developed or developing countries also promote different projects aimed at positioning them

securely within a world-class education system. This section will introduce some of the processes for enhancing competitiveness in both the domestic and global market place present in the three research contexts relevant to this study, including international influences, national policies and projects, and university strategies aimed at internationalisation.

2.1.1 Internationalisation of Higher Education in Taiwan

Influence from international education policies

Taiwan is a member country of University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP). UMAP, established in 1993, is a voluntary association of government and non-government representatives of the Higher Education (university) sector in the region (UMAP, 2009), its aim being to enhance international understanding through increased mobility of university students and staff (*ibid*). Students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, as well as faculty can study or research in other member countries through Exchange Programmes for a minimum of one semester and a maximum of a year. Hosting universities are expected to waive tuition fees for UMAP students upon exchange. Credit for study undertaken while on exchange is to be accepted by the home university.

Taiwan joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2002. Since then Taiwan's Higher Education market has been subjected to a wider as well as a more challenging market due to the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which promotes an international free trade market. This means that member countries may recruit or exchange students as well as establishing a university branch across borders. By these means, improving educational qualities and promoting international competitiveness has become one of the priorities of Taiwan's universities.

China is the biggest competitor to Taiwan in both Chinese language study and degree study. From 1978 the Chinese government began to reform its education system, including opening the door for Chinese students studying abroad (EDU.CNR.CN, 2008) and in the 30 years since, Chinese students have come to make up 14 percent of the total worldwide international student population (Bain *et al.* 2006, p. 1), from just 860 students studying abroad in 1978 to 144,500 in 2007 (EDU.CNR.CN, 2008). Since the Chinese economic market has become increasingly prosperous, Mandarin learning has become increasingly popular; in 2008, China attracted 190,000 Western students to study in language centers and universities (People's Daily Online, 2008), ten times more than Taiwan (18,300) (Bureau of International Cultural and Educational Relations, 2009a). With such powerful competitive forces, therefore, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in

Taiwan has cooperated with other government departments and introduced several projects aimed at promoting internationalisation in Higher Education and recruiting international students. These are now discussed.

National education policies towards internationalisation

In a Higher Education White Paper of 2001, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE) asserted that human capital is an essential ingredient of knowledge-based economies, echoing an OECD report of 1996 (p. 9) which made the claim that knowledge “embodied in human beings (as “*human capital*”) and in technology” is now recognised as the driver of productivity and economic growth, leading to a new focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance. As part of this, the role of Higher Education is to offer advanced knowledge, innovation, and manpower cultivation as well as internationalisation, since these are important elements in the international competitiveness of a nation. The Taiwanese MOE also pointed out that internationalisation in Taiwan was not yet advanced enough. Even though there had been a certain degree of international academic cooperation, this was limited to learning from others rather than the other way around. That is to say, the academic profile of Taiwan could not attract sufficient foreign students or faculty. In response, the MOE began to cooperate with other government departments and introduced several projects aimed at

promoting Higher Education quality and internationalisation in Higher Education, in four aspects. I will talk about each project briefly here:

- *Projects aimed at improving teaching and learning quality*

A three-year Excellence in Teaching and Learning Project, aimed at enhancing the quality of Higher Education supplied grants to between 55 and 60 public and private Higher Education institutions, totaling US\$11 million annually from 2005 (MOE 2005a). The project's aim was to construct a sound curriculum which provides knowledge of both professional subjects and language learning for the purpose of training elites for the industry and business market, as well as improving research resources, by quality and quantity. A professional development programme for teachers was also seen as essential to the project, including provision of professional training workshops, encouraging the intensive interaction between teachers and students, and practising techniques of teaching quality assessment.

- *Projects aimed at enhancing international competitiveness*

Seeing that there are few universities in Taiwan listed in the world's top universities (e.g. in "league tables" published by: *The Times Higher* in the UK, *US News and World Report* in the US, *The Good Universities Guide* in Australia, *Weekly Diamond* in Japan), the MOE (Department of Higher Education)

launched an "Enhancing Global Competitiveness Plan" in 2002, aimed at fostering international exchange activities, improving students' English proficiency and encouraging more international students to study in Taiwan.

This plan included projects to promote research achievement, through initiatives such as the "Universities Pursuing Excellent Academic Development Project", the "Project for the Integration of Research Universities" and the "Development Plan for World Class Universities and Research Centers of Excellence". In 2005, a dozen universities won extra funding of such a nature, totaling 50 billion New Taiwan dollars (1 billion GBP) to be allocated to them consecutively over a five year period in the hope of boosting their education quality, such that at least ten universities might be projected into the top 100 worldwide, with at least one among the top five universities in Asia.

- *Projects aimed at encouraging study abroad programmes*

The Taiwanese Ministry of Education has also launched several programmes aiming to encourage university students to study abroad, such as "Study Abroad Scholarships" (whereby universities self-select elite students, including those whose family is in a poor financial condition to study abroad for at least one term/semester), "Study Abroad Loans" and "Internship Abroad Programmes" (MOE 2005b). Another project is the "National Manpower Development for

Postgraduate Studies Project”, a collaboration by the Ministry of Education and the National Science Council in Taiwan since 2003, aimed at encouraging post-doctoral researchers to study or research abroad for seven to twelve months. From 2005, the Ministry of Education integrated all of these study abroad scholarships, naming them “Elite Study Abroad Projects”, to be co-managed with the National Science Council of Taiwan (Cheng 2007, p. 57).

- *Projects aimed at recruiting foreign students*

In 2006, a project subsidizing universities to recruit international students (Department of Higher Education, 2008) was launched to encourage universities aggressively to recruit international students. The MOE has also encouraged the establishment of international offices on campuses to take care of international affairs and international student management, such as counseling and dormitory arrangements. Meanwhile, four government agencies jointly established in 2004 the “Taiwan Scholarship Programme” to encourage outstanding international students to undertake degree programmes in Taiwan (*Study in Taiwan* n.d.). The scholarship includes one-year of pre-degree Mandarin Language Enrichment Programmes (LEP) and four-year undergraduate programmes, two-year master’s programmes and three-year doctoral programmes. There were 555 scholarships awarded in 2004, a figure that had more than doubled (to 1,356) in 2008 (Bureau

of International Cultural and Educational Relations R.O.C., 2009b). According to Statistics released by the Ministry in 2008, there were 18,000 foreign students studying in Taiwan, figure that has seen a twofold increase in the last decade, 70% of whom were studying Mandarin in language centers. The remaining 30% (about 5,500 students) were drawn from five continents and registered on degree programs spread across 100 universities or colleges in Taiwan, of whom a majority were from South East Asia (e.g. Malaysia, Vietnam, Japan and Korea), followed by America (including Central and South America) (Department of Statistics, Taiwan, 2008). With those efforts, the MOE aimed to triple the number of foreign students studying degree programmes in Taiwan's universities over the forthcoming five years.

From those short- and long-term projects, we can see that the Taiwanese government attaches great importance to internationalisation of its educational system in order to compete with others in the international market. To push Taiwan institutions into the list of top universities in the world not only requires a broadening domestic students' international perspectives by encouraging studying abroad programmes or by aggressively recruiting international students, but also needs to assure a high standard of teaching quality.

Motivation of international students studying in Taiwan

The majority of students who study for degrees in Taiwan are from South East Asia. In 2008-2009, this group numbered 10,000 (63% of the total of foreign students in Taiwan) (FICHET, 2009) mainly choosing the country for geographical reasons: they preferred to study in their home region of Asia. Meanwhile, students from Central and South America apparently chose to study in Taiwan because of intimate diplomatic relationships between countries, encouraged also by the scholarships offered by the Taiwanese government. A further reason for Taiwan attracting foreign students, mostly from developing countries, is attributed to its strong technology sector which guarantees high quality education in fields such as bio-technology, semi-conductor technology, and business (FICHET, 2009). Thus, about 12% of those international students from other Asian countries such as Malaysia and Thailand study in technology-related fields in Taiwan (Higher Education in Taiwan, 2008).

Universities' attitude towards internationalisation of education

In 1997, there were 78 colleges and universities in Taiwan. By 2007, the number had risen to 149, comprising 100 universities and 49 colleges. Accompanying this, the number of students has increased by 250% to 1,192,139 over the same decade (*ibid*, p. 6). However,

the universities will soon face the problem of fewer students, for two main reasons: a decrease in the birth rate and an outflow of student population due to the open market created when Taiwan joined the World Trade Organisation. It is in this context that recruiting international students has become one of the important policies in Higher Education and the establishment of English-taught programmes in Taiwan has become a trend. To attract both international and home students, each Taiwanese university must be innovative and of high quality so as to cope up with the competition among the 150 Higher Education institutions that comprise the sector. The current quality assurance system has existed since 1975 for the purpose of maintaining education quality, being enhanced in 2005 by the establishment of a new Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT). Stated in the Regulations of University Evaluation and Accreditation, the evaluation process used is based on two indexes - 'quality' and 'quantity' (HEEACT, 2007). The quality index includes administrative affairs, management and development, financial and accounting management, curriculum design and teaching, and student counselling, while the quantity index includes academic achievement, such as teaching qualities and research achievement, teaching and learning resources, and the enrollment of international and domestic students. The evaluation results affect the funding subsidiary from governments.

The selected university in Taiwan (University T)

The assessment of university quality is administered by the Taiwan Assessment and Evaluation Association (TWAEA) on behalf of Ministry of Education. Although University T is one of the newly-established private universities in Taiwan, with a less than ten year history, it has continuously been recognised as one of the most outstanding Higher Education institutions in all kinds of assessments, including the annual review of private universities and colleges. The Ministry of Education has particularly endorsed the University's efforts in internationalisation, such as its goal to become an internationally outstanding university focusing on teaching by continuously inviting well-known scholars giving lectures or seminars (MOE Annual Evaluation Report, 2009). Moreover, the number of international students exceeded over 100 in 2004-5 three years after beginning such recruitment. In 2006, the Ministry of Education acknowledged University T's achievements and upgraded it from a college after only six years of existence. The International Honour Programme is the sole programme that recruits international students, the majority of 113 international students in the programme major in Business Management, a small additional number being majors in Shipping and Logistics (personal communication with the administrator in International Office, 2009).

2.1.2 Internationalisation of Higher Education in the United Kingdom

Influence from international education policies

European integration can be traced back to after World War II; for instance, the Council of Europe, founded in 1949, seeks to develop throughout Europe common and democratic principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals (Council of Europe Website). Meanwhile, the European Coal and Steel Community began to unite European countries economically and politically in order to secure lasting peace; in 1957, the Treaty of Rome created the European Economic Community (EEC), or ‘Common Market’ (*Europa* website). In 1987 the Single European Act, signed by 12 European states, established the single European market. In 1993, the ECC was transformed into what is now called the European Union (EU) with 27 independent states (up to 2009). Its aim is to enhance political, economic and social co-operation (*ibid*). Being one of the member countries in the European Union since 1 January 1973, the UK not only implements EU policies, but also actively engages in the construction of these policies. Among the Higher Education policies promoting academic integration across the EU, the ERASMUS project, agreed by the Council of the European Communities in 1987, is one of the projects aiming to enhance the mobility of students and staff within the Community (Teichler, 1996).

The ERASMUS scheme involves two hundred thousand students every year (*Europa Website*), from undergraduate through to doctoral level, each spending a part of the period of study for their degree (between three months and one year) at a university in another EC member state. The number of students in the UK from other European Union (EU) countries had been increasing every year, there being 112,150 EU students registered in UK Higher Education in 2007/08 (HESA, 2009). Pietro & Page (2008) reviewed research undertaken to investigate Erasmus students' motivation for studying abroad and identified five main reasons: to gain cultural experience, to improve foreign language skills, to study in high quality academic environments, to improve career prospects and to gain a good understanding of the host country. However, in Britain the gap between incoming and outgoing students has widened. It hosted 16,266 Erasmus students in 2004-05 — more than twice as many as it sent out — and UK participation in Erasmus fell from 7,973 students in 2002-03 to 7,214 students in 2004-05 (Osborn, 2006). The explanations for British students' declining interest in Erasmus exchange programme are varied. John Reilly, former director of the UK Socrates Erasmus Council proposed some possibilities (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 2001). First, there is the financial affect of taking on the extra costs of study in another country. However, students in some other EU countries that are less well off financially than those in the UK have

seen the rate of student participation continue to rise. Another factor might be linguistic competence. Phillipson (2003, p. 9) compared the information on EU websites and found “people in the UK, Ireland and Portugal are least likely to speak another language, with less than a third of these populations saying they can do this”. Few UK students have any language training beyond the age of 16 and a sense of inadequacy in a foreign language may still be a deterrent (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 2001). In light of this concern, the ERASMUS scheme provides good resources for language training, both before students and staff go abroad and whilst they are visiting the host country. Certainly some students (and staff) find it hard to comprehend and communicate in their first few weeks, but through intensive application, their language proficiency can be brought to an adequate level (Maiworm 2001, pp. 9-10). But perhaps the main reason for low student mobility out of the UK could be the lack of a "mobility culture", Reilly believing that the phenomenon of low mobility "is essentially cultural and motivational. Students, their families and universities in other European countries recognise that if they want to develop their career prospects they need one or two European languages at a good level and experience in other countries. This climate does not exist in Britain" (*Times Higher Education Supplement*, 2001). A further impediment is that some students may find it difficult to accommodate a study period abroad within a three-year degree, re-informed by other concerns such as the validation of courses taken abroad, the translation of marks

and the transfer of credits. Although the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) was introduced in 1989, within the framework of ERASMUS, aiming to facilitate the recognition of student workload in the periods of study abroad in Europe, implementation of ECTS still encounters inconsistencies caused by varied national or institutional approaches (Reichert & Tauch 2005, p. 26).

To sum up, being a member country of the European Union can be beneficial as well as challenging for the UK in terms of the internationalisation of Higher Education. For instance, the free movement of workers within the European Union may imply a 'brain gain' as universities can easily employ scholars from other EU countries without a complex visa process. However, it may be that the international students in my study who have chosen to be hosted in the UK for their degree programme will find it more difficult, compared to their peers in other countries, to engage with home student who are among the least likely in Europe to be linguistically adventurous..

National education policies towards internationalisation

In the UK in the late 1950s, only one in 20 people entered into Higher Education, and students made no contribution towards tuition costs, a situation countenanced by the Treasury because of the very small percentage of the population participating in Higher

Education (Sutherland 2008, p. 47). From the 1960s, the UK government deemed Higher Education to be a form of human capital investment contributing to the fundamental basis for the nation's success in the global economy and with the result that expansion of universities and widening participation in Higher Education was introduced. The 1963 report of a committee appointed by the Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins, recommended "courses of Higher Education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so" (*ibid*). The aim was to expand student numbers in Higher Education from 216,000 full-time students in 1963-64 to 560,000 in 1980-81, and this was nearly achieved (Moser 1988, p. 6).

In 1996 the OECD began to endorse the concept of a "knowledge-based economy", that is an economy directly based on the production, distribution and use of knowledge and information (OECD 1996, p. 7). As part of this, the OECD claimed that "Government policies will need more stress on upgrading human capital through promoting access to a range of skills, and especially the capacity to learn (*ibid*)". Within two years a National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education in the UK echoed the OECD's "knowledge-based economy" concept, describing some of the purposes of Higher Education as follows (Dearing 2003, p. 33):

- *to increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society;*
- *to serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge based economy at local, national and regional levels.*

The Dearing Report was also concerned with the funding for a further expansion of Higher Education, one of its recommendations being a student contribution to Higher Education through the payment of a tuition fee. This was justified on grounds of equity: rather than using an “ability to pay” criterion (for example, by means of a progressive income tax system), as had been in place historically, Dearing proposed that a “who benefits” criterion should be used instead (Sutherland 2008, p. 49). The acceptance of Dearing’s proposals, backed up with subsequent government investment in Higher Education had their effect, evidenced in statistics released by OECD 2008 showing 37% of UK 25-to-34-year-olds attaining a tertiary qualification – a figure above the OECD average at the time of 33% (OECD, 2008, p. 2).

The transition from elite to mass Higher Education in the UK is also a global phenomenon. Higher Education is expanding rapidly as governments identify high-level technical and intellectual skills as being the key to success in knowledge-based economies. In the UK this has accompanied the dismantling of traditional manufacturing

industries and a rhetoric promoted by leading industry figures, such as Sir Digby Jones, CBI Director General, who predicted in 2003 that “there would be no unskilled jobs in the UK 10 years hence. His implication was that Britain must survive on highly skilled, knowledge-based professional work” (BCS, 2006). The increasing number of graduates entering the labour market and the decreasing graduate unemployment rate between 1995 and 2005 appeared to show that the UK economy had developed a seemingly voracious demand for those with high skills (*Prospects* website 2006/07), although this rosy picture has recently been punctured by the effects of the financial crash of 2008.

But long before home students began to take more responsibility for the cost of their Higher Education, international students had been the higher fee payers. In 1966 the Labour Government announced a differential fee for overseas students, the overseas student fee for 1967-68 being set at £250 in higher and advanced further education compared with £70 for home students” (UKCISA 2008, p. 14). Later, a full tuition fee policy for international students was implemented in the 1980s during the period of the Thatcher government (*ibid*), despite the effect noted by the Overseas Development sub-committee of parliamentary select committee for Foreign Affairs that the imposition of full-cost fees inevitably led to a reduction in the number of students from poorer countries studying in Britain and the rapid rise in the number of students from middle-income countries (Brocklebank-Fowler, 1997). It is believed that having

international students not only facilitates internationalisation in both educational and cultural values but also contribute billions of pounds to the economy, thus, in June 1999 the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Tony Blair, declared a formal international education policy designed to attract international students and make their recruitment a national priority (Hira 2003, p.919). He also proposed some incentive strategies for attracting international students, such as removing the work restrictions for international students, offering 1,000 extra scholarships for international students funded by government and private industries (*Encyclopedia of Education* website), and allowing international students who complete a postgraduate degree to work in the UK for up to 12 months after graduating (Blair, 2006). Other government projects aimed at promoting the recruitment of international students in Higher Education, include the “U.K. Education Brand” initiative, developed by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) in 1999 on behalf of the UK government and managed by the British Council, intended to develop the positive perceptions and characteristics of UK education so as to maintain the United Kingdom's credentials as a world-class provider of education and training. In 2006, the government allocated almost £7m to universities and colleges for the specific purpose of attracting students from abroad via improvement in the experience of international students at British institutions and through the building of closer partnerships by academic staff with their colleagues overseas (Blair, 2006). These

strategies and practices were designed to consolidate the position of the UK as the second largest host country in the world for international students, a situation which reflected, in part, the attraction of the UK for students from previous British colonies such as India and Hong Kong. India (colonised by the United Kingdom from the mid-eighteenth century) became an independent nation in 1947 and now supplies the second largest national of group of international students to the UK institutions after China (Gill 2008). The total number of international students increased from 20,000 in 1963 (UKCISA 2008, p. 11) to 223,855 in 2006 (The UK Higher Education International Unit, 2008), the tuition fees paid by international students making up approximately 7.7% (£1.5 billion) of all income received by UK Higher Education institutions in 2005-06 (Vickers & Bekhradnia, 2007), along with living expenses estimated to bring in a further £5 billion to the economy every year (Blair, 2006). Thus, recruiting international students is a national priority due to its beneficial effect on educational institutions' finances and the stimulus it provides to the broader economy.

Motivation of International Students Studying in the UK

English is often referred to as a 'global' language; it has major implications for speakers of all other languages, for education systems and professional qualifications, for the economy, and for the vitality of cultures big and small.

English is influential and popular worldwide because it connotes pleasure, employment, influence, and prestige.

It opens doors, it facilitates mobility.

(Phillipson 2003, p. 5 - 7)

These statements may help to explain why three out of the top five countries which host international students are English-speaking: the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia (Bain *et al.* 2006, p.9). The main features of the UK's success in recruiting international students have been courses taught in English, the relatively short duration of undergraduate and Master's-level degree courses, effective marketing by individual universities, and the perceived high quality of teaching and research on offer, resulting in high completion rates and a good graduate employment record (Cemmel & Bekhradni, 2008). The relatively high tuition fee does not stop international students making pilgrimage to the UK, and this may imply that the perceived benefits from qualifications in Anglophone countries outweigh the considerably cheaper costs of studying in others, helped by access to the English language and active marketing (Hatakenak 2004, p. 5). In addition to gaining fluency in English language skills, international students are equipped with the ability to deal with people from different cultures - a skill that it is reported employers seek in graduate recruits (*Studyoptions website, British Council website*). Thus, the experience of studying and living abroad, along with the qualifications awarded by British universities, is held to provide strong competitiveness for graduates in terms of career advancement.

One fact evidenced in the reports just cited is that universities benefit financially from having fee-paying international students; another benefit is assumed to be the facilitation

of cultural interactions between home and international students. Moreover, international students, in return, may strengthen their competitiveness in the global market by receiving better education and qualifications abroad as well as enhancing their language skills. One of the aims in this study is to investigate students' perception of advantages such as these of studying abroad, and whether their expectations (e.g. improving language skills, receiving better education) are met.

Universities' attitude towards internationalisation of education

UK universities welcome international students for several reasons. First, there are financial considerations. Some universities' revenues rely on fee-paying international students. Across the UK sector as a whole, financial income has mainly come from the government (via the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and from tuition fees: 38.7% and 23.9% respectively (HESA, 2005/06), although this situation is due to change radically from 2012 as a result of reforms currently under way. Moreover, international comparison of Higher Education funding among 13 OECD countries released by Department for Education and Skills (2003, p. 6) revealed that the UK government spent the equivalent of \$9,657 per student in tertiary education in 2000, which is below the OECD mean average and under half of what the US spent (\$20,358). Back in the 1960s, Lord Robbins had warned universities of the dangers of excessive

dependence on state funding (Moser 1988, p. 5); thus universities have been seeking non-government finance, such as fee-paying international students. Second, over and above the financial considerations, international students are held to provide the “pedagogic benefits that come from the creation of multicultural learning environments” and UK universities are said to feel that they benefit from significant numbers of graduates in leadership positions when international students return to their own countries (Vickers & Bekhradnia 2007, p. 19).

As non-native English speaking countries begin to use English as the language of instruction, as the effects of the Bologna Agreement within European countries begin to take hold, eroding some of the existing competitive advantages of UK universities, as other countries start to market themselves more aggressively and as internet information enables students to compare the value they receive for their money, UK universities are coming under pressure to maintain or further improve the quality of the teaching and learning they provide. Moreover, the UK Higher Education sector is very diverse, with 176 Higher Education institutions recorded in 1997 Dearing Report and this makes any rankings on a common scale difficult and controversial. Thus, there are several systems for measuring education quality and standards. The most commonly used measurements are managed by government agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), HEFCE, and these measures feed into some of the annual league tables published by newspapers, such as *The Times Good University Guide*.

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The National Committee of Inquiry in Higher Education (also known as Dearing Committee) recommended in 1997 that external auditing should become a formal part of the UK's quality assurance processes (NCIHE 1997). The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established with this and other roles in mind and it has developed a comprehensive set of codes and policies, in collaboration with HE communities, to provide independent assessment of how Higher Education institutions in the UK maintain their academic standards and quality. It also provides evidence to HEFCE to determine if institutions are meeting their statutory obligations to assure the quality and standards of academic programmes for which they are funded. The Quality Assurance report in 2007 on University B, the selected university in the UK for the purpose of this research, concluded that confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of a) the academic standards of the awards that it offers and b) the quality of the learning opportunities available to students (QAA 2008, p. 5). In terms of teaching and learning, the audit team's view was that a "close relationship between research and

teaching pervades the University's educational activities and is a characteristic feature of the ... student experience" (*ibid*, p. 11).

Performance Indicators (PIs). Since 1999, the four UK Higher Education funding bodies have published annual performance indicators (PIs) to provide robust and useful management information for Higher Education institutions (HERO Website). The performance indicators cover the following areas: student access rates, drop out rates, completion rates, employment rate of graduates and research output. The recent report on the employment rate of graduates with first degrees from the University B in 2006-07 was 94.7%, with only 3.5% of all entrants dropping out after first-year enrollment (HESA, 2008).

Research Assessment Exercise. Based on the results of the Research Assessment Exercise managed by HEFCE and released in December, 2008, 90% of research in the University B was rated in the top three grades with the result that the University was allocated £18.4 million for research funding and £44.2 million for teaching for 2009/10, a rise of nearly 9% (against a national average rise of 4%) (University B News, 2009). Moreover, if the research quality profile and its intensity are combined, the *Times Higher* ranked University B as one of the 20 leading universities in the UK for research

excellence and described it as one of the “rising stars among research intensive institutions” (University B News 2009, p. 3).

National Student Survey (NSS). The National Student Survey asks final year undergraduate students to provide feedback on their learning experience on campus; it also enables the participating institutions to identify and improve in areas where there is low student satisfaction. The survey ran for the first time in 2005 across all publicly funded Higher Education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with many Higher Education institutions in Scotland and some students studying in further education colleges also taking part (HERO website). University B was ranked among the top five in the country for student satisfaction in 2007/08 and has remained in the top ten since 2005/06 (University B Website). In particular, its Business School – the focal point in the this research study - has topped the subject rankings for overall student satisfaction among all UK business schools for the same three years period (*ibid*).

The Times League Tables. League tables of British universities have been published annually by several newspaper agencies, such as *The Times* and *Financial Times*, since 1992. Many parents and students use *The Times Good University Guide* to compare universities against a range of criteria, such as by subject, when deciding to which

universities they will apply. In this particular guide, universities are ranked on eight key performance areas (Times Online, 2007): student satisfaction, research quality, entry standards, student-staff ratios, services and facilities spending, undergraduate completion, good honours results, and graduate prospects. The University B is ranked among top 20 in the *2009 Good University Guide (ibid)*.

The selected university in the UK (University B)

From various evaluation results mentioned above, University B can firmly be placed among the top 20 universities in the UK. Its business school is also well-known and was ranked by *The Times Good University Guide* in the top ten for every subject it teaches (University B website). The Business School hosts 1,685 undergraduate students, including approximately 400 international students (statistics provided by University B via e-mail, 2008).

2.1.3 Internationalisation of Higher Education in Germany

Influence from international education policies

In 1998, Higher Education ministers from France, Germany, Italy and the United

Kingdom, signed the Sorbonne Declaration, aimed at encouraging a common frame of reference for Higher Education in order to improve external recognition of degrees and facilitate student mobility in Europe. Due to the extended length of Higher Education programmes offered in France, Germany and Italy as well as the limited recognition of qualifications and the low level of completion achieved by students, which adversely affected the recruitment of international students, the four countries agreed to provide a common set of qualifications based on the Bachelors and Masters qualifications already offered in the UK and recognised widely throughout the world (Cemmel and Bekhradnia 2008, p. 1). The joint declaration on "The European Higher Education Area" was adopted and signed by 29 European education ministers in Bologna on 19 June 1999, setting out a ten-year plan to introduce Bachelors (minimum 3 years) and Masters (no specified length) programmes throughout the 29 countries (*ibid*).

To enhance Germany's international competitiveness in the field of Higher Education, the Federal Government and the *Länder* in Germany introduced this two-tiered system after the signing of the Bologna Declaration and pointed out in a joint report (National Report Germany, 2002) that it needed to be accompanied by measures to promote acceptance of these degrees by industry and society, and to open up to graduates new opportunities in the labour market. Meanwhile, the Conference of the Ministers of Education (KMK) and

the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) had advocated that all degrees awarded by German Higher Education institutions should offer equally good application and employment prospects (*ibid*). With its decision of 5 March 1999, last amended on 14 December 2001, the KMK further specified the structure of the new graduation system. As a result, in the 2002 summer semester, 544 Bachelor courses and 367 Master courses were recognised as being offered by Higher Education institutions in Germany (*ibid*). By 2008, more than 60 percent of all study programmes at German universities fell within the Bologna framework, a figure which reached nearly 90 percent at the universities of applied sciences (Zervakis 2008, p. 1). The move to the two-tier Bologna system is designed to help increase personal rates of return on university education by shortening programmes, focusing them on occupational qualifications (along with scientific foundations and methodological competence), and reducing dropout rates. Moreover, it could also facilitate an increase in university entry rates to 40% of a cohort (from around 30% presently) (Carey 2008, p. 35). However, the statistics showed that “only 2% of first-year students in the winter semester of 2002/03 enrolled in Bachelor’s programmes, even fewer in Master’s programmes, and many of them came from outside Germany.” Thus, to begin with, at least, the new programmes were successful in attracting foreign students but not in gaining rapid public acceptance within Germany (Wex cited in Welsh 2004, p. 365).

The other reform stimulated by the Bologna Process is the establishment of a European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) to which Germany has contributed substantially (National Report Germany, 2002). German Higher Education institutions wishing to establish a new Bachelor/*Bakkalaureus* or Master/*Magister* course have to prove that the course is modularised and includes a credit system, which ensures comparable standards for the allocation of credits to modules on the basis of student work load, examination and study regulations. In the academic year 2000/2001, a total of 185 German institutions of Higher Education, including 93 *Fachhochschulen* (Technology universities), were introducing or applying an ECTS in some 1,340 areas - not only to Bachelor/*Bakkalaureus* and Master/*Magister* courses but also to traditional study courses (*ibid*). Although some unresolved issues remained in the ECTS, such as credit allocation related to learning outcomes, student workload definition, grading systems and the use of ECTS for credit accumulation, the introduction of the two-tiered (Bachelor and Master's) system and ECTS appears likely to help facilitate mobility within EU, as evidenced by an increasing number of ERASMUS students.

Study abroad has traditionally been a top priority of Higher Education in Germany; thus, several German organisations (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) –

German Academic Exchange Service, for example) have been promoting actively the mobility of students and staff since the Sorbonne Declaration. In general, German students are considerably more mobile than students from similar industrial countries around the world. For example, the proportion of German students undertaking a full degree programme abroad (2.6%) is substantially higher than among students from Australia (0.5%) and the USA (0.2%) (Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, p. III). Mobility programs such as the European ERASMUS program are the driving force of mobility within the EU. In 1992, the European Community set a target of 10% of all domestic students spending at least half a year of their course in study abroad. Only five years later, in 1997, German students had achieved this goal (Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, p. 2). In 2001 an Educational Financial Aid Reform Law was passed offering financial aid for German students studying abroad. "Following a one-year orientation phase at a German institution of higher learning, students receiving financial aid under Germany's Federal Law on Education and Training Promotion (BAföG) are free to continue their course of study until completion at another college or university in another EU member state" (*ibid*, p. 8). Due to the widely accepted idea of studying abroad and the enforcement of government policies, as well as the efforts made by academic institutions and organisations, the number of German students participating in Socrates/Erasmus exchange programmes had been high by European standards. In 2002, this program

sponsored 18,500 German students (Isserstedt & Schinitzer, 2005, p. 2), and in 2002/2003 Germany was one of the countries with the highest increase of outgoing students (11%) in the Erasmus Student and Teacher Mobility Programme, slightly lower than Portugal (12%) and Luxembourg (14%), compared to the previous year (Europa Press Release Rapid, 2004).

National education policies towards internationalisation

In continental Europe there is an increasing tendency for universities to offer courses and degrees taught in English. This is a general trend, particularly at graduate level in the north of Europe, and in such fields as Business Studies (Phillipson 2003, p.65). For example, Germany offers about 650 English-taught degree programmes including 160 business programmes (DAAD website), Italy offers about 300 such programmes and almost all the courses in the Netherlands are taught through the medium of English. Germany has taken over from France to become the third most popular destination for academic study among the 2.7 million international students studying abroad, after the United States and Great Britain. (EchoWorld, 2002; Coleman 2006, p. 6). Thus, statistics for the Federal Republic of Germany showed, ‘a marked increase in the number of international students, with a rise of 21% between the 1997/98 and 2000/01 academic years’, comprising about 11% of the international students enrolled at German

universities and technical schools in 2000/01 (*ibid*). At the same time, it is interesting to note that the Netherlands and Finland among Socrates-Erasmus countries offer 100% English-instructed degree programmes (Coleman 2006, p. 6) yet this does not lead them to attract more international students than Germany. One explanation for this might be that 98% of Germany Universities are fully state funded, with reimbursement of the tuition fee from the German government. There were over 250,000 international students in Germany in 2009, with more than 30% of postgraduate degrees being awarded to international students (compared to a figure of 35% or more in the United Kingdom where international students pay fees and institutions enjoy the historic advantages discussed in the previous section) (OECD 2008, p. 80). Although it costs the German State upwards of £1 billion per year to reimburse the tuition fee, the German Government is willing to pay the universities to take the students because of the even greater benefits they are said to bring (Vickers& Bekhradnia, 2007), leading German Education and Research Minister Edelgard Bulmahn to declare: “We are investing in the people who, in a few years, will help shape the economic, social and cultural processes in their countries. By increasing international cooperation, this investment will surely pay off for both sides” (EchoWorld, 2002)

In addition to offering courses taught in English and German language training courses, it

has also been seen in Germany as essential to create a more accessible social and intercultural environment to facilitate the daily life of foreign students. The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) indicates in its Internationalisation of Higher Education report (Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, p. 6) that “securing the basic necessities of life often has an even greater impact on the success of studies for foreigners than the actual difficulty of the studies themselves.” It also suggests that “a lack of student services and insufficient basic social conditions are contributing factors to high drop-out rates” (*ibid*). To cope with the demand for increasing international student numbers, both in terms of counseling and social services, ensuring the basic social conditions that facilitate a student's daily life is seen as just as important as creating a basis for financial support. Thus, Germany's student services have developed a package that provides primary assistance from a single source. Students pay one fee that covers the following services (Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, pp. 6-7):

- *accommodation in a student hall*
- *meals*
- *tutoring program*
- *cultural services*
- *health insurance*
- *student services dues and*

- *public transportation pass*

This package is designed to eliminate the difficulties that students experience in the entry phase of their international experience and thought to be an important combination of services, especially for short-term study abroad.

Virtually every industrialised nation, including Germany, strives to facilitate arrangements that allow highly skilled professionals and academics to settle and supplement the domestic workforce, ensuring for the country's future competitiveness in an international economy (Hegen, 2001). Along with European integration, and with a view to strengthening the international dimension of its economy, the measures to improve legal conditions for foreigners wishing to study and work in Germany have been addressed in legislative reform. For instance, the report of the Independent Commission on Migration to Germany established by the Federal Minister of the Interior in September 2001 (National Report Germany, 2002) mainly considered proposals for the support of foreign students and scholars, such as residence and work permit provisions. In 2005, the German economy lost at least 3.5 billion Euros in added value because of a lack of specialists, according to the Institute for the German Economy in Cologne (Education Germany Newsletter, 2007). In recent years, German industry has had 23,000 job openings a month for engineers, according to reports by the Association of German

Engineers (VDI) and 20,000 job openings in the information technology sector according to Bitkom, the association for the sector (*ibid*). In response, German enterprises are putting more effort in the search of graduates and highly qualified workers from abroad, and the German government has acknowledged a growing need to re-examine immigration laws and measures to make working and studying for foreigners as easy and convenient as possible, such as those put forward in a report of the government's Commission on Immigration and Asylum Policy (Janes, 2003). Nevertheless, the author of this report concludes that “with the high levels of unemployment still nagging at the German economy, the challenge of finding a politically viable balance between the immigration and integration needs of German society remains significant. How much the Commission will be able to change the parameters of the debate on immigration, citizenship and the integration of foreigners in Germany remains to be seen” (*ibid, unpaginated*).

Motivations of international students studying in Germany

In Germany, the largest proportion of international students comes from China (8.9%) and Eastern Europe (Vickers& Bekhradnia, 2007), while migration networks also play a role, as illustrated by the concentration of students from Turkey in Germany (OECD 2008, pp. 362). Such students choose to study in Germany for a wide variety of reasons,

including improving their language skills, gaining specialised knowledge, and enhancing their job opportunities after graduation (Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, p. III). In this context it is one of the aims of this study to explore the participants' motivations for study in Germany and their perceptions of the usefulness of the diploma gained in a German institution for their future career and life experience.

Universities' attitude towards internationalisation of education

In Germany, as in the UK, the student population at university has changed from an elite to a mass education at enormous speed in the past few decades. In 1970, 510,000 students were enrolled in German Higher Education institutions, a figure that has now risen to some 1.98 million (*Facts about Germany*, n.d., p. 119). A total of 376 Higher Education institutions offer study programmes, including 102 general universities, 170 universities of applied sciences and 69 private colleges (*ibid*). Over the period 1998-2000, the majority of students in almost all OECD countries chose to follow tertiary programmes in the field of social sciences, business, law and services - except Germany, the UK and five other countries, where this field accounts for over one-third of new entrants (OECD, 2008, p. 61). In Germany and the UK, it is the fields of humanities, art and education that account for the largest concentration of what the OECD labels 'tertiary-type A' programmes, those "largely theory-based and are designed to provide sufficient

qualifications for entry to advanced research programmes and professions with high skill requirements, such as medicine, dentistry or architecture” (OECD, 2002), and advanced research qualifications (OECD, 2008, p. 81).

The education reforms based on the Bologna Declaration are not just about implementing the new degree structures, they also necessitate curricular review. The European University Association (EUA) indicates in its Trend IV report of 2005 that HEIs should take into account not only ongoing European discussions concerning descriptors for Bachelor-level and Master-level degrees, learning outcomes and qualification profiles, but also the institution-specific case for curricular reform (Reichert & Tauch, u.d.). To German students, studying abroad used to be, first and foremost, a way to enhance their educational experience; more recently career orientation has become the prime motivating factor (Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, p. 8). Ulrich Teichler’s extensive research on the Socrates/Erasmus programme claims that "preparing students for careers in an internationalised and globalised world is no longer the objective of only a handful of programs and persons. Today it has increasingly become an integral part of many courses of study" (cited in Isserstedt & Schinitzer 2005, p. 8). Alongside this, when the two-tiered degree programme was implemented, it was reported that “only 10% of HEIs expect holders of a Bachelor degree to leave the system, such relatively modest numbers as was

thought may reflect the novelty and lack of familiarity with the new degrees and may also reflect the insufficient design and content of some of the new Bachelor programmes – they may not include the skills and competences students will need to become employable” (Tauch 2004, p. 281).

In light of this issue, some German Higher Education institutions have sought cooperation with consultants from industry and business. Businesses and universities are held to benefit from closer dialogue over the creation of new study programmes and improving employability by gearing programmes more consistently to the needs of the labour market and student interests (Zervakis 2008, pp.2-3). As Zervakis & Wahlers (2007, p. 2), the executives at HRK German Rectors’ Conference, suggest “creating the common Higher Education area is not only about establishing internationally recognisable degrees, it involves fostering a change in perspective – from the instructors to the students and from the curricula to the skills to be acquired during study”.

Employers’ support for the new two-tiered degree structure can also be seen from the statement published in the late summer of 2006 by 22 major corporations, including Adidas, BASF, Deutsche Bahn and Procter & Gamble; “More bachelors and masters welcome! We will increasingly be offering attractive career fields and development prospects for graduates with bachelor’s and master’s degrees” (Federal Foreign Office,

n.d.). A large number of company representatives in Germany are serving as consultants to university councils and accreditation agencies, supporting the development of “Career Services” centres, teaching courses at the universities, and offering students and teachers insights into business practice (Zervakis 2008, p. 5).

Like the other two research contexts in this study, there are growing calls in Germany for the enhancement of quality assurance in order to cope with internationalisation challenges. Systematic quality assurance at German HEI's began in 1994 with evaluation of the quality of teaching; in December 1998 an Accreditation Council was established; in 2001 a basis for regulating the procedure and criteria for the new accreditation agencies was developed, based on one of the Bologna Process objectives – establishing “Quality Assessment in the Field of Higher Education” (Quality Assurance Project Progress Report 2004, pp. 6-8). In addition to the accreditation agencies certified by the Accreditation Council, the procedures of some European accreditation agencies, such as the European Network for Quality Assurance and the Joint Quality Initiative, are also used in German HEIs. The most common practice generally uses a two-stage instrument of evaluation – internal self-assessment and on-site visit by external experts (*ibid*, p. 6). Internal quality assurance procedures usually monitor the quality of teaching and research while external quality procedures are regarded as enhancing the quality of institutional

culture through observation of the links between teaching and research and other dimensions of institutional management.

Concern about university ranking was not common in Germany until the 1990s when news magazines began to publish “hitlists” of the “best” German universities (*Study in Germany, n.d.*). In 2002, the Centre for University Development (CHE) compiled the first comprehensive German university ranking system which evaluates degree courses and faculties measured against 30 indicators, from student numbers and the amount of third-party funds, to student and staff judgements on the quality of teaching and on library resources (*ibid*). Interesting to note that the number of international students is not included among the indicators for evaluation, even though the mobility of visiting lectures and exchange students is taken into account (*Zeit Online, n.d.*).

From what had been discussed in this section, we can see that European education systems have been influenced significantly by the trend to internationalisation, particularly via the Bologna Process. The selected German institution in this study has successfully attempted to comply with the standards of internationalisation set by several international accreditation associations, hoping to gain thereby as much international recognition as possible.

The select university in Germany (University G)

That University G is one of the leading universities in Germany is indicated by the fact that it was awarded national “Excellence Initiative” status in 2006 (University G brochure, 2009). The Business School of University G has always been ranked at the top position by news or business magazines, such as *Focus* in 2007 and *Handelsblatt* since 2005 (University G Website). It is also accredited by several leading professional bodies in business education worldwide, such as AACSB International, the Association of MBAs (AMBA) and the European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD-EQUIS). Influenced by the Bologna Process, the business administration programme of University G was reformed as a two-tiered degree programme (Bachelor’s/ Master’s) in the fall/winter semester of 2006/2007. The Business School hosts around 4,000 students in total, including 400 international students (University G brochure, 2009).

2.1.4 Comparison among three research contexts

Currently, Higher Education falls in the intersection between wider global trends (‘Europeanisation’ or ‘globalisation’), and national traditions. In the past decade, governments in the three countries under review have granted Higher Education

institutions more autonomy. Decentralisation from government to educational institutions affects decision-making structures, such as curriculum, and financial budgets. Granting autonomy may strengthen university self-governance, Neave & Van Vught (cited in Huisman & Van der Wende 2004, p. 350) concluding that it allows autonomous Higher Education institutions to better cope with and adjust to the changing requirements of international, national and regional environments. In the UK and Germany, national views on the role of Higher Education have gradually grown closer to the EU's characteristic perspectives of Europeanisation and globalisation. By contrast, in Taiwan, globalisation seems to be the main principle, which echoes what Huang (2005) considers: that globalisation is the most powerful driving force influencing current Chinese Higher Education. Nevertheless, academic freedom in all three countries allows Higher Education institutions to distinguish themselves from others through innovation of curriculum designs or the added value of specific measures of teaching and research quality.

Within the general process of the internationalising of Higher Education, some specific national concerns can be identified such as varied cultural rationales for internationalisation and different assessments of the ideal balance in the flow of incoming and outgoing international students. For example, while Germany and Taiwan offer

English-taught degree programmes, they also require foreign students to learn or be fluent in the local language for the sake of preservation of the host's national language and culture and one of the objects of this study is to discover the extent to which international students who choose to study abroad also value the opportunities of learning that country's language as well as the experience of understanding other cultures through interacting with students from all over the world.

As a preliminary to this, the next chapter will review some of the cultural theories in the academic literature relevant to student internationalisation. First, I will review ideas of the intercultural competence which are held to be a vital skill with which business graduates should be equipped. Second, I will examine literature concerning the cultural components of the multicultural business classroom, a literature which includes long-standing ideas about intercultural competence viewed as interactions between individualism and collectivism (e.g. Trompenaars 1993, Hall 1960, Hofstede *et al.* 1990, and Adler 1986). Finally, I will review literature associated with Holliday's "small cultures" theory and Wenger's "community of practice" ideas. Towards the end of the chapter (section 3.3), I will analyse the literature on contemporary Higher Education business curricula, including the curricula in the immediate researched contexts of this study before ending (in sections 3.6 and 3.7) with a review of literature exploring the

concept of “learning journeys” and presenting the final formulation of the research questions to be investigated empirically in chapter 5.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Intercultural competence

Living in increasingly multicultural societies within a global village, the opportunities for people to interact with those from cultures that are different from their own are becoming more common. When confronted with different cultures, people's attitudes toward them can be varied, from positive, through neutral to negative. Some people may choose to understand, appreciate, respect or accept the differences; some may avoid or ignore the differences; and others may try to impose their own culture or beliefs and try to convert by means of overruling socially, politically, economically or linguistically. For those who attempt to understand other cultures, it is not sufficient to communicate by using one's own cultural concepts as a predictor of shared assumptions and responses to messages. Thus, as internationalisation becomes a more ubiquitous phenomenon, this does not mean the integration of the world into a single culture, but implies instead a process through which we come to understand each other and respect each other's cultures, beliefs and behaviours. Moreover, to understand differences between one's own and others' cultures in order to facilitate communication, can be seen as an exercise in intercultural competence. Although Hannerz (1996, p. 102) considers "there is now a world culture",

he does not believe that there is a replication of uniform cultures but diverse cultures which include “increasing interconnectedness of varied local cultures, as well as a development of cultures without a clear anchorage in any one territory”. To prepare students well for a global business environment, internationalisation of the curriculum attempts to foster students’ global understanding, including international awareness and international expertise, and to develop students’ tolerance, respect and open-mindedness towards different economies, languages, cultures, and business practices. Moreover, after their experience of living abroad and interacting with people from diverse cultures, the views held by travelling students of their home cultures, as well as taken-for-granted stereotype knowledge of foreign cultures, may have been irreversibly altered.

There are numerous definitions of culture. It can be seen “as consisting of everything that is human made (e.g. Herskovits, 1955), or as involving shared meanings (e.g. Geertz, 1973)” (cited in Gudykunst *et al.* 1988, p. 27). Hall (1959, p.119) believes “culture is communication” that “culture is the link between human beings and the means they have of interacting with others” (*ibid*, p. 213). However, “the fact that communication can be effected in so brief a time on the cultural level is often responsible for the confusion which so often occurs in cross-cultural exchanges” (*ibid*, p. 121). Swidler (1986 cited in Friedman & Berthoin Antal 2005, p. 75) distinguishes cultural competence and

intercultural competence by stating that cultural competence is the ability to draw on one's own culturally shaped repertoires unconsciously when interacting with others who are from the same culture, sharing similar customs, beliefs, and practices. In contrast, "intercultural competence" is the ability to explore and overcome the constraints embedded in one's culturally shaped repertoires, actively constructing new strategies and behaviours for future intercultural interactions. With regard to how one can break out of one's own cultural frameworks and expand the range of interpretations and behaviours, one can draw on dealings with others from different cultural frameworks, in order to gain domain knowledge of other cultures and actively engage with cultural differences through adaptation and integration (Bennett 1998 cited in Friedman & Berthoin Antal 2005, p. 75). Ady (1995, p. 93) states that "the relationship between adjustment and competence may admittedly be a riddle of the 'chicken-and-egg' variety; the argument can be made, for example, that an individual is adjusted when competence has been built through time". Intercultural competence involves the knowledge of other cultures as well as the social skills and personal traits that enable one to mediate between one's own culture and that of others (Buttjes 1989 cited in Eisenchlas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 416): "the more closely the individual's personality traits resemble host culture norms, the more adjustive those traits may be" (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 458). Hannerz's (1996, p. 103) definition of "cosmopolitanism" is compatible with such concepts in that it is related to

individuals' "willingness to become involved with the Other, and the concern with achieving competence in cultures which are initially alien, relate to considerations of self as well". Such competence is a built-up skill which becomes "a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting" (*ibid*).

When international students first arrive in the foreign countries where they study, they have been characterised as experiencing "entry euphoria" (Oberg 1960 cited in Savicki *et al.* 2008, p. 157) during which "their enthusiasm and fascination with the host culture overshadow the day-to-day difficulties they encounter" (*ibid*). Then they may move to a second phase where they encounter the conflicting values between home and host cultures, leading them to experience feelings such as inadequacy, anxiety, frustration, and anger. In such a situation culture shock becomes predominant, and international students "begin to resolve some of the cultural clashes and to learn skills and knowledge to help them navigate successfully in the host culture" (*ibid*). As the international students expose themselves with ever-increasing intensity to the host culture, misunderstandings may become less shocking and mysterious and thus associated with less negative emotions. For a range of theorists, this is when the intercultural competence begins to develop, an idea encapsulated in the description of Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008, p. 1): "international contact ... facilitates knowledge of 'elsewhere', of 'the other' – and

increasingly 'elsewhere' is less foreign, 'the other' is more familiar".

There are several models that help explain the process of intercultural competence (Table 2.1). Sizoo *et al.* (2007) revisited earlier work on intercultural competence and found it to be a process developed through several stages. The first stage is a cognitive dimension in which an individual understands cultural conventions, moves beyond culture shock and adapts to the host country. At stage two, an individual is able to develop a positive emotion toward understanding and appreciating cultural differences. Thus, individuals can deal competently with the host nations with which they come in contact - at work or study as well as in daily life. This is where Bennett (1993) considers that individuals move from ethnocentrism and monoculturalism, to ethnorelativism which is to appreciate the cultural perspectives other than their own, via a process of developing intercultural sensitivity. At a third and final stage, individuals possess enough understanding of both their host culture and their home culture to be able to conduct themselves effectively and appropriately during intercultural interactions. Similarly, Yachimowicz (1987 cited in Hoff 2008, p. 57) used Piaget's model of "decentration" to describe the change in perspective gained from a sojourn abroad for international understanding. The model includes three stages. At the first stage, 'unconscious egocentricity', individuals apply their own cultural attitudes to the foreign context and find that their habitual ways of

thinking, feeling, and behaving may not function as expected in the host culture. The second stage is that of ‘transitional beliefs’. As the name indicates, individuals' beliefs are transitional at this stage and begin to change so as to accept more of the other culture's value system. The last stage is that of ‘reciprocity’ where individuals achieve “intellectual and ethical 'reciprocity'” which is defined as “faculty for social awareness and international understanding”. Alder's model (1975, cited in Yachimowicz 1987) consists of five stages of growth: “contact, characterised by excitement and euphoria; disintegration, characterised by tension, confusion, and alienation; reintegration, characterised by strong rejection of the foreign culture; autonomy, characterised by increased understanding of the host culture; and independence, characterised by increased self- and cultural awareness”.

Table 3.1 Stages of Cross-/Inter-cultural Development

| Authors | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | | |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Anderson (1990) | Cognitive stage | Associate stage | Autonomous stage | | |
| Serrie (1992) | Cross-culturally self management | Interpersonal level | Organizational or institutional level | | |
| Chen and Starosta (1997) | Intercultural awareness | Intercultural sensitivity | Intercultural competence | | |
| Bennett (1993) | | Ethnocentrism Ethnorelativism | | | |
| Yachimowicz (1987) | Unconscious egocentricity | Transitional beliefs | reciprocity | | |
| Adler (1975, cited in Yachimowicz 1987) | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Stage 5 |
| | Contact | disintegration | reintegration | autonomy | independence |

Source: Sizoo *et al.* (2007), Bennett (1993), Hoff (2008)

These authors do not ascribe a fixed time-frame to each stage. Some individuals may stay longer in one of the stages and some may proceed more quickly to the next than others.

In order to reach intercultural competence, one must build up an information network gradually throughout the stages and one can only reach intercultural understanding by learning from knowledge, past experiences, and any other memories that individuals can use to make sense of the intercultural events and relationships in their environment and to solve the intercultural problem they encounter (Bennett 1993). To become more expert at intercultural skills, the information network needs to grow in breadth and depth. This comes with exposure to new cultural frameworks, while increase in depth comes with extended familiarity within a given framework. For example, being present in the ethnic, racial and linguistic diversity of the multicultural university, students may initially develop the cognitive aspect of intercultural competence by observing heterogeneous cultures. However, being in a context saturated with culturally different persons at a multicultural university does not guarantee experience of intercultural interactions. Thus, Halualani (2008, p. 10) found that merely belonging to a diverse campus did not lead inevitably to intercultural interaction, cultural awareness, openmindedness and appreciation of cultural differences. Rather, intercultural competence is developed

through individuals' experiences. One must actively communicate and negotiate with others so that it is possible to develop skills for interpreting and understanding direct intercultural interactions. Thus, the American Council on Education recommends that "the educational experience must be infused with some degree of *intercultural competence*" (original emphasis: ACE 1995 cited in Klak & Martin 2003, p. 446), so that "such calls for international intercultural competence dovetail with the longer standing emphasis on the need to diversify college curricula in response to domestic pluralism/multiculturalism" (Takaki 1993 cited in Klak & Martin 2003, p. 446).

For the purpose of training tomorrow's managers in a global business environment where they will interact with people following different values, behavioural norms and ways of perceiving reality in culturally complex contexts (Friedman & Berthoin Antal 2005, p. 69), intercultural competence seems to be an essential skill. "Intercultural competence does not focus on enculturation" but to "prepare students to develop understanding of the principles and factors that influence communication among groups and individuals, and to increase their ability and confidence in interpreting unfamiliar environments as well as to avoid misunderstanding or conflicts" (Eisenclas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 419). This competence is held to enable communicators who are from different cultures to discover differing views of reality, making it more likely that they will create common

understandings and generate collaborative action (Friedman & Berthoin Antal 2005, p. 70). Moreover, as many jobs now entail an international dimension, not only expatriate managers but also those managers who stay in their home offices have to interact effectively with people from very varied backgrounds (Sizoo *et al.* 2007, p. 84).

According to a Council on International Educational Exchange survey of over 300 employers, “employers value study abroad and overseas internships to a greater extent than any other form of education except foreign language learning (and, of course, the students' majors)” (Bennett 2008, p.14). Thus, it is seen as essential that students are educated in an environment where they are exposed to diverse ideas, perspectives and interactions that help their development of intercultural competence and enable them to function efficiently in an increasingly ethnically and culturally diverse society and globalised economy (Eisenclas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 414). In this light it is not surprising that those analysing the international business curriculum in Higher Education comment that it should aim at developing students’ international business skills and cross-cultural capability, including cross-cultural sensitivity, cross-cultural business skills, and international management competence.

3.2 Components in the multicultural classroom

The contexts in which business subjects are taught and learnt around the world include

the international business classroom where the diverse cultural backgrounds of the students intertwine with other elements such as language, learning style, and teaching pedagogy to influence the student experience and the curriculum. This section will discuss the impact of cultural diversity on classroom practice, learning styles and teaching pedagogies.

3.2.1 Cultural diversity

Hofstede (1980, p. 25) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another”. Culture is created by groups, transmitted to individuals through processes of socialisation, and maintained through institutions in the form of explicit or implicit rules, models and templates for behaviours and interpretation that constrain action, define opportunity, and facilitate patterns of interaction (Clemens and Cooks, 1999). Culture contributes to individual and group identity because it ‘gives people a sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave and of what they should not be doing’ (Harris and Moran 1991, p. 12).

There have been many decades of theory and research on the relationship between culture, thought and behaviour, although there has been a decided shift in emphasis over the past

ten to fifteen years (see “small cultures” and “communities of practice” below). The most influential perspective has been the distinction between Western and Eastern cultures, portrayed as individualism *versus* collectivism (e.g. Trompenaars 1993, Hall 1960, Hofstede *et al.* 1990, and Adler 1998). Triandis (1993 cited in Gallois *et al.* 1995, p. 129) states that “both individualistic and collectivistic tendencies exist in any single nation, but one tends to predominate over another: individualism in many Western societies and collectivism in the East”. Hofstede’s (2001) country-based comparative studies of the individualism and collectivism traits of various countries include five cultural dimensions: Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), and Long-term Orientation (LTO). The values of each dimension for the majority of nations from which participants involved in this study originate as well as the nations in which this study was conducted are listed in the table below (Table 3.2).

Power Distance Index (PDI) relates to the society's level of inequality which is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Generally speaking, a high Power Distance culture such as the Philippines has a significantly high Power Distance ranking on Hofstede’s scale. Teachers are expected to take all initiatives in class – initiative from students is considered disrespectful – while in a low Power Distance culture, teachers expect initiatives from the students in their classes. In a high Power Distance culture

students treat teachers with the respect reserved for people of high status, while in low Power Distance culture students treat teachers as equals.

Individualism (IDV) is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. The ties between individuals are loose in the societies/nations that tend more to individualism whereas people are more integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups from birth onwards in the more collectivistic societies/nations. For instance, Asian and Latin American countries, such as China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Chile, and Columbia, rank low in Hofstede's IDV ranking. Those (collectivistic) societies foster strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount. Examples of countries that have high IDV rankings are Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, being societies with a more individualistic attitude and relatively loose bonds with others. The populace is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members.

Masculinity (MAS) refers to the distribution of roles between the genders. Women in Hofstede's feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the 'masculine' countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not to the same extent as the men, with the result that these countries show a gap between men's values

and women's values. Several countries in this study have relatively high masculinity rankings, such as China, Germany and Hungary, indicating to Hofstede that these countries experience a higher degree of gender differentiation of roles. The male dominates a significant portion of the society and power structure. Although “gender” is not one of the specific focuses in this study, the degree of masculinity may be found to influence students’ interactions with others and their identity negotiations.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI) concerns a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. For example, Latin American countries such as Chile and Columbia have high values in Hofstede’s Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) index indicating a relatively low level of tolerance in these societies for uncertainty. In an effort to minimise or reduce this level of uncertainty, strict rules, laws, policies, and regulations are adopted and implemented. The ultimate goal of this population group is to control everything in order to eliminate or avoid the unexpected. A result of a high Uncertainty Avoidance characteristic, Hofstede suggests, is that such societies do not readily accept change and are risk adverse. People in uncertainty-avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures (the United Kingdom, for example), are more tolerant of opinions different to those that they are used; they try to have as few rules as possible, and, on the philosophical and religious level, they are

relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative and are not expected by their environment to express emotions.

Long-Term Orientation (LTO) This item has been investigated using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars (IMIT, n.d.). Values that Hofstede associates with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance, while values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, and fulfilling social obligations. For example, China has the highest-ranking factor of Long-term Orientation (LTO), which may be indicative of all Asian cultures (including Taiwan). Hofstede considers that this dimension indicates a society's time perspective and an attitude of persevering that is, overcoming obstacles with time, if not with will and strength. The Philippines and the United Kingdom have low LTO rankings, which are held to indicate these societies' belief in meeting their obligations and tending to reflect an appreciation for cultural traditions.

Table 3.2 Values of countries involved in this study ranked according to Hofstede's five cultural dimensions

| Country | PDI | IDV | MAS | UAI | LTO |
|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Chile | 63 | 23 | 28 | 86 | N/A |
| China * | 80 | 20 | 66 | 30 | 118 |
| Colombia | 67 | 13 | 64 | 80 | N/A |
| France | 68 | 71 | 43 | 86 | N/A |

| | | | | | |
|----------------|----|----|----|-----|-----|
| Germany | 35 | 67 | 66 | 65 | 31 |
| Hungary * | 46 | 80 | 88 | 82 | 50 |
| India | 77 | 48 | 56 | 40 | 61 |
| Philippines | 94 | 32 | 64 | 44 | 19 |
| Norway | 31 | 69 | 8 | 50 | 20 |
| Portugal | 63 | 27 | 31 | 104 | N/A |
| Russia * | 93 | 39 | 36 | 95 | N/A |
| Taiwan | 58 | 17 | 45 | 69 | 87 |
| United Kingdom | 35 | 89 | 66 | 35 | 25 |
| United States | 40 | 91 | 62 | 46 | 29 |
| Vietnam * | 70 | 20 | 40 | 30 | 80 |
| World averages | 55 | 43 | 50 | 64 | 45 |

* Estimated values

Source: http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php

Hall (1976) differentiates cultures on the basis of the communication that predominates in them. He describes how, in a high context culture much ‘unspoken’ meaning is transferred during communication, whereas, in a low context culture meaning is largely encompassed in the utterances. The culture of countries such as the United States and Germany tend to be at the low-context end of the continuum, and most Asian cultures, such as Japanese and Chinese, in contrast, fall toward the high-context end of the continuum. The individual in a high-context system expects his/her interlocutor to know what his/her point of view is and will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one, while the individual in low-context systems

uses direct and explicit ways of communication. Gudykunst *et al.* (1988, p. 44) used Hofstede's schemata to categorise the cultures Hall labels, suggesting that the low-context systems tend towards individualism and high-context systems towards collectivism. Triandis (cited in Gudykunst *et al.* 1988, p. 41) suggests that:

...collectivistic cultures emphasise goals, needs, and views of the ingroup over those of the individual; the social norms of the ingroup, rather than individual pleasure; shared ingroup beliefs, rather than unique individual beliefs; and a value on cooperation with ingroup members, rather than maximising individual outcomes.

When personal and collective goals conflict, members of individualistic cultures will choose to pursue personal goals at the expense of collective goals; on the other hand, members of collectivistic cultures consider it socially desirable to place group goals over individual goals. In other words, collectivists draw from the "we" identity, while individualists draw on the "I" identity (Ting-Toomey 1988). Friedman and Berthoin Antal (2005, p. 72) claim that cultural misunderstandings, often experienced as conflicts, "occur in interactions not only when difference is observed and misinterpreted, but also when surface similarities (e.g. in language, dress and etiquette) mask significant

differences at the deeper, submerged levels.” For instance, although Australians and Americans speak the same language, there are occasions when they may misunderstand each other. As such, the greater the difference between cultures, the more difficult it is to avoid misunderstanding and cultural conflicts. Ledwith and Seymour’s (2001, p. 1308) research endorses the point that “the more culturally dissimilar people are, the higher the level of uncertainty and anxiety. The more culturally close, the lower the level of uncertainty and the higher the level of reciprocity.”

While individualism-collectivism has been widely used to explain cultural differences in behaviour, the notions share the assumption of a conceptual framework which takes for granted the role played by ethnicity and nationality in constituting ‘large cultures’. Such assumptions may overgeneralise subtle and detailed components in the context of the multicultural environment and may threaten to reinforce stereotypes and the confirming of prejudices. For instance, the population of a nation can be differentiated on many grounds; an example was given by McSweeney (2002, p. 92): that “Great Britain” is composed of at least three nations – England, Scotland and Wales, but Hofstede treats it as a single entity with a single ‘national’ culture. The second criticism of Hofstede’s statistical study relates to sampling. The number of the respondents of the questionnaire was not balanced across the forty countries used in the study, in that some countries

were represented by more than 1000 respondents while there were less than 200 respondents for other countries (McSweeney 2002, p. 94). The representativeness of Hofstede's study has further been criticised due to another sampling issue: the respondents were recruited amongst marketing-plus-sales employees and exclusively represented one single company – IBM. Hofstede assumes that every occupation has a common worldwide occupational culture (Hofstede 1980 cited in McSweeney 2002, p. 97), which is in contrast to Holliday's understanding of "small cultures" (see 3.2.2). Holliday (1994, p. 29) has proposed the concept of 'small cultures', such as classrooms, in which teachers and students co-construct their beliefs, values, behaviours and expectations through the process of learning. Similarly, in companies, corporate cultures are shaped by the operating and managerial styles, structures and processes (Adler, 2002). Therefore, the respondents in Hofstede's study may better represent the organisational culture of IBM instead of the occupational culture or even the national culture of specific countries.

Moreover, the interactions of complex human societies cannot be fully explained by the dichotomy of individualism and collectivism, as "individuals can be amazingly complex cultural composites who belong to several cultural entities (e.g. country, schools, sports club, company) at a single point in time or over the course of a lifetime" (Friedman and

Berthoin Antal 2005, p. 73). In terms of the classroom learning context, “students are remarkably diverse, and thus no one label can accurately capture their heterogeneity” (Spack 1997, p. 765). In the following section I will elaborate on Holliday’s “small cultures” theory which I see as a valuable concept to understand the dynamics of the interactions of international students in the multicultural business classroom.

3.2.2 Small cultures

For some researchers, small cultures are contained within and subordinate to large cultures through an onion-skin relationship. As such, these researchers use small cultures “as an interpretive device for understanding emergent behaviour” or phenomenon. The concept is similar to the “subcultural theory” in the field of criminology, which is used to talk of criminal subcultures and to graphically describe their activities and values. It suggests that people in each particular structural position (shaped by their age, class, gender, race etc.) evolve their own subculture, influenced by their subjective experience of the actor (i.e. place of growing up). And “people in the same structural position can evolve different subcultures and these will change over time. For subcultures are human creations and can vary as widely as the imagination of the participants involved” (Young 2010). Thus, small cultures do not stand alone and are

usually dependent on the context of the wider society. For instance, Aspinall (2006) uses “small cultures” to explain that the ineffective foreign language teaching in university classrooms in Japan is due to policy failure, doing so through an analysis of the social norms, values and expectations relating to teaching and learning that permeate university classrooms in Japan.

According to this view of “small cultures”, individuals interpret emergent behaviour within the social groups to which they belong and this constitutes a social ‘tool-kit’ for problem solving, enabling group members to make sense of and operate meaningfully within those circumstances (Holliday & Kullman 2004, p. 64). Every culture, including small cultures, is a continuously changing process in which people actively negotiate, co-construct the meanings and reflect upon the cultural frameworks that they belong to. “These frameworks are interwoven with our personal identity as they help bind us to our social groups” (Endicott *et al.* 2003, p. 404). When related to education the idea of ‘small cultures’ emphasises the process of learners’ interaction with each other as well as with teachers and is concerned with the transformation of identities at various levels within the academic communities that surround them. Instead of categorising learners by gender, culture or any homogeneous static characters, their interactional learning behaviours should, according to this view, be seen as “embedded in the local context of the

community practices in which they participate” (Morita 2004, p 597).

Because I am not convinced that stereotypical categories of collectivism and individualism may best describe the specific intercultural interactions that my study will reveal, the “small cultures” perspective will be influential in my choice of research instruments and in the process of analysis. When applying small cultures to intercultural communication, the study aims to describe how individuals and social or cultural groups define themselves and others. And in order to understand small cultures such as those of specific business studies courses and classrooms, and how practice among learners operates, one needs to go below the surface of large explanatory labels (such as collectivism and individualism) in order to probe the views held by individuals and small groups as to how such dynamics translate into the “why” of behaviours, beliefs, and value systems as they impact on interactions within situated contexts. Holliday (1999) suggests that a small culture approach is more concerned with social processes as they emerge; thus a research procedure that can capture the understanding of participants as these social processes develop and change becomes an important methodological consideration when looking to research the different types of cultural interaction that are reflected in student behaviour and responses to teaching in international universities. My research design reflected this concern to identify emergent social processes in the lives of

individual students recently arrived in a new 'host' culture.

Interpretivism maintains that people actively construct their social world and make meanings in and through their activities and that individuals have different interpretations of single events. Therefore, researchers need to employ what Bauman (1990 cited in Holliday & Kullman 2004, p. 65) called “defamiliarization”, a process which takes us away from the commonly accepted opinions about what everybody and everything is like, and attempt to examine situations through the eyes of participants without the intervention of, or manipulation by, the researcher. According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989 cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 139), effective research of this kind involves ‘the description of activities in relation to a particular cultural context from the point of view of the members of that group themselves’ – ‘insider accounts’. Thus, while the generalised concepts of individualism and collectivism may provide some basis for an overall cultural analysis, a small culture approach may be most appropriate for describing the complex processes of learning and interaction that take place in the multicultural business classroom and in the lives of international students more generally.

3.2.3 Communities of practice

Potter and Wetherell's (1987 cited in Holliday and Kullman, 2004, p. 59) definition of "community of practice" echoes Holliday's small cultures theory, in which members tend to communicate with each other in the same terms. Becoming a member of a particular culture is a process of enculturation conceived as learning to understand the complex set of shared beliefs, values, and concepts in a group so as to make them one's own (Fay 1996 cited in Holliday & Kullman 2004, p. 60). This requires the individual to overcome the sophisticated stereotypes that may prevail about the culture he/she is interacting with.

Wenger's theory of communities of practice (1998, p. 146) emphasises three perspectives – engagement, imagination, and alignment – as a result of which members of specific communities are actively involved in mutual processes of negotiation of meanings, and in interpreting and understanding what one does or what one knows in the course of doing a particular job. When interacting with others, these processes further frame the form of subsequent interaction. That is, individuals may learn to adapt their behaviour if their counterparts react in unexpected ways. They may also choose alternative forms of behaviour, depending on the success of previous actions. Interaction is thus shaped by belonging to a community, by the complex interweaving of participative experience and received responses which generate a series of actions. The present research project focuses on the first two layers, engagement and imagination. These

facilitate alignment when individuals then invest in and coordinate their energies, actions, and practices in relation to a broader or larger scale community (e.g. internship in enterprises). As the societies or communities we belong to are interdependent fragments in the world, the processes of communities of practice – “negotiation of meaning, learning, the development of practices, and the formation of identities and social configurations” – can be seen as “involving complex interactions between the local and the global” (Wegner 1998, p. 133).

When newcomers come into contact with new practices, they bring their own values from the communities they belong/ed to and move toward fuller participation in a given community’s practices through the process of struggles, conflicts and negotiations resulting from interaction with more experienced community members. Their identities extend beyond socially or institutionally defined roles and, in the setting of my research, include a variety of subject positions that were locally constructed by the individual student and the classroom context. Their multiple identities do not merge into one; instead, they become part of each other, whether they clash or reinforce each other. Even so, there are times when the members of communities do not negotiate with the cultural practices of other groups but accept them as a ‘package deal’, particularly when the alien culture clearly contrasts with the culture of origin, individuals may select the pieces of

other cultures which suit their culture of origin. Hannerz (1996, p. 104) comments that such potential surrender is also a part of the sense of mastery which occurs when the individuals “embrace the alien culture but [do] not become committed to it”. Meanwhile, not only do newcomers negotiate their identities, but communities can change as newcomers join them. Even when the influence of the foreign or strange cultures is rejected by the home culture, “the rejection is itself another way the alien culture interjects into the home culture” (Fay 1996 cited in Holliday 2004, p. 61). Thus, while the generalised concepts of individualism and collectivism may provide some basis for a totalising cultural analysis, a “small cultures” approach and “communities of practice” perspective may be most appropriate for describing the complex processes of learning and offer important insights into understanding the dynamics of multicultural learning environments and how these play out in the daily life of the learners who work in the multi-cultural classroom and on the multicultural campus.

The next section outlines the constituents of an internationalised curriculum and what skills a business graduate may learn from an undergraduate business programme in order to work in a global environment.

3.3 Internationalisation of the business curriculum

Under the influence of rapid changes in global economic development, such as European nationals being able to travel and work in any European Community country, business schools across the continent have had to engage in a process of globalisation by expanding their international networks and by internationalising the curriculum. In terms of expanding international networks, universities have sought the establishment of partnerships with universities overseas so that students and faculty can gain firsthand international experience and enhance their international understanding through exchange programmes or internships abroad. Recently, joint degrees have emerged, providing a powerful tool by combining the resources of the home and overseas institutions to increase students' exposure to the global orientation of business education (Manuel *et al.* 2001, p. 58; Praetzel 1999, p. 143). On the other hand, Higher Education institutions have to cope with cultural, social, political, and economic changes while evolving research agendas and internationalising students' curricula. Some researchers (Hamilton 1997 and Edwards *et al.* 2003 cited in Novin *et al.* 2004, p. 364; Praetzel 1999, p. 137) have recommended that the internationalisation process of curriculum development should foster students' global understanding by including international awareness, international competence, and international expertise, and develop students' tolerance, respect and open-mindedness towards different economies, languages, cultures, and business

practices. Most importantly, such curriculum development needs to develop students' skills for effective living and working in a culturally diverse world. The internationalisation of Higher Education thus involves a combination of global processes concerning conceptions of knowledge, economic exchange, the changing nature of work and labour requirements and cultural diversity.

Working out an internationally integrated framework for the revision of educational institutions' policies, curriculum reform and academic staff development is essential and, according to Thomas (2006, p. 119), must involve all staff, all students and all aspects of the educational experience. An Australian report (IDP 1995, p.1) states that international curricula are defined by "...an international orientation in content" and are "aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students". Yet this does not mean, the authors conclude, that curricular activities should be designed exclusively for international students; nor does it imply that such designs should only lead to courses that are offered off-shore or curricula that lead to joint or double degrees with partner institutions. On the other hand, the report concludes that neither should the curriculum be restrained to respond only to the needs of the local community. In order to avoid using concepts that are strongly framed within the confines of the local national

context with which international students may be unfamiliar, teachers need also to use a variety of international illustrations as well, so as to validate relevant and diverse cultural experiences shared across an international student group. In this light, teachers' professional experiences in foreign countries and the understanding of foreign cultures become vital to the multicultural classroom. The respondent universities in the survey studies of Kwok *et al.* in 2000 (p. 575) considered the faculty's living and teaching abroad experience the most effective factor for internationalising faculty: 4.7 on a five-point scale. Also, given that less than 5% of Western students undertake any part of their course in a foreign country (Thomas 2006, p. 113), international students are seen to represent a valuable teaching resource which offers the potential to enrich the international curriculum, promote cross-cultural understanding (Praetzel 1999, p. 142) and further benefit all students in the multicultural learning environment. In the three institutions selected for this study, international students make up a certain percentage of the student population in the classrooms. The remainder of section 2.4 will discuss whether their current business curricula reflect internationalisation components in the context of suggestions made in other studies on the internationalisation of the business curriculum.

3.3.1. International material in business curricula

Business related majors are one of the popular study areas among the 2.7 million students who study outside their home countries (Bain *et al.* 2006, NAFSA). With an increasingly international and diverse student body in global Higher Education, university business schools are exhorted in the research literature to draw on these resources of diversity and multiculturalism to prepare students for their future professional fields in a global economy. As early as 1974 the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) began requiring its member business schools to increase international business content and address global issues in their curricula (Novin *et al.* 2004, p. 363). Although internationalisation is a common index for accreditation, the degree of internationalisation of the curriculum and the degree of students exposure to international coursework may vary from institution to institution. This is not only seen in the school's mission, but also depends on their resources and positioning strategy. Large colleges and universities are more interested in and have more resources than small ones offering students the choice of a major or minor in international business.

Since the 1960s a number of research studies related to the development of business school internationalisation worldwide have been sponsored by the Academy of

International Business (Terpstra 1970; Daniels and Radebaugh 1974; Grosse and Perritt

1980; Thanopoulos and Leonard 1986). The most recent global survey on examining the internationalisation of business schools, carried out in 2000 (Kwok and Arpan 2002), includes four dimensions: the objectives of the institution, curriculum and faculty internationalisation, foreign institutional relationships and partnerships, and satisfaction with progress achieved. In terms of the internationalisation of the curriculum, the criteria were the percentage of infused courses and specialised international business courses students take and whether students have foreign experience. The data shows that the most infused courses offered were Policy/Strategy and Marketing; and International Marketing and International Finance were the two most frequently offered specialised International Business courses. In terms of “foreign” requirements, foreign language training during the programme of study was the most required (*ibid*, p. 572). There are few courses explicitly titled ‘international’ across the three institutions in my research study (see Appendix I) suggesting that international and global concepts could be extended across the curriculum so as to reflect the rationale stated earlier in this section.

Manuel *et al.*'s (2001, p. 48) research, which also focused on AACSB member schools, shows that universities adopt a variety of forms on internationalising business curriculum, including modifying existing courses by including international dimensions in curriculum, creating a major or minor area of study for students, and improving the

quality of international courses by broadening, among other aspects, the range of international issues. For example, Cheney (2001, p. 90) found that many business schools in the United States have incorporated “intercultural communication into their curricula through individual lectures, research projects, semester-long courses, study abroad programs, and other methods”; however, it is rare to see courses like business communication or intercultural communication offered in European universities (Verluyten 1997, p. 135). University G in the present study is one of the few universities in Europe offering such courses for those who do not participate in the one-semester abroad programme in the fifth semester. In addition to integrating intercultural competence in the business curriculum, exchange programmes, such as Erasmus and Socrates, or international students in home universities give domestic students opportunities for interacting with those from different cultures in a learning environment and engaging in multicultural group projects. Some researchers indicate that those experiences may not guarantee intercultural competence but they certainly help greatly in imparting cross-cultural understanding and competence to students as well as reducing cultural bias (Kedia and Cornwell 1994 cited in Manuel *et al.* 2001, p. 58; Saghafi 2001; Praetzel 1999, p. 141). Since participants in this research study have already travelled overseas to access new learning contexts, this study will be focused on investigating

participants' learning experience through the classroom interactions as well as their interactions in the daily life outside classrooms.

Some studies have indicated that European business schools are more active in the progress of internationalising the business curriculum than those in the United States (Kwok and Arpan, 1994; and Kedia, 1993 cited in Novin *et al.* 2004, p. 363). Arpan *et al.* (1993 cited in Praetzel 1999, p. 137) found that "European Schools were more than three times as likely to seek functional field international expertise at the undergraduate level than U.S. business schools", a finding which may result from the insufficient faculty interest in the United States, while European schools were more likely to pay special attention to internationalisation activities as a formal component in faculty performance evaluations and in promotion and tenure decisions. As two of the three research contexts in my study are in the European continent, I shall probe into this issue further as well as looking at the methods universities adopt for internationalising their business curriculum from the perspectives of students' learning, both within these two universities and in comparison with the context in Taiwan.

Furthermore, based on a Delphi study (Zettinig & Vincze 2008, p. 111), it is believed that the most important component in international business programmes is to equip their

graduates with business capabilities for a decade ahead. The experts who participated in the Delphi study considered that “big emerging markets (BEM)” would be developed in the international market in the 2010s, in which industries and organisations will increasingly look for new markets and resources, perhaps in newly emerging countries. The example of BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) was given (*ibid*, p. 119) in the light of the fact that those countries are in a position to supply certain resources that have become less abundant elsewhere such as the supply of soy and iron ore in Brazil and the supply of oil and natural gas in Russia, while countries with increasing population growth and GDP, such as China (Moe *et al.* 2010, p. 14), were considered most likely to be favoured in terms of market seeking. It is in this context that predictions that “95 percent of the world’s population growth in the next 50 years will occur outside of Western Europe” (Simon 2003 cited in Thomas 2006, p. 113) may signal the direction of future potential markets. With the expansion of cross-border markets, business curricula are coming under pressure to provide two perspectives: one is to develop mindsets and frameworks that help students to better understand the changing demands and conditions of the markets as well as to obtain sustainable strategy-making skills to cope with an “increasingly complex world with multitudes of critical stakeholders within and outside the organisation” (*ibid*, p. 120). The other perspective is to include the issue of innovations in different business activities (e.g. R&D, marketing, manufacturing) that

create completely new systems. For example, China opened its doors to welcome foreign investment three decades ago, and due to its low labor costs, many manufacturing industries including those in Taiwan have transplanted their factories to China (Xinhuanet.com 2008). British enterprises have also moved off-shore to countries such as India; examples are companies as varied as BT, National Rail Enquiries, Norwich Union, Reuters, Morgan Stanley, IBM, and Accenture (BCS, 2006). As the global-oriented market becomes one of the central components of business curricula, the expert panel in Zettinig & Vincze's Delphi study suggested that the recent evolution of international entrepreneurship concepts and perspectives is a valuable development and "the range of capabilities should exceed the traditional focus of international market selection and geographical location analysis" (Zettinig & Vincze 2008, pp. 125-6). The international business activities that have influenced domestic markets and politics are likely, in turn, to influence calls for promoting internationalisation of the business curriculum. However, it is difficult to find a balance in the focus of teaching between the international level and local realities in terms of the political, social and economic questions.

I have discussed the dilemma of finding a balance between international and local business contexts in the international business curriculum. In the following section, I will

move on to consider the essential skills that research studies suggest an international business programme should aim to equip their business undergraduate students with.

3.3.2. Fostering students' international business skills through the internationalisation of the curriculum

A fundamental skill for competing in today's global economy is critical thinking ability; for example, the U.S. Department of Labor's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (1991 cited in Braun 2004, p. 232) claims that students need 'skills of enquiry and analysis rather than a set of facts about globalisation' (Rizvi 2000 cited in Thomas 2006). Celuch and Slama's (2000) studies based on concepts and methods advocated by the Foundation for Critical Thinking when teaching a consumer behaviour course, focused on the practice of the skill through individual and group assignments and through class participation. Their students found such an approach helped the development of an "ability to work with others, openness to new ideas, capacity to think for oneself, capacity to make informed decisions, problem-solving skills and facilitating concept learning" (Celuch and Slama 2000, p. 61). In similar vein, Willard E. Hotchkiss, who served as Dean at a number of schools of commerce early in the twentieth century called for curriculum integration and the development of critical-thinking skills (cited in Bohanon 2008, p. 243). According to Braun (2004), three common approaches through which

critical thinking skills are taught in the business curriculum are: problem-based learning (e.g. case studies), course-content-embedded learning (e.g. discussions, debates, etc.), and as an element underlying other pedagogies (critical theory, critical reflection, critical systems thinking).

Meanwhile, some authors maintain that case studies help develop students' critical thinking by engaging them in productive dialogue, following basic problem-solving steps: developing analysis, judgement and synthesis skills. This is in coherence with the viewpoint from the expert panel in the Delphi study (Zettinig & Vincze 2008, p. 134) that case study is a common approach taken to integrate students' understanding of international issues and disciplinary-based concepts in changing economies, the aim being to help them identify and analyse problems within the case and solve them with suitable strategies. In addition to using the actual business situations documented, one example adopted in the MBA curriculum at Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business in US requires students to team up with company employees to analyse corporate problems and provide a recommendation. In this practice, graduates perform four approaches of learning (Kolb 1984 cited in Zettinig & Vincze 2008, p. 136): *conceptual* - learning different concepts and frameworks in a course; *experiential* - teaming up with others from different cultural backgrounds; *experimental* - working in a heterogeneous

team, testing hypotheses and then formulating an action plan; *reflective* – after the project is over, the subsequent final exam students may have the ability to display and reflect on the management concepts they have practiced in the team project. The course-content-embedded approach is through instructor’s modeling of critical thinking and directing student thinking into new areas, aiming to enable students to explore course concepts and issues by including guided questioning, classroom discussions and debates and group exercises in class. Meanwhile, pedagogic strategies, such as critical theory, critical reflection, and critical systems thinking, aim to train students to “identify and question business assumptions critically and draw inferences about interrelationship in the practice of business theory with regard to the larger scope of the environment” (*ibid*, p. 234). This leads some writers to assert that it is essential to include critical thinking skills development in the business curriculum so as to teach students to identify the underlying characteristics of problem structures and provide “a multitude of learning opportunities in varying contexts to promote transference of skills” (Halpern 1998 cited in Braun 2004, p. 235).

Internship is also held to be valuable experience for students when applying theory to practice outside the classroom. Many business programmes strongly recommend completing internships but offer students the option of choosing whether to participate

(McCarthy & McCarthy 2006, p. 202); this may explain why the internship is not explicitly included in the programme structure across three institutions of this study. Also, due to the large number of students in colleges and universities today, not every business student has an internship experience and this leaves some graduates with no real career-related experiences integral to their course of study (*ibid*). For example, a larger proportion of small firms in Taiwan are unable to provide extensive in-company training, and business relies on universities to provide professional training courses designed to anticipate employment needs. Moreover, language barriers may be another difficulty for international students attempting to secure an internship in local companies. Even if employed as an intern in an international enterprise, one still needs to communicate with other colleagues and customers in local languages and to fit into the working environment. Another hands-on experience outside the classroom is the ‘job-shadowing’ experience where “students learn about a job by walking through the work day as a shadow to a competent worker... Students witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice” (Paris and Mason 1995 cited in McCarthy & McCarthy 2006, p. 203). Such experience can be arranged by universities or lecturers in one-day fieldtrips, either included in the course syllabus or as an optional extra.

3.3.3 The nature of the undergraduate business curriculum

Current business education aims for three traditional outcomes: “an understanding of a body of knowledge based on business functions; providing business with graduates who are professionally trained, with a focus on a specific function; and the ability to produce work jointly with others as a business organisation (team work)” (Reeves-Ellington 2003, p. 6). Reeves-Ellington (2003) compared 40 undergraduate business programmes located in Australia, Germany, India, Ireland, Pakistan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, and found that the majority of the entire curriculum was taken up by traditional “function” courses, such as Business Administration & Management and Economics & Accounting which, together, are deemed to build solid business knowledge. This phenomenon is apparent in the curriculum design of the three researched business institutions of this study. However, Wallace B. Donham (1922 cited in Bohanon 2008, p. 243) indicated that in programmes studied 20 years ago “the typical first-year man [sic] at the end of the year seemed to have studied individual courses with little conception of their interrelation”, and may have failed to see the big picture of how functional business areas fit together. In this light, he recommended that such a first-year experience should be followed by a more specialised curriculum which helps develop intellectual breadth in the junior and senior years. After the foundational business knowledge offered in the first year, the curriculum of three institutions of this study includes a wider range of

managerial courses, such as human resource management, operational financial management, marketing strategies and computer information systems etc. so that students can specialise in broader management expertise (Lopez 1993, cited in Dudley & Dudley 1995, p. 308), and be able to understand and integrate input from different areas.

Reeves-Ellington (2004, p. 5) also suggests that the business curriculum should be designed in response to the rapid changes of the world economy; thus, it must not only include foundational business knowledge but also requires “broader societal support and integration in the form of a liberal economy”. This echoes with what Willard E.

Hotchkiss’ (1919 cited in Bohanon 2008, p. 243) claims:

... the freshman and sophomore years of the business curricular should be composed of a pre-business course of study. This should include a large component of liberal education and what we would today call foundational courses in business, such as economics, accounting, and statistics.

Liberal education is “a tradition that provides critical thinking, knowledge to use critical thinking and professional skills to use the knowledge” (Reeves-Ellington 2003, p. 29) as part of “a tradition that uses texts to teach the branches of study most concerned with the secular human condition (including business activities)” (*ibid*). It should help cultivate mental and socio-cultural skills, such as team building, social reasoning and judgment,

social responsibility (ethics), societal understanding, and cultural knowledge skills.

However, the integration of functional business courses and liberal education are not commonly or explicitly seen among the 40 universities in Reeves-Ellington's study, nor in the three researched contexts of this study. It forms the hidden curriculum, in which "all the beliefs and values and understandings are passed on to the student in an educational institution, not through formal teaching but, unconsciously, through what the institution implicitly demands of the student" (Ottewill *et al.* 2005, p. 90). Therefore, such skill training is learned by osmosis via daily social practices.

Before examining the course structures of the three business programmes in this study (see Appendix I), I first compared the admission requirements across the three universities under review and found in all three locations foreign students are required to prove their English proficiency by taking internationally accredited language examinations, such as IELTS or TOEFL tests, as English is the sole medium of instruction in the selected university in the UK and a significant medium of instruction in the selected universities in Germany and Taiwan. The German university also requires international students to prove advanced German language skills, such as "Test DaF", with a grade point average of 4, as German is also one of the main language of instruction. There are only slight differences in terms of the core courses among the three (see also Table 3.3).

- Although the programme in University G has been reorganised, influenced by Bologna Process, the modules offered show many of the traditional traits in which fewer management and more economics-oriented modules were taught. As such, it awards the undergraduate business administration degree as Bachelor of Science while the other two institutions awards it as Bachelor of Arts. This may be because “science was traditionally treated as equivalent to theory (‘pure science’), while applied approaches (techniques) were regarded as unscientific” (Pieper, p. 212) before World War II, with the result that psychological aspects of management were not taught at German business schools until the 1920s. Also, the economy before World War II had a great influence on German business education (Locke 1985), so a substantial number of economics-oriented courses, such as accounting and finance, and policy/law courses, are included in the curriculum in University G. In fact, the credits of economics-oriented modules are more than double those of the management modules in the curriculum of University G. Moreover, Business-Law related modules take up a certain number of the core course credits in the programme while the other two schools list them as elective courses.
- However, the degree in University G is not solely based on scientific study of this

kind; it also follows AACSB, one of the internationally recognised accreditation associations, in including business ethic issues as one of the core courses.

According to its course description, Business Ethics aims to “examine the ethics and morality of decision-making as practiced by corporate and economic actors within their respective institutions, with a view to achieving success in the market in a responsible way”. The intellectual understanding of ethical obligations may not be sufficient to ensure ethical behavior, but can be an important contributor to that goal.

- The module “Business Strategies” offered in University B, which is not found in the other two contexts, aims to help students understand the competitive global business market of the coming century and train students to develop the ability to analyse strategic issues from a number of broad functional perspectives (source: course catalogue on University B website). One elective module offered in University T named “Global Strategic Management” has a similar aim (source: course catalogue on University T website).
- Nearly all the credits of the core courses in University B are functional courses (e.g. management, accounting, and statistics) and this leaves plenty of room for students’ choices of elective courses. In contrast, University G does not leave students many choices for elective courses, as nearly all the courses are

mandatory.

- The language modules take up a large number of the core course credits in University T because one of the aims of the programme is to enable international students to master Chinese as a second language during their four years so that they are able to participate in Chinese taught courses during the junior and senior years. In addition to the Chinese language courses, English composition is also one of the core courses in University T, aiming to strengthen international students' English writing skills. A second language course is not a requirement in the other two institutions.
- In University G, all students in the undergraduate Business Administration programme are required to study one semester abroad in the senior year. Those who do not spend a semester abroad are required to take the module "International Cultural Studies", which aims to reinforce their language in intercultural contexts, their communicative competence as well as their understanding of cultural theory and globalisation etc. The study abroad programme is optional in University B and T, but there is no course which explicitly emphasises cultural theories for those who do not choose to participate in the exchange student programme.

Table 3.3 Course Structures of the Three Business Programmes

| | University T | University B | University G |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Business Administration & Management & Marketing strategies | 7 modules; 21 credits | 5 modules; 90 credits /45 ETCS | 4 modules; 33 ECTS |
| Economics, Accounting, Statistics, Mathematics, & Finance | 5 modules; 24 credits | 5 modules; 105 credits /52.5 ETCS | 8 modules; 70 ECTS |
| Business Law | (elective) | (elective) | 2 modules; 20 ECTS |
| Management Information System | 1 module; 3 credits | 1 module; 15 credits /7.5 ETCS | 1 module; 16 ECTS |
| Foreign Languages | 36 credits | (elective) | 12 ECTS |
| Electives | 18-32 credits | 120 credits | N/A |
| Unique Module | | Business Strategy; 30 credits / 15 ETCS | International cultural studies; 20 ETCS |
| Others | 12 credits (Taiwan History, Constitutions etc.) | | 12 ECTS (Bachelor thesis) |
| Total credits for graduation | 128 credits | 360 credits = 180 ECTS | 183 ECTS |

Since the 1960s, courses in international business, computers, and business policy have been added to business curricula (Dudley & Dudley 1995, p. 306); this can also be seen in the curricula across the three case study contexts. Some literature sources have documented the following essential skills needed in the business curriculum in order to strengthen core business knowledge and to provide students with a better understanding

of the integrative nature of business organisations. I examined the course structures chosen for detailed study within the research, comparing them with the points made in the previously discussed literature as follows:

- “To be productive, students must be computer literate and skilled in using information technology, beginning with word processing, spreadsheets, data entry, and electronic information transfers” (Dudley & Dudley 1995, p. 307); much of the work in our daily live, particularly at work, is performed by computers and marketing strategies are widened through the use of the internet. Although such skill training is listed explicitly in University B and T for a minimal number of credits, University G put great emphasis on it; presumably, such skills are spreading across the curriculum and are embedded in the content of the modules in all three universities.
- Language training plays an important role in the business curriculum; learning a foreign language may enable students to learn and appreciate the global dimension of business (Kedia and Cornwell 1994 cited in Manuel *et al.* 2001, p. 56). More and more universities recognise their specific responsibilities to promote societal and individual multilingualism by increasing cultural diversity on campus and by requiring students to be competent in English (Waddock 1997, cited in Praetzel 1999, pp. 137-8) plus a second foreign language. Hayden &

Thompson (1997) found that students in European international schools are expected to speak the local European language and English, as it is one of the media of instruction. Those students considered it important to learn in multicultural contexts and to be fluent in more than one language. Verluyten (1997, p. 135) also agrees and states that “it is not surprising to discover that a business student, in much of Europe, is trained and expected to be multilingual; this does not mean speaking some English along with one’s native language, but being reasonably fluent in two, three, or four languages.” As China has increasingly become one of the key world economic powerhouses and Chinese proficiency will be a future competitive advantage, University T assigned nearly a quarter of the courses to Chinese language learning. The local language fluency may also accelerate international students' language use in daily life. University G also provides foreign language courses (e.g. Mandarin, German, Japanese, French, and Spanish). However, a foreign language requirement is only necessary if students at University B want to participate in the study abroad programme and study in a country where the instruction of language is not English.

- Communication is held to be a core capability for any type of business activities, and all types of communication should be included in the curriculum (e.g. writing, reading, negotiating, presenting, and debating) to ensure students’ language

competency in various business situations (Li, 2009; Bartolomei, u.d.; Borkar, 2010). For example, University T offers “English Composition” and University G offers “Presentation Skills and Public Speaking” as core courses.

- A customer-driven approach is a key characteristic of successful businesses, a point stressed by leading business thinkers such as Deming, Drucker, Levitt, and Peters (cited in Dudley & Dudley 1995, p. 307). Thus, courses such as marketing and consumer behaviours are often designed to include this knowledge, and this is evident across the three contexts.

3.3.4 The issue of ethnocentricity in business textbooks

Some researchers are concerned about over-ethnocentricity in the curriculum and in the textbooks used in the business programmes. When universities attempt to portray an image of an internationally friendly environment in their recruitment brochures, some researchers argue that, even so, the academic practices which students experience are overwhelmingly embedded in local traditions. For instance, the Open University reported (cited in Haigh 2002, p. 54) at a conference in 2000 that, as Britain’s largest and most inclusive university, the Open University still “worries that its curriculum is widely perceived as predominantly white and Eurocentric and as such fails even to represent the

diversity of cultures and experiences in modern Britain.” Some students feel the course content is not relevant to their experience or to the cultural environment they will return to work in their countries (Thomas 2006, p. 115). Some studies (Sebastianelli and Trussler, 2006, p. 74; Case and Sylvester 2000 cited in Thomas 2006, p. 117; Praetzel 1999, p. 138) have documented that business textbooks for subjects such as statistics, marketing, organisational and human resource management are largely Anglo-American: the practice in one culture may not be universally transferable into other cultures. Those textbooks may fail to include a significant range of international problems, exercises and applications. Bigelow (1994 cited in Laughton & Ottewill 2000, p. 380) concludes that “None of the skills texts currently available in the US make any qualifications about the cultural extent within which the skills they consider apply”. Where the textbooks are unable to include diverse business practices from around the world, lecturers’ knowledge and professional experience in foreign countries become key components to enrich the course content. This is supported by the respondent universities in the survey studies of Kwok & Arpan in 2000 (2002, p. 575), which considered the faculty’s living and teaching abroad experience the most effective factor for internationalising faculty: 4.7 on a five-point scale. Bell’s (2004, p. 10) survey study also shows that over half of the academics in one Australian University considered that an international curriculum went beyond content via the inclusion, for example, of international examples or practices.

Thus it is seen as necessary for lecturers to negotiate the content of the curriculum with their students, recognising that the students bring to it understandings and skills about their society and its needs (Alderson, 1996).

The development of internationalisation has generated a challenge for teaching business in a multicultural classroom. In order to develop students' international understanding by presenting a cultural diversity dimension in internationalising the curriculum, faculty are exhorted to equip themselves with relevant expertise by participating in professional development or faculty exchange programmes. Armed with professional knowledge or firsthand experiences in foreign countries, lecturers can then be encouraged to bring to life cultural, political, economic, and communication concepts as well as the business practices appropriate for inclusion in the business education curriculum. For example, Mitry (2008, pp. 86-7) includes cultural-diversity examples, particularly from the reforming economies in Eastern Europe in which his research specialises, in his Economics classroom discussions and found it a valuable opportunity to enhance traditional teaching approaches which were limited to teaching principles from domestic Western textbooks with a narrow view of the diverse cultural aspects of the many emerging, reforming, and developing economies. Using cultural-diversity data has also been seen as helping students to develop a broader perspective capable of including more

knowledge into every equation. To overcome the traditional ethnocentricity within the business studies curriculum, Laughton & Ottewill (2000, p. 383) argue that there is a need to secure a greater degree of “ethnodiversity” by introducing business practices originating from different cultural values.

We have discussed some cultural theories in multicultural education settings and some components of international business programmes. Next, I will discuss the means of integrating intercultural competence into the curriculum suggested by researchers for use both within and outside the classroom environment.

3.4 In the classroom: teaching and learning

Many teachers and management educators find that even well-prepared lectures or workshops often fail to engage all students when the composition of the cohort is multicultural. In particular, traditional methods of uniform instruction seem to be ineffective with a student group that is very diverse, with students from different backgrounds and with different approaches to learning...

De Vita (2001, p. 165)

Learning involves formal and informal teaching and participation, embedded in action, not centered in an individual's head but distributed in activities, continuous interactions and relationships among people.

Fenwick (2008, p. 228)

The pedagogy teachers use in classrooms formed by local students might be different

from that of the multicultural classroom. As learning style preferences appear partly to be shaped by culture, some authorities suggest that lecturers who are teaching in the multicultural classrooms need to introduce supportive teaching approaches that help lessen feelings of learning frustration and cultural estrangement. Thus, some research (Flowerdew 1998, Bodycott & Walker 2000, Haigh 2002, Kragh and Bislev 2005; Gill 2007, De Vita 2001) has been undertaken exploring different learning orientations, and learning styles, as well as on reporting teachers' pedagogies and attitudes towards an increasingly international learning environment. For example, De Vita (2001) suggests that students whose native language is the medium of instruction might cope well with verbal inputs, whereas students for whom the medium of instruction is not their native language may prefer a visual style of information. Kragh and Bislev's (2005) study of international students' perception of cultural differences, including teaching and learning approaches, found that the nations that have the most discussion-oriented teaching and learning styles are Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Great Britain, USA, Canada and Australia, whereas Japan and Russia, Poland, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Thailand, Austria and Belgium are less discussion-oriented. Some studies (Singhanayok & Hooper 1998; Peterson & Miller 2004) compare students' learning performance in cooperative learning and large-group instruction where students work individually and find that they benefit from task-related thinking, engagement in tasks and enhancement of perceived

skills and self-esteem. Moreover, when students work in a multicultural group, individuals from different cultural backgrounds may have different ideas on how these groups should be organised or the different perceptions of what kinds of behaviour can keep or disturb group harmony (Wenger, 1998; Flowerdew 1998). Also, some Asian students, particularly Chinese, are considered passive learners and less active in classroom discussion (Flowerdew 1998; Bodycott & Walker 2000). Chinese students are influenced by Confucian heritage, according to which teachers are givers and students are passive receivers, showing little active participation in classroom discussions and interaction with their teachers. Such students are likely to believe that learning is through teachers as the authoritative source of knowledge and less likely to be in favor of self-directed strategies. In class discussion, the opinions provided to the whole class come from the collective, rather than the individual. This is held to be in contrast to American or British classrooms, where students are encouraged to think critically. There, it is common to see them challenging each other's opinions while Chinese students try to maintain harmony with other students and are reluctant to challenge ideas presented by others which might cause others to lose face (Bodycott and Walker, 2000, p. 88).

Therefore, the international student's learning experience in multicultural classrooms is likely to differ from that which he/she has experienced at home, as peers from different countries or different educational backgrounds may provide role models and display

ways of interacting or learning that were not previously available in the home country.

As mentioned earlier, cooperative learning has been suggested as an effective means of promoting academic achievement and the reduction of prejudice in intergroup contact (Singhanayok & Hooper 1998; Peterson & Miller 2004; Slavin 1995 and Harrison 2001 cited in Eisenchlas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 421). Summers & Volet (2008, p. 358) in their review of several research studies (Smart *et al.* 2000; Hobman *et al.* 2004; Wright and Lander 2003; Watson *et al.* 1993) conclude that international students consider that doing assignments in culturally mixed groups fosters interaction between local and international students. Watson *et al.* (1993 cited in Summers & Volet 2008, p. 358) found that students can generate alternative outlooks and approach problems in multiple ways in multicultural groups, which adds further support for the value of universities equipping their students with the skills to work effectively in culturally diverse groups. From the conversations I had with international students while working in my former job in a university International Office in Taiwan, some indicated that cultural differences between East and West can make group work or group discussions difficult, as students from individualistic societies may expect clear and direct communication, while those from collectivistic societies may not seek to be as specific or direct. Also, students from collectivistic societies tend to be more susceptible to the influences of students from

individualistic societies and are reluctant to challenge ideas presented by others which might cause others to lose face, or fail to maintain harmony with other students. Lack of understanding of each other's culture might be one of the factors that cause such uncomfortable group working experiences. However, some students in my conversations valued the experience of seeing how others from cultures different from their own have ways of solving problems or facing challenges when working in group projects; this, it was thought, may lead to greater motivation and participation in the new learning environment as well as helping them develop their learning capability. These statements are coherent with the findings of several research studies (Kolb, 1984; Murray, 1993; Ottewill & Laughton, 2001) which maintain that the distinction between individualism and collectivism does not necessarily cause conflict in a multicultural classroom; instead, it may help enhance creativity in the development of the learning process. As Adler (2002, cited in Woods *et al.* 2006, p. 30) suggests, "multicultural groups have the potential to invent more options and create more solutions than do single-culture teams." For example, students may share their previous experiences in their native countries related to the concepts being discussed in class; this helps open up the diversity of experiences and perspectives in the multicultural classroom. While most research on intercultural or cross-cultural communications prefer the taxonomy of individualism and collectivism, one of the aims of my research is to explore to what extent these generalisations

correspond to the students' individual perceptions as well as to investigate the ways in which multicultural groups handle the conflicts (task-orientation disagreement, as opposed to relationship conflict), and individuals' perceptions of group projects, since the group members, who are from different cultural groups, are likely to have different ways of thinking and doing things.

Moreover, some studies indicate that there is little interaction and high levels of disinterest between local and international students (Eisenclas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 414); local students may be unwilling to pursue intercultural mixing (Ledwith and Seymour 2001; Ward 2001 cited in Summers & Volet 2008, p. 367) and may not appreciate multicultural cooperation in group work (Ottewill and Laughton 2001).

Language of instruction can be one of the factors causing such reluctance; first, it relates to the change of language instruction of the curricula from local languages to an international norm: the English language. The local students and staff may be reluctant to teach or study through a language which is not their native, due to the language limitations of both instructors and students (Callan 1998, p. 53; Bodycott & Walker 2000, p. 87) and this can cause hostility between the domestic and international students.

However, the dilemma some universities face – whether to transform their programmes into international curricula based on English, or to keep the local language as the main

language of instruction and communication – is outside the scope of this research discussion. A further factor relates to the language proficiency of international students when the medium of instruction is the second or foreign language, for instance, English: language proficiency may influence the negotiation of identity on the part of international students. Morita's (2004, p. 583) study found that the process of students' identity negotiation was based on their experience of difficulties in a given classroom as well as on their sense of how others might perceive them. The non-native-English-speaking students may feel inferior to native-English-speaking students and may lack confidence in their English speaking ability; they may sometimes find it frustrating not being able to articulate themselves as well as they could in their first language. Those ineloquent students are often seen as less-productive contributors in group work (Ottewill and Laughton 2001). In addition, non-native-English-speaking students can feel ignored or excluded from the group process (Ledwith & Seymour 2001, p. 1299), which leads to their less enthusiastic participation in group projects.

Otten (2003, p. 15) claims:

...that intercultural encounters do not automatically increase the intercultural competence of students. They can even reinforce the stereotypes and prejudices if the experiences of critical incidents in intercultural contexts are not evaluated on cognitive, affective, and behavioural levels.

Byram's (1997 p. 42) intercultural communicative competence addresses attitudes of curiosity and openness of both 'host' and 'guest' interlocutors; and skills of interpretation, discovery and interaction between the knowledge of the two cultures. In the case discussed here, international students need to 'dismantle their preceding structure of subjective reality and re-construct it by relativising their own meanings, beliefs and behaviours through comparison with others'. The hosts, such as teachers and home students, need to "decentre and take up the other's perspective on their own culture, anticipating and where possible resolving dysfunctions in communication and behaviour." Neyer and Harzing's (2008, p. 329) qualitative study found that "individuals who were successful in terms of dealing with cross-culturally determined behaviour, were those who no longer expect others to behave in the way they would according to their own cultural backgrounds." Gudykunst (1995, pp. 16-7) also suggests that successful intercultural communication depends on the ability of individuals to be mindful, consciously open to new information which involves focusing on the process of communication that is taking place, not the outcome of our interactions. Therefore, lecturers who are working with international students are faced with what Bruffee (1993 cited in Alderson 1996) called the "reacculturative process" whereby "students explore their thinking with others through collaborative learning as they jointly seek to construct

common meanings and understandings of the knowledge communities they are seeking to join.” These statements emphasise the openness to different cultural perspectives when communicating or interacting with others which the multicultural classroom aims to foster. Thus, an ideal in the literature is a situation where teachers and students contribute to shaping identity through engaging in the process of accumulating a history of shared experiences and the development of interpersonal relationships. In this context, Haigh (2002, p. 58) agrees with both Martin (2000) and Bean *et al.* (1995) in suggesting that teachers could start with the classroom and use the personal identities and experiences of all of their students to help each better to understand the world in which we live and learn. Furthermore, these authors emphasise the benefit of students working in multicultural groups, such as learning different ways of approaching a task, in order to bridge language and break cultural barriers while fostering innovative approaches in tackling project work. To enhance intercultural understanding, in themselves and their students, teachers are thus encouraged to rethink and confront the taken-for-granted beliefs, and to reconstruct their view of the role of teaching in international education.

To summarise, the challenge for educators is the development of a multi-style pedagogy that provides equal opportunities for students from all backgrounds in an inclusive learning environment and that also serves to introduce home students to the demands of

an increasingly multinational world of work. Alderson (1996) suggests that it is necessary for the lecturers to negotiate the content of the curriculum with the students, recognising that the students bring their understandings and skills about their society as well as their needs.

3.5 Outside the classroom

Intercultural competence is seen as critical in every workforce since it is argued that employees nowadays must be able to “work with different organisational stakeholders having diverse ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds” (Dudley & Dudley 1995, p. 307). Relevant skills can not only be cultivated in classroom settings but can also be developed in social settings outside the classroom. As mentioned earlier, studying in the culturally diverse university does not guarantee the development of intercultural competence if no actual communicative interactions occur. Summers and Volet (2008, pp. 357-358) note that much research has observed a phenomenon where there is little interaction between local and international students and thus researchers have begun to focus on how universities can promote beneficial social contact between the two groups. One strategy adopted by some universities is the peer-pairing programme (Quintrell and Westwood 1994 cited in Summers and Volet 2008, p. 358; Eisenchlas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 418), in which international students were paired with local students to maintain

regular contact. In addition to academic contact, they may carry out various day-to-day life activities together (e.g. watching TV, shopping for ingredients for a meal to be cooked and eaten together). This may help build up friendships as well as enable greater participation and skills development to enable adaption to the new culture. Similarly, skills are developed through language exchange partner programmes, mainly aimed at enhancing students' language proficiency, with the additional purpose of increasing mutual understanding of other cultures. The Taiwanese university where I was employed during 2005-2007 paired up local students with international students as language exchange partners. Local Taiwanese students acted as international students' Mandarin tutors as well as their local tour guide, helping orient international students to the community, showing them the neighbourhood around campus, and informing them about local cultures and traditions. Studying together was also part of their exercise: through direct contact international students were able to familiarise themselves with the academic standards and approaches expected of them in the host country. Their language use in such interaction was not limited to Mandarin as some foreign students were at the early stages of learning the language, thus, the language exercise became reciprocal in a way in which the learning of both local and international students was almost equal. In these programmes participants were less intimidated in one-on-one interactions than in front of a full class, as well as being more comfortable correcting each other's mistakes in

language usage and teaching each other new vocabulary. It may be questioned how effective this programme was in terms of achieving intercultural competence, but it certainly promoted meaningful interactions between participants, on an equal footing, which is “the first step to improve intercultural communication skills” (Dlaska 2000 cited Eisenchlas & Trevaskes 2007, p. 419).

Cheney (2001, p. 98) comments that a number of structured strategies are needed when implementing such a programme, such as “ensuring equal status for both participants in the interaction, imposing equal authority in decision making, emphasising the interdependence of participants,” and providing ample opportunity to increase intensive participations. It is common to see universities organising orientation programmes for international students, but as Otten (2003 cited in Thomas 2006, p.115) notes, “in contrast, there is little attention for a systematic preparation for intercultural settings for domestic students and faculty”. The intensive interactions not only offer language benefits to both groups of students but also infuse the student experience with characteristics of other languages and cultures and challenge students’ perceptions of stereotypes of other cultures.

For the purpose of increasing students’ intercultural appreciation, some multicultural

universities host a large-scale series of events concerned with international cultures. For example, University T has held several weekly international cultural events throughout the academic year, such as ‘international gourmet week’, where both international students and local students display the traditional food of their countries and share and taste the food; and ‘international cultures and art week’ where students perform the traditional folk dances or music and can visit gallery art exhibitions on campus. Klak and Martin (2003, p. 445) suggest that “campus activities aimed at promoting diversity will be more successful when they extend from an understanding of the cognitive processes leading individuals toward or away from increased intercultural sensitivity.” Those events help students to grow in an incremental, individual and phenomenological process of intercultural sensitivity.

3.6 Learning Journeys

There has been an emergent interest in biographical and life history approaches in education research over the past three decades (Tedder & Biesta, 2007, p. 1), coupled with an interest in “interpretative approaches to study of culture, biography, and human group life (Denzin 1997, p. 55). Researchers of such studies attempt to uncover how people gain knowledge and understanding of their life experiences (*ibid*, p. 56). This attempt is exemplified in a longitudinal research study “The Learning Lives” research

project which attempts to discover “how people come to develop such understandings and what the significance of such understandings is for how they live their lives” (Goodson *et al.* 2010, p. 1). Although “The Learning Lives” research project focuses on the field of adult education, not on international education, and this study focuses on young university students who may not have as much life history as more mature adults do, the aim of both is alike, to “develop a more nuanced understanding of learning and educational processes” (Tedder & Biesta, 2007, p. 1) through exploring the significance of the learning processes which are structured at different ages and stages in the learner’s life. Moreover the Learning Lives authors found that , “the dispositions (in the Bourdieuan sense) [of learning] are formed throughout their earlier life and go on being formed in ongoing and new situations” (Hodkinson 2008, p.4) and that their respondents’ “dispositions (built up through their own history) influence and are influenced by what and how they learn” (*ibid*).

The concept of biographical and life history approaches is helpful to explore international students’ learning journeys in the present study because it “engages with a broad conception of learning, one which does not restrict the meaning of learning to institutional definitions, but which includes the cognitive and reflexive dimensions of learning as much as the emotional, embodied, pre-reflexive and non-cognitive aspects of

everyday learning processes and practices” (Tedder & Biesta, 2007, pp.1-2). People are active subjects in the learning process, “in which they reflexively ‘organise’ their experience in such a way that they also generate personal coherence, identity, a meaning to their life history and a communicable, socially viable lifeworld perspective for guiding their actions” (Alheit & Dausien 2002 cited in Tedder & Biesta, 2007, p.3). As mentioned in the section on small cultures theory (2.3.2, above), one has several identities in different communities. When entering a new community, the accumulated experiences of interaction with others act as a social ‘tool-kit’ for problem solving and help form one’s new identity. Meanwhile, newcomers engage themselves in understanding how the system in a new community works and how other members learn and behave. Similar to the views of researchers such as Hodkinson (2007) and Lynch & Field (2007) in the Learning Lives project, I also consider that learning is part of a process of becoming and learning is situated, relational and embodied, and that this is relevant to the ways in which people respond to events in their lives while “interacting with and participating in the social and cultural milieu” (Goodson *et al.* 2010, p. 5). “Sometimes learning reinforces already established dispositions and identities, sometimes it is part of progressive development, sometimes of more dramatic change” (Hodkinson 2007, p. 2). In the transitional process of becoming a member in the multicultural classroom at a foreign university, sojourners’ previous life experiences – rooted in their earlier cultural

experiences and the experiences of interaction with other members in a new cultural context – influence what and how they learn as well as the ways they forge their new identities.

Looking into one's own life journey allows researchers to explore how one negotiates identity through the life experiences, “depending on the interaction with other social and environmental factors” (Lynch & Field 2007, p.2) and how “individuals make sense of and manage shifting experience, both desired and undesired, across their lives” (*ibid*, p. 3). Moreover, because one's life journey is not a linear path, it is “an ongoing sense of progression” influenced by differing emergent events and it is also a “part of a reflexive process” (*ibid*). This theoretical frame was helpful to me in designing the research instrument of diary keeping, which not only allowed participants to ‘organise’ their learning experiences reflexively, but also assisted both the participants and the researcher to learn from the stories of learning experiences that they told.

3.7 Conclusion and Revised Research Questions

With the increased internationalisation of business operations, business schools across the world are challenged with the difficulties of developing a curriculum experience (both within and beyond the classroom) that that provides business graduates with the skills

needed for local, regional, and global markets as well as addressing the interdependent realities in business practices which include the cultural norms, ethics, and values of local, regional, and global cultures. In this light, essential business knowledge includes communication both among members of a diverse work force and with domestic and international clients. Thus, it is widely assumed that, to be successful in the increasingly cultural diverse work force, graduates must become more aware of, more sensitive to, and more understanding of those belonging to cultures different from their own. International campuses would appear to be ideal settings to facilitate the process of students developing an understanding of, and tolerance for other cultural practices through interaction with peers from different cultural backgrounds (Steir cited in Summers & Volet 2008, p. 357). It is one of the goals that university T aims to promote in the multicultural campus, its website stating that the business programme “promotes interaction between international and local students and raises awareness and international perspectives of the local students.” Related to this, Monk (cited in Haigh 2002, p. 54) argues that “internationalisation means more than increased knowledge, empathy for and understanding of other social groups: it also requires an emotional, perceptual and cognitive shift in the personal response to otherness.” Furthermore, it has the potential to prepare students with more positive interactions in international trading environments and culturally diverse teams. Saghafi (2001, pp. 65-66) comments that “to advance their

competitiveness in the global job market, students should not only develop their domain knowledge by taking specific courses and relevant projects, but also their generic skills through group projects and work experience during schooling and their foreign language and cross-cultural competence through interaction with [others from different cultural backgrounds]”. Although universities acknowledge the importance of intercultural competence, they do not always provide an explicit description of how they propose to enhance students’ intercultural competence. Therefore, this study aims to explore international students’ perceptions of their experience in the multicultural learning environment both inside and beyond the classroom. As a result of the in-depth analysis of the relevant literature reported in this chapter, the research questions introduced in the first chapter were developed significantly and are now outlined in the following section.

3.7.1 Research Questions

The growth in international student numbers and the ‘internationalisation’ of programmes are not alone sufficient for universities to be characterised as international. In addition, they are under pressure to engage with the processes of globalisation by expanding international networks and developing an internationalised curriculum. Although the curricula offered in the three universities to be researched are relatively similar focusing,

for example, on business administration and international business strategies, it is not clear how the programmes meet the perceived needs of international and home students in terms of knowledge content, while also providing students with intercultural or cross-cultural understanding. Particularly in today's international business climate, developing cross-cultural versatility and awareness is essential for the successful operation of a new overseas joint venture project as well as for successful business negotiations and management processes (Koh 2003, p. 29). As such, the academic literature suggests that development of cross-cultural understandings must not only permeate the curricula as designed, it must also be a shared responsibility of both teachers and students. Therefore, one main interest of this study is the student's experience of learning in the multicultural business classroom and how this is reflected upon by participants when interviewed or writing diaries. It is also anticipated that the students' reflection upon international business education will prove to have been influenced by the motivation to study abroad, by other personal traits and by the wider social and cultural experiences that have come with membership of a university in another country. As such, a discussion of various experiences is also a factual inquiry within the study. By multicultural business classroom, I mean the classroom which is composed of students and teachers from various cultural backgrounds and where the business curriculum is designed for studying international phenomena which may or may not be common in

different contexts and where at least some of the students are studying in a non-native language.

The purpose of this multi-site case study is to illuminate how the identity of international business undergraduate students is constituted in and beyond the multicultural business classroom, the role in this of cultural components of the curriculum in international business courses (both within and beyond the classroom) in different national settings, and the implications of this for teachers and institutional managers. To achieve this, the research will be designed to allow the following principal research question to be answered.

How do international undergraduate business students negotiate their identities as learners in relation to cultural groups within their host countries of study and in the business classroom settings where they study?

There is considerable attention given in the research literature to exploring international students' learning in multicultural contexts in Western universities, such as those in the UK, US, Australia or New Zealand (e.g. Morita 2004, Ushioda 2006, McAllister *et al.* 2006) but there is a paucity of research concerning the learning process of international

students who are taught in English in non-Anglophone countries, including where student groups are international in composition. Consequently, comparative research of such student experiences between Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries is also lacking. Drawing on data generated from international students who are members of groups studying international business in the three countries, the study aims to fill this gap and to explore the ways in which students reconstitute their identities through contact with people from other cultures during the period of learning.

To assist in answering this principal research question, sets of subsidiary questions will be posed:

- a) How do international students evaluate their multicultural learning experiences (within and beyond the classroom) and whether these meet their expectation?
- b) To what extent do students' (new) identities forged through the negotiation process influence them in their future career thinking? Do they consider that their experience enables them to be more capable of communicating with colleagues or clients who are from other cultural groups?
- c) What is the nature of the undergraduate business curriculum? How much international material is infused in it? To what extent does this reflect cultural

components amounting to the internationalisation of the curriculum of undergraduate business education?

d) To what extent do international students believe that the teaching pedagogies they have experienced and the knowledge learned in the foreign countries where they study will benefit them in their future career?

The results of the research related to the principal research question will inform discussion of a subsidiary question:

What are the implications of the findings of the principal research question for teachers and managers of institutions of Higher Education where international business is strongly represented in its portfolio of programmes?

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGIES

So far, I have discussed the general framework of international undergraduate business programmes through examining university websites and government policies towards international education. Then I reviewed a range of studies investigating international students studying in countries other than their own and found that “culture” is seen as one of the most influential components in terms of teaching and learning in the multicultural classroom. I have also elaborated on the perceived importance of intercultural competence for business graduates who will be working in an increasingly international business environment. It seems that intercultural competence is often not explicitly included in the curriculum; even if it is taught, it is primarily an ability gained through actively engaging in interaction, negotiation, adaption, and integration with people from other cultures. After the literature review had been drafted, I next began to interview participants in the three specific research contexts of this study.

The focus of my research project was to explore the multicultural learning experiences within distinctive research contexts rather than the experiences of students registered in international business programmes around the world. The multicultural classrooms in which my participants were studying, and the campuses on which they lived, were

considered the communities where they had negotiated their identities. Assisting with this, Holliday's concept of "small cultures" helped me create a lens through which to examine the three research contexts, since each classroom, each institution and each host country had its own distinctive culture. Very soon the study led to the collection of a large amount of qualitative data through interviews with a sample of participants and through their diaries. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodological bases of the research that was conducted, the sampling frames that were employed, the research methods that were used, the ethical considerations that formed the backcloth for the research and guided its execution, and the way in which the data generated was analysed.

4.1 Epistemological stance

This study is in the interpretivism paradigm. Interpretivism, a contrasting epistemology to positivism, holds that reality contains many truths dependent on how people interpret them, and that human knowing is bounded, finite, always corrigible and subject to change (Ernest, 1994, p. 35). It is associated with relativism, in which knowledge is dependent on the knower and the context, possibly on a community of knowers and their social context (*ibid*, p. 36). Interpretivists posit that knowledge is socially constructed, "it is centered in both how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds, and in the configurations of meaning and institutional life that inform and shape their

reality-constituting activity” (Denzin & Lincoln 2005, p.484). Thus, they focus on understanding “a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting, and thinking” within the social reality (Bryman, 2004, p. 14). In this way, the interpretive approach focuses on the social world instead of the world of nature and it aims to “capture lived experiences of the social world and the meanings people give these experiences from their own perspectives” (Corti & Thompson 2004, cited in Liamputtong 2010, p. 11). Cohen also comments that interpretivism emphasises “behaviour-with-meaning” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 21) in which a large number of our everyday interactions with one another rely on shared experiences. The strength of this paradigm is in capturing uniqueness and in being sensitive to individuals’ thoughts, understanding of, meaning-making of, and feelings about particular circumstances and contexts. In educational research, context is made up of unique particulars. To conclude, interpretivists intend to understand how individuals define the social reality around them, through the eyes of their participants. The answers the researcher attempts to seek are the questions of what social reality relies on the perspective of the participants and how this reality is produced or constructed in their everyday practice. Thus, this qualitative research relies largely on stories told by participants and does not aim to measure or generalise, but to understand the meaning, interpretations and subjective experiences of each participant. Through the in-depth nature of qualitative methods, the researched are allowed to express their feelings and

experiences in their own words (Liamputtong 2010, p. 12).

This study relies highly on qualitative data collected through 18 individual interviews, 3 group interviews, and 40 diary entries. Learning is an ongoing constructive process; participants shared the details of the learning journey that they were constructing with others who, in turn, influenced the ways in which each research subject perceived his or her situation. The researcher then attempted to make sense of the issues raised by participants by generating explanations for what was going on. “It’s about making inferences, developing insights, attaching significance, refining understandings, drawing conclusions, and extrapolating lessons” (Hatch 2002, p. 180). Thus, it is inevitable that the researcher brings his or her own preconceptions, interests, biases, preferences, biography, background and agenda to the interpretation, which becomes “a more reflexive, reactive interaction between the researcher and the decontextualised data that are already interpretations of a social encounter” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 469). That is, the knowledge of the researched is still the basis of analysis. In the following pages, I will talk briefly about my role as a researcher in this study and acknowledge the preconceptions I may have. As Ely (1991 cited in Radnor 1994, p. 9) noted, “by recognising and acknowledging our own myths and prejudices, we can more effectively put them in their place.” He also believes that “greater self-knowledge can help us to

separate our thoughts and feeling from those of our research participants, to be less judgmental and to appreciate experiences that deviate greatly from our own” (*ibid*).

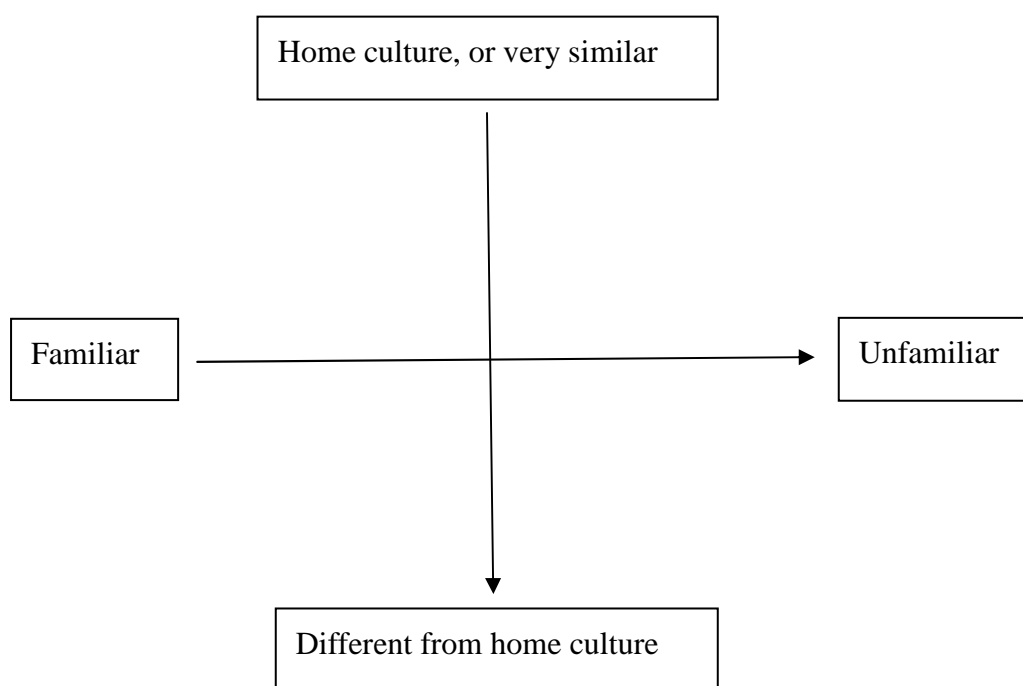
4. 1. 1 Reflexive

My role as a researcher in three national contexts positioned me as an insider in Taiwan and an outsider in Germany and the UK. However, in the Taiwanese context my viewpoint of the education system may not be purely that of an insider. First, although the selected institution in Taiwan was that where I had worked prior to commencing the study, so making access to conduct the research in the institution easier and prior understanding of the cultural context more likely, my view of the Higher Education system in Taiwan may have been adjusted by the process of having studied outside of my homeland and through reading works by authors from different national contexts, as well as through communicating with students from other countries. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008, p. 49) say that such experiences “make the familiar strange”; so such experiences may have had an impact on the fieldwork process as well as on my attitudes after returning to my home context. As an outsider to the German and British Higher Education systems, I am aware that my long personal educational experiences in Taiwan may have lead me to expect education systems to perform in a particular way. Fortunately, my education

experiences in the United States (where I gained my master's degree), and Britain should have helped me notice different practices among the three research contexts, emphasise divergent aspects, find some things more or less surprising and, possibly, be less approving or disapproving of some characteristics of the systems being examined. Moreover, interviewing respondents from different continents should have helped minimise the impact of such ethnocentric bias.

According to Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008, p. 54-5), where the research context is the researcher's home context (the first quadrant in figure 4.1), the research process is likely to be relatively straightforward. In the third quadrant, the researcher has a depth of understanding of context very different from his or her own; the British context of my study falls into this quadrant because I have studied, lived, and worked in Anglophone countries for about eight years. The German context belongs in quadrant 4, because it is different from what I am familiar with in terms of linguistics and cultures. "Researchers could use this matrix reflexively to think about themselves, or in evaluating studies by mapping out different relationships between the researcher and the context being researched" (*ibid*) as well as referring to the international research based on international frameworks and comparative perspectives.

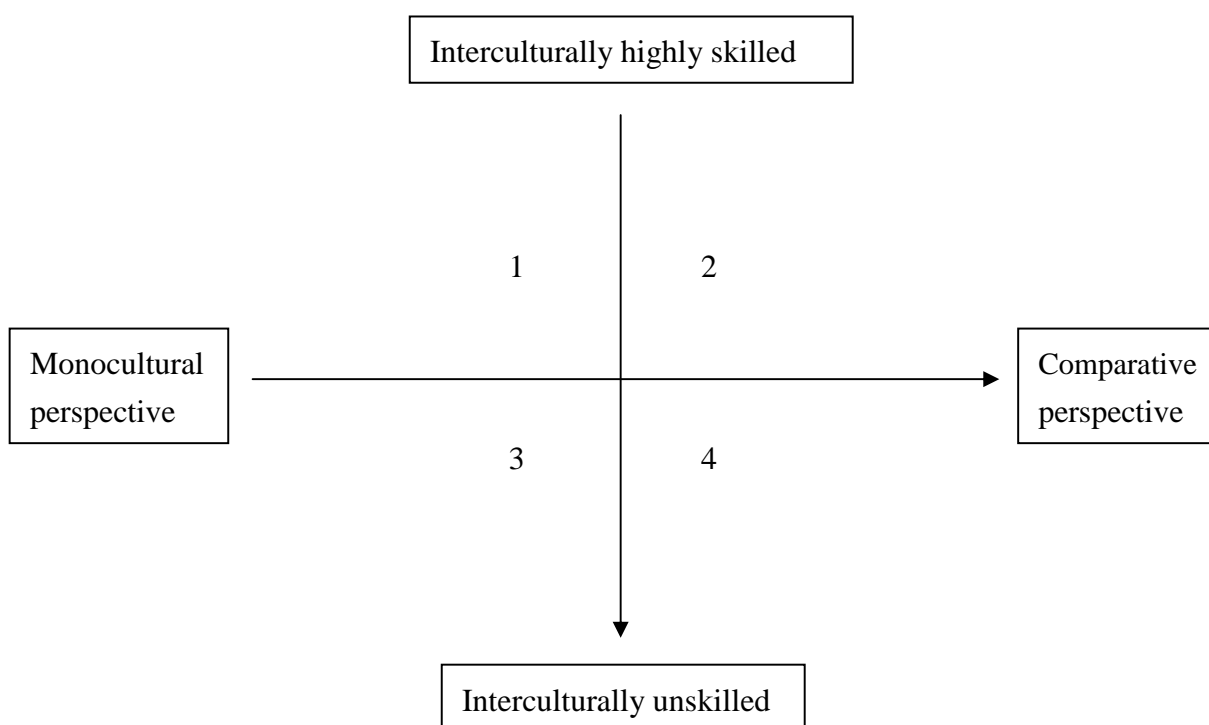
Figure 4.1. Research circumstances and potential responses (adopted from Phillips and Schweisfurth 2008, p. 54)



Phillips and Schweisfurth classify a researcher's skills (Figure 3.2) by the range of contexts the researcher has experienced or investigated. "The more contexts researchers have experienced, the wider their comparative perspectives may be, as they can draw on a wider repertoire of observations, phenomena and explanations" (Phillips and Schweisfurth 2008, p. 55). The ideal international researcher, according to Phillips and Schweisfurth, is interculturally competent and possesses enough experience to have a sound comparative perspective — and thus belongs in the second quadrant. Although I do not have much experience conducting comparative research, I have interacted with people from different parts of the world not only during the time I studied abroad but

during my more than ten years of work as an English as Second Language (ESL) teacher in both Taiwan and New York. Also, I enjoyed the full assistance of a ‘gatekeeper’ in the German institution. Thus, I am confident in placing myself in the second quadrant of Figure 4.2. However, I am also aware that as a human being, my contextual foreign or local roles may cause unavoidable conscious and unconscious motives, desires, feelings, and biases. To avoid being too subjective, I set out to examine carefully the interpretation of every incident that my research participants reported.

Figure 4.2. Researcher skills and perspectives (adopted from Phillips and Schweisfurth 2008, p. 56)



4.1.2 Rapport

Establishing rapport with the interviewees is one of the first tasks of an interviewer. Smith (cited in Wellington, 1996, p. 28) suggests that rapport should be “the result of a positive, pleasant, yet business-like approach”. Before interviews I had very minimum contact with participants in the UK and Germany compared with those in Taiwan. Some participants seemed a bit nervous during the first quarter of the interviews. But since I have many years of teaching experience, am not a strictly serious person, and am accustomed to facing different groups of students every year then creating a relaxing atmosphere is not a problem to me. Moreover, due to my own life experiences, both in study and at work, I understand how participants feel in the process of learning a foreign language, what it is like to arrive in a completely new foreign environment without family, relatives or friends and how difficult it is to expand one's social circle in a new environment of this sort. I often told the participants that I empathised with their experience. Except in a couple of instances, where participants and I were less at ease due to the limited time participants had to offer, I tried to make the best use of the time and ask as many questions as I could. In all other interviews the participants showed their relaxation and trust with laughter. A couple even shared their love stories with me either via e-mail communication or in their post-interview diary entries. I was very aware of such emotional involvement when it came to data analysis but consider that my personal

involvements acted primarily as a social support in order to encourage participants to continue their commitment to the research study. Except in the German context, where a small amount of money was offered to participants, social support of this kind seemed to be an effective as well as customary way of attracting participants for research of this kind. All of the UK and Taiwan participants were given a box of English tea as a token of appreciation for their participation in the study after the interviews without any advanced notice. I do not consider that this small present influenced any of my participants' statements or perceptions to the questions I asked, or had any further impacts on the validity of the data.

4. 2 International and Comparative Educational Research

Before I discuss how comparative methodology is used in this study, I shall briefly introduce the development of international and comparative education.

4.2.1 The development of comparative and international studies

The origins of the field of international and comparative education can be traced back to the pioneering work of Marc-Antoine Jullien and Cesar August Basset in Paris in 1817 (Arnove, 2003, p. 3) the first comparativists whose work was characterised by

“systematic gathering of empirical, statistical data to inform policy-making” (Broadfoot 2001, p. 90). Later, in the early 1900s, Michael Sadler suggested in a published essay that when researchers compare national education systems to foreign ones, they ought to bear in mind national character (Phillips 2006a, pp. 45-46). In particular, understanding foreign education systems helps researchers to better understand “the spirit and tradition of our own national education” (Sadler, cited in Phillips 2006a, p. 46). Recently, Kandel's work can be seen as a clear attempt to bridge ‘cultural’ perspectives and interpretative approaches to data within a comparative education framework. As had Sadler before him, Kandel emphasises the need to understand educational systems and practice as part of their wider context:

The comparative approach demands first an appreciation of the intangible, impalpable, spiritual and cultural forces which underlie an education system; the forces and factors outside the school matter even more than what goes on inside it. Hence the comparative study of education must be founded on an analysis of the social and political ideas which the school reflects, for the school epitomises these for transmission and for progress. In order to understand, appreciate and evaluate the real meaning of the educational system of a nation, it is essential to know something of its history and traditions, of the forces and attitudes governing its social organisations, of the political and economic conditions that determine its development. (Kandel, 1993, p. xix, cited in Broadfoot 2001, p. 90)

Watson (2001, p. 9) describes changes of approach to comparative education since the mid-twenty century in the following way.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, comparative education was asserting itself as a new 'educational discipline' on university campuses throughout North America, western Europe and east Asia... Then during the late 1970s and 1980s, it went through a 'crisis of confidence'. It came under attack from academics in the social sciences as to its relevance... At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the picture has changed yet again. There is no longer any need to justify comparative education studies; there is, however, a need to refocus its orientation; to ensure that classic mistakes of misinterpretation are avoided; and to seek new areas for research.

Watson goes on to mention that, with the increasing growth of globalisation, the world has entered a knowledge era, where “knowledge constitutes the basis for international competition, especially with the growth of information technology” (Watson 2001, p.10).

Educational systems have been reformed in response to new demands and new approaches to teaching and learning have been developed as a result of new information technology. Thus, proponents of comparative research urge a comprehensive reconceptualisation of comparative and international education. In particular, authorities such as Crossley argue that researchers are required to “forge valuable linkages with fundamental social, cultural and historical traditions – in a way that acknowledges the implications and complexities of globalisation in a postmodern world where issues of culture and identity are heightened” (Crossley 2001, p. 46).

The agents that conduct comparative and international studies have thus diversified

beyond traditional academics to governmental, regional and international development agencies such as UNESCO. The field has long engaged in the studies of language, literacy and culture; with the rapid pace of globalisation, global forces have influenced the educational arrangements worldwide, and issues relating to culture, identity and context have challenged the traditional discourses to form new fields of inquiry.

Researchers in the field started to work alongside colleagues from other disciplines or in other countries to investigate multisectoral social development — such as support for social welfare, health and educational development — instead of the former prominence given to the language of education (Preston 1996, p. 45). In parallel came demands for a strengthening of the relationship between educational research, policy and practice in pluralist and multicultural communities (Crossley 2001, p. 57). Moreover, Hans and other comparativists all regarded a key purpose of comparative education as one that looked into the future, as Hans (1959 cited in Watson 2001, p. 34) pointed out:

Comparative education is not only to compare existing systems but to envisage reform best suited to new social and economic conditions... Comparative education quite resolutely looks into the future with the firm intent of reform.

The present study conforms to some of the features of contemporary comparative education just referred to. As stated in the foregoing, it aims to investigate international students' learning in current international business programmes across three countries —

taking into account the local contexts of the respective educational systems, policies, and cultures. It also aims to provide some implications for faculty members who are working closely with international students in multicultural settings in Higher Education. In the following section, I will discuss the application process of comparative method in this study.

4.2.2. Comparative methodology

International studies and comparative studies are usually interdependent as “comparative studies are usually international in nature and international studies are often comparative” (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 7). Erwin Epstein (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 7) considers that comparative studies apply “historical, philosophical, and social science theories and methods to international problems in education”; studies in international education include the analysis and description of activities that “bring together students, teachers, and scholars from different nations to learn about and from each other”.

Therefore, comparative education is described by Hoy (1984, p. 248) as “a body of knowledge of foreign educational systems held together through an understanding of the methods of studying and applying such knowledge”. Patricia Broadfoot (1977 cited in Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 11) also states that “the comparative study of

education is not a discipline: it is a context” in which comparativists are expected to “take into account the historical, cultural, social, economic, etc., context in which educational phenomena are observed and that they must be sensitive to and knowledgeable about what these contributing areas of expertise can offer. We can only properly understand an educational phenomenon in terms of the contextual factors that have created and shaped it” (*ibid*). To better understand the countries compared, including the ‘home’ country, and to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in the contexts compared, Schneider emphasises (*ibid*, p. 15) “the extraction of paradigms, models, and methods for the solution of practical problems and the implementation of educational reform; and the breaking-down of prejudice and the establishment of international thinking in education”.

According to Nowak (cited in Phillips, 2006b, pp. 314-5), comparisons are typically made on various types of relationally equivalent phenomena including cultural equivalence, contextual equivalence, structural equivalence, and functional equivalence. Once the equivalences are established, the researchers can begin the task of comparison by recognising differences and similarities, and attempts to identify the nature of particular contexts. For instance, “the phenomenon of globalization has had enormous implications for the fields of comparative education and international education” (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 51). Therefore, the collection of descriptive data of

individual government educational policies is important within international comparative education as international frameworks are brought to bear on international and local questions of policy and practice (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 52). In Chapter Two this study documented the financial resources invested in international Higher Education, its learning environment and the organisation of international campuses and curricula.

After the collection of background data of this kind, the research process is now taken to the next step – comparison and analysis — to explain similarities and differences. Corner & Grant (1999, p. 66) emphasise that a comparative educational study “has to progress from accurate *description to analysis*, and from that to the forming of *generalisations* about the working of educational systems”. They also claim that a comparative education study needs to raise awareness of the differences and make clear the similarities between systems, policies and practices in various countries. The influence of the system on its context also has to be examined because an educational system has a complex and dynamic relationship with its natural and social environment.

The final stage of comparative study is usually the consideration of transferability or generalisability, that is the extent to which specific locations might consider the findings to be applicable elsewhere or generalisable (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008, p. 110).

Researchers who are looking for transferability by using comparative methodology must

scrutinise complex processes of adoption and adaptation, taking account of cultural, historical, social, economic factors, because every education system reflects the corresponding socio-cultural systems within which it is embedded. Cloudesley Brereton (cited in Phillips 2006b, p. 314) also comments that “we cannot blindly adopt the organisation or methods of any of our neighbors, for each nation has evolved its own particular way of dealing with its educational flora, the result of long years of trial and experiment, but...we can try to study and understand the methods and above all the loving care and insight that each nation lavishes on the coming generation”. Holmes (cited in Hoy, 1984, p. 248) identified the aims and purpose of the comparative education as “both theoretical – to improve our understanding of education as such, and in particular, our own national problems in education – and practical – it should help administrators to reform their schools more effectively and efficiently”. This is also one of the aims of this research study. Although multicultural classrooms have only a short history in Taiwan compared to the other two contexts, this does not mean there is no potential for practice in the Taiwan education system to influence work in other countries. This study seeks to discover perceived challenges and rewards experienced by foreign students in multicultural classrooms and on multicultural campuses, in different contexts, in order to illuminate the international insights that managers and teachers in different national settings might access when seeking to support their foreign students effectively.

4. 2. 3 A multi-site comparative case study

This multi-site comparative case study adopted an in-depth qualitative method in order to grasp the meanings of individual participants' perceptions on the events in the communities they were involved in. Although both qualitative and quantitative approaches can be found in comparative studies, Ragin (1987, p. ix-x) pointed to two main ways in comparative social science through which qualitative work is able to grasp rich and profound data. First, qualitative work tends to be case-oriented; thus, researchers “treat cases as whole entities and not as collections of parts (or as collections of scores on variables)”... And, second, “causation is understood conjuncturally. Outcomes are analyzed in terms of intersections of conditions, and it is usually assumed that any of several combinations of conditions might produce a certain outcome. These and other features of case-oriented methods make it possible for investigators to interpret cases historically and make statements about the origins of important qualitative changes in specific settings...” For instance, many well-known international educational indicators issued by international agencies — such as OECD, UNESCO or the World Bank — do not much consider the underlying educational philosophy of a country nor countries' social, economic and cultural context. There have been some critiques (Crossley 2001, p. 50) of comparisons of achievement of these kinds across national systems of education as they are held to lack the core concepts of context and culture: the concepts that remain

central to the work of specialists in the field of comparative and international research.

Moreover, a hallmark of qualitative approaches is their attention to complexity – the heterogeneity and particularity of individual cases. Thus, in the data analysis of this study, the comparative method highlights the uniqueness of each individual participant in this study due, not least, to his/her biographical and educational background; this requires me to propose appropriate explanations based on the collected data.

Case studies may best capture the distinctive human dimension of education as case study researchers believe that “human systems develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity and are not simply a loose collection of traits” (Sturman, 1997, p. 61); thus they allow researchers “to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do, and to generalise or predict from a single example”, which “requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge”(ibid). In seeking an in-depth understanding of educational internationally, it is necessary to investigate the processes that operate in a particular educational context as well as the outcomes or products of that system. That is, case studies help researchers to develop a theory to understand similar cases, phenomena, or situations bearing in mind that “case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance” (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 253). With

interpretivism as the guiding approach overall, this comparative case study strives to capture participants' lived experiences of, thoughts about, and feelings for studying in the multicultural classroom and living on the multicultural campus in countries which are not their own.

Firestone and Herriott (cited in Sturman, 1997, p. 64) list some major elements for the multisite case study. For instance, it emphasises explanation in addition to the in-depth description. Also, it emphasises the standardisation of data collection procedures through, for example, the use of common semi-structured interview schedules, which allow researchers to focus on narrative accounts and to follow up with the pertinent questions on the spot. The empirical phase of this research project had three stages. First, contextual documentary data about the three institutions — such as student population, nationalities, and course contents — was collected. This was followed by collecting the qualitative data, which comprised in-depth interviews and participants' diaries — the second and the third stages, respectively. When analysing and comparing the data collected from three contexts in three different countries, the unit of analysis and comparison was the institution level within each country. Moreover, Phillips and Schweisfurth (2008, p. 95) indicate that the nation-state is not necessarily a coherent entity in educational terms. For instance, although England and Scotland are both part of Great Britain, they have quite

different education systems. Also, the Federal Republic of Germany comprises 16 individual *Lander*, each with its own education system. Furthermore, Holliday's notion of “small cultures” indicates that every community has its own culture; thus, the data collection and analysis of this study focuses on the basic unit: multicultural classroom and its surrounding campus (including living accommodation).

4.3 Sampling

The sample of this study — the educational institutions and the student participants within them — are non-probability samples. The sample of the three institutes was selected through the purposive sampling method, while the sample of student participants was obtained by using opportunistic sampling and snowball sampling methods. As the purpose of this study is to investigate international students' learning in multicultural classrooms in which courses are taught in students' second or foreign languages, with the assistance of my supervisors I established criteria (e.g., the number of international students hosted and the percentage of the instruction taught in a language medium other than that of the host culture) for the selection of the countries and institutions, as described in Chapter 1. According to Cohen *et al.* (2007, pp. 114-115), purposive sampling is handpicked by researchers based on their judgement, seeking particular characteristics that satisfy the specific needs of the research. After the institutions were

determined and access to them was obtained, e-mail messages introducing the research study and inviting to join the project were sent to the target group of participants. Students who responded to the e-mail invitation were taken as the participants of this study until the required sample size (6-8 participants in each of the three locations) was obtained. Due to some difficulty in recruiting participants in the German institution, the snowball sampling technique was adopted. The first few recruited participants helped me contact other members in the target group. The details of sampling process are discussed in the following two sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

4. 3. 1. Rationale for research sites chosen

The rationale for selecting the three countries – Taiwan, the UK and Germany – for this study was given in Chapter 1. As part of my previous work in the international office in a university in Taiwan, I became very interested in exploring the practice of degree programmes taught in English, such programmes being relatively new in Taiwan. Since Britain has offered education to students from all over the world since at least the 1950s, the university policies there have become more and more mature in terms of recruiting international students, visa issues, and life concerns. Anecdotal evidence suggests that international students not only prize the potential career advancement of a degree earned

in a British university but also value the experience of living and studying in a culturally diverse environment. Meanwhile, Germany hosts a large number of international students, more than any other country in which English is not the native language (the top five countries being, in descending order, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia). Likely motivations for international students choosing to study in Germany appeared to include the popularity of the German language in Europe (Eurobarometer, 2006), Germany's outstanding engineering technologies and the country's relatively low tuition fees for Higher Education. Another reason I selected Germany is, as in Taiwan, English is not the native language. Thus, having another country where English is the second or foreign language involved could help achieve the comparison of international students' perceptions of learning in foreign contexts and their interactions with local students and those from different parts of the world, as well as help the investigation of students' negotiation of identity when communicating in a second or foreign language.

Determining which business schools would be suitable for this comparative study was very complicated, except in the case of the British institution. This university (hereafter called University B) has a wide range of international students in its business management programme and its high rank at home and abroad made it ideal for my

research; also, I had contacts there who suggested that they could help secure research access. After the completion of the ethical approval process (Appendix II), complying with the regulations of British Educational Research Association (BERA), permission for my research was the gained via sending an introduction e-mail to the relevant gatekeeper of the institution (the Director of its business school).

Among approximately 130 universities (including technology universities) and colleges in Taiwan, there are 57 universities that host individually more than 20 international students (FICHET, 2009) for degree study. And based on the criteria set for selecting the institutions for this study (see Chapter One), the number is reduced to 17 national and private universities, excluding technology universities and colleges. I sent out an e-mail to several universities that host more than 100 international students each, introducing this study and my desire to conduct a study by interviewing their international students. I received only a couple of replies expressing interest. When I visited the country during Chinese New Year in 2008, I met the primary gatekeeper of one of the universities, who granted me permission orally and, later, via e-mail as well. However, although the international students were recruited and admitted for enrollment by the school's International office, once they were enrolled they became scattered throughout different departments. Furthermore, due to the disinterest and reluctance of the sub-gatekeeper in

its business school, gaining access to the international students in that institution became impossible. Therefore, a different university, University T, was chosen for this research; it has approximately 113 international students in total, and has a relatively short history of hosting international students, with the first batch having graduated in the summer of 2009. However, this university had a strong motivation for elevating its internationalisation, such as increasing the number of international students by offering a four-year scholarship, and increasing the number of academic partnerships with overseas universities; and its quality of teaching was proven by the school's upgrade in 2006 from college to university, granted by Taiwan's Ministry of Education, when the school was only six years old.

As I do not have any connection to either the German language or the German Higher Education system, identifying the appropriate German university for this study was very time-consuming, especially because the English websites of German institutions often show less detailed information about the programmes than the German-language versions. By examining website information and gaining assistance from my supervisors and the staff in the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), I was able to identify ten universities that offer an undergraduate business degree and meet the criteria mentioned earlier. Again, I sent out e-mail messages to the relevant personnel at those German

universities on the list that were internationally known. And, as before, I received only a couple of replies showing interest. Of these, one institution has an academic partnership with the university at which I was studying in the UK, which allowed me unexpectedly good access to that institution. The German institution selected for this study, University G, is one of the top business schools in Germany; in fact, it was the first German institution to be accredited by the AACSB and EQUIS (University of Victoria website). These successes are based on a continuous quality assurance effort in research, teaching and administration. The school offers some courses taught in English, as well as many classes taught in German. The institution is suitable for the study because international students study in their second or another foreign language – either German or English.

4. 3. 2. Participants

The participants were a non-probability convenience sample of sophomore (second) year “foreign” students. “Foreign” in this study refers to students who are required to study for a significant proportion of their programme in a language of instruction that is not their mother-tongue. There were two main reasons for choosing second-year students: their availability and their relative familiarity with the contexts in question. Freshmen, on the other hand, might still have been in the process of adjusting themselves to a very new

living and learning environment, while final-year students might have been occupied with examinations and thesis as well as with planning for their future after graduation. Also, participation in year-abroad programmes or internships is common for third-year students in German and British universities. Thus, second-year students may not have the stress from the previous two concerns and also they could provide more descriptive experiences of their study since enrollment.

To protect students' privacy during the process of recruiting volunteer participants, an introductory letter was sent out by the gatekeepers in University B and G via e-mails on the behalf of the researcher. At University T I was given the permission to contact the students on my own behalf, probably because the gatekeepers there already knew me well from my previous work heading the international office there. The introductory e-mail message was designed merely to make sophomore-year students in three institutions aware of the study and its need for volunteers. Further information detailing the research project and interview arrangements was supplied to those who responded to the message with an offer to volunteer. Two weeks after my initial e-mail, only a few students at University T responded; with the contact information to hand, I was able to send out the invitation letter again a month later to the sophomore-year international students in the Business Management Programme of University T, whereas the regulations of University

U and University G did not allow the gatekeepers to send out the e-mails more than once. Meanwhile, I had kept in touch with some international students whom I knew when I worked at University T, so I asked them to raise awareness of the e-mail regarding this study among their fellow international students, as sometimes students receive so much e-mail from the University that they do not pay attention to messages from someone they do not know. The above reasons are likely as to why sophomore-year students at University T responded far more than the students at University B and University G, none of whom responded after the two universities sent out the introductory e-mail messages.

Because University T begins its first semester of the academic year earlier than the other two, my contextual research and data collection began there. At University T six participants who expressed interests —two from the Philippines, two from Hungary, one from Vietnam, and one from Russia — were confirmed; and the interviews were scheduled via e-mail before the researcher arrived in the researched context. An American participant volunteered to take part in the study on site; although, as a native English speaker, he was not in the target group of this study, it was considered that his shared experiences of learning in the multicultural classroom and in a foreign context would also be valuable to this comparative study. Unfortunately, the American did not continue his participation during the second phase of fieldwork (diary keeping), but his

story sharing in the individual interview and the focus group meeting were adopted for analysis because those stories were so vivid that they help enable the researcher better to understand intercultural interaction in the researched context in Taiwan.

The recruitment of participants in University B and University G was more difficult than expected. Although the introductory letter of the recruitment for this study was sent to potential participants by the universities, no responses were received. The researcher then had to contact those business programme lecturers who taught the courses with the most sophomore international students, in order to gain permission to spend a few minutes of class time talking to the students and introducing the research project. After giving a brief speech in a couple of lectures, the researcher waited outside the lecture hall after the class. A few students approached to volunteer for this study but the number of participants did not reach the minimum anticipated before the field work. The original design was for a minimum of eight participants to secure a completed set of data for analysis from at least four, allowing for some drop out in the course of the study. Thus, the researcher sought other means of contacting participants; for example, University B has the “Buddy Scheme”, a programme in which international students can sign up for a British Buddy for social contacts such as going to movies or having coffee together for a chat aiming to improve international students' English skills. The researcher asked the faculty in charge

of the scheme for help sending out an e-mail message to international students; this brought in another two participants. In addition, through the researcher's own personal contacts, two more participants were recruited, which increased the number of participants in University B to six: one German, one Indian, one Kazakh, one Taiwanese, one Chinese and one Macanese. Unfortunately, the Indian participant was not able to attend the focus group meeting due to illness; and he did not continue his participation in the period of diary keeping. His interview was not discarded completely as it was thought likely to help reinforce the analysis of some issues that other participants raised. The Kazakh participant did not attend the focus group meeting because of a personal appointment that had been scheduled long before his participation in this study and he was the only participant among all who requested face-to-face conversation instead of writing a journal. (He does not like writing at all.) The researcher met him twice after the first interview, discussing the questions other participants would write about in the diary entries.

The recruiting process was most difficult at University G for several reasons. First, although most modules in University G do not have mid-term exams, it happened that one of the modules *did* have a mid-term exam — and this was scheduled for the middle of the two-week period that I spent at University G for recruiting and interviewing participants.

Because the exam was important for students' final grade, the students were then busy preparing for the exam and were not interested in giving out an hour of their time for the interview for this study. Most international students I talked with in the hallway after their lectures told me that they did not have time for the interview or journal keeping because they were already very busy studying and they also had part-time jobs that kept them quite busy. A few students did not even have a minute to talk to me after class and hurried down the hall to their next activity. Another reason is that I was not aware that at University G it is customary to offer money to interviewees as an incentive to participant. I learned this from one of the student assistants in the office of the Dean of the Business School when she told me that none of the students were interested in taking part in the research after the researcher's first face-to-face invitation in the big lecture hall. Although I was reluctant to offer such an incentive because it could have an impact on the reliability of the data across the three research sites, I had to compromise on that occasion because without participants there would be no research. After I gave two brief speeches in the big lecture hall to nearly 400 sophomore-year students (local as well as international), only one Chilean student expressed willingness to participate in the research. I then contacted all the tutors who are seniors and would be teaching small tutorial sessions, asking for a few minutes to talk to all the students again because I believed it would be easier to identify the international students in smaller classes than in the big lecture hall. After

visiting 10 tutorial sessions in one day, I was able to increase the number of the participants to five: one from Chile, one from Norway, one from Portugal and two from China. Although I specifically emphasised that the target group was the international students whose native language was not German or English and who were studying for a degree at University G, it turned out that two of the five volunteers — the Norwegian participant and the Portuguese participant — were different than the group I had intended to target. The Norwegian girl considered herself a native German speaker because her whole education had been undertaken in German schools either in Germany or in Ireland; and the Portuguese participant was actually an exchange student spending just one semester at University G. But as in the case of the American participant in University T, I believed their story telling could still help explain some issues raised by participants in their host institution. Also, because the number of participants was already small despite considerable effort, I did not want to limit it further. Unfortunately, the Norwegian participant did not continue her participation in the period of diary keeping; and the Portuguese participant returned to his country and dropped out of the research project after sending in his first diary entry.

Because few participants were recruited at University G, and because a majority of the five participants were not able to attend the focus-group meeting, the faculty in charge of

the Dean's office of Business School suggested that I talk to some of the Diplom students. These students were enrolled in an old system – five years of study including a bachelor's and a master's degree – and after some discussion with my supervisors, it was considered that these students' accounts would help enrich the data set collected in Germany. The Diplom participants were found by using a snowball sampling method. Two of them were working as student assistants in the Dean's office; and they managed to find another two friends in the business programme. Four of them were in the sixth or seventh year of the diplom programme. Two of them were Bulgarian, one was Colombian, and one was French. Because I had learned that interviewees at their institution are usually paid, I offered them the same incentive; but three of them said that they would help for free. Two of the five participants in the bachelor programme said the same thing. I remain unconvinced that offering money for interviews is a good incentive in recruiting participants for research studies, as it can be seen that all of the participants in Taiwan and the UK, as well as half of the participants in Germany, were willing to make contributions to this study voluntarily without receiving any monetary allowance.

Table 4.1 shows the basic information of participants in the three research contexts, including their name (pseudonyms are used), age, gender, nationality and their major with a note if they dropped out in the middle of the data collection period.

Table 4.1 Basic information on participants across three researched contexts

| Participants in University T (Taiwan) | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-----|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| | Name | Gender | Age | Nationality | Major | Note |
| 1 | Gina | female | 19 | Vietnamese | Business Management | |
| 2 | Lily | female | 24 | Russian | | |
| 3 | Kitty | female | 28 | Hungarian | | |
| 4 | Henry | male | 19 | Filipino | | |
| 5 | Arnold | male | 19 | Filipino | | |
| 6 | Frank | male | 33 | American | | Discontinued after the interview and focus group meeting. |
| 7 | Kenny | male | 19 | Hungarian | | |
| Participants in University B (United Kingdom) | | | | | | |
| | Name | Gender | Age | Nationality | Major | Note |
| 1 | Charlie | male | 18 | German | Accounting & Finance | |
| 2 | Thomas | male | 19 | Macanese | Accounting & Finance | |
| 3 | Sherry | female | 19 | Chinese | Accounting & Finance | |
| 4 | Julie | female | 23 | Taiwanese | Tourism & Management | |
| 5 | Albert | male | 22 | Kazakh | Economics & Finance | |
| 6 | Ali | male | 20 | Indian | Accounting & Finance | Participated in the individual interview only. |

| Bachelor-degree Participants in University G (Germany) | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|-----|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Name | Gender | Age | Nationality | Major | Note |
| 1 | Britta | female | 20 | Norwegian | Business Administration | Discontinued after the interview and focus group meeting. |
| 2 | Roger | male | 20 | Chilean | | |
| 3 | Jose | male | 20 | Portuguese | | Exchange student |
| 4 | Yolanda | female | 24 | Chinese | | |
| 5 | GiGi | female | 26 | Chinese | | |
| Diplom-degree Participants in University G (Germany) | | | | | | |
| | Name | Gender | Age | Nationality | Major / Minor | Note |
| 1 | Lisa | female | 24 | Bulgarian | Business Administration | Participated in the focus group meeting only, no diary entries were required. |
| 2 | Sara | female | 26 | Bulgarian | Business Administration / Intercultural Communication | |
| 3 | Anna | female | 25 | Colombian | Marketing, Logistics and Psychology | |
| 4 | Nancy | female | 23 | French | International Relations | |

4.4 Research Methods

4.4.1 Interviews

Contextual documentary material collected in the three researched countries and

institutions was followed by interviews. The interview method was chosen because the study aimed to investigate participants' learning experiences in a multicultural setting, how participants interpret the behaviours and beliefs within the situated contexts, and how they negotiate and form a new identity in a new context. Thus, according to McNamara (1999), "interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences". As the study involved a small number of participants and relied largely on interview data, a semi-structured interview method was adopted to allow for greater focus on narrative accounts in order to understand deeply the participants' learning journeys. This is in line with the view that in-depth interviewing "is useful to access individuals' subjective constructions of their social world" and represents a "guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee's rich, detailed materials... and discover the [interviewee]'s experience of a particular topic or situation" (Rossman & Rallis 1998, cited in Halualani, 2008, p. 4). Thus, I had a set of guiding questions prepared prior to the interviews; but I was open to exploring the issues behind the questions with flexibility and in a manner that fitted with the conversation held with each interviewee so as to discover what each felt was significant about their experiences (Bloomer & Hodkinson 1999, p. 10). Moreover, with "small cultures" and "communities of practice" theories in mind, I expected that participants in the different contexts might recount a wide range of stories about their learning journey given that they came from a

culture different to that of the host country, so were likely to be maintaining various identities. Such data would have been more difficult or even impossible to collect if I had structured the order of the questions and made them too specific and focused.

After reconsidering the concepts and field studies surveyed in Chapter 3, I listed questions based on the themes identified in those studies, which include four aspects: the motivation for studying (business) abroad, the expectation and experiences of studying in the programmes in which the participants were enrolled, the intercultural interaction inside as well as outside classrooms, and the expected impact of the experience of studying abroad on their future plans. Sub-topics were also identified; and specific questions were designed under each sub-topic. The questions I had prepared were designed to guide the conversation that I anticipated would take place. The order of the questions and the wording of the questions, however, were flexible and subject to change according to interviewees' replies. The questions in respect of motivation included when the idea of studying abroad was developed, what the advantages and disadvantages of studying abroad are, the reason for choosing the institution where the participant was currently studying, and their first impression of arriving in the foreign context. As in almost all cases the programme was being taught in the interviewees' second / foreign language, their perceptions of their own language proficiency were discussed here; in

some cases, the language issue was often mentioned in the interviews. The above questions allowed the researcher to have some understanding of the biographical information about each interviewee, which also helped get the interviewees to start talking about familiar information; meanwhile, it may have helped them get used to the interview context and speaking while being recorded, as well as easing their concerns about what the interview would be like. The questions then moved toward the teaching and learning in the classroom; instead of asking what teaching pedagogy the professors used in classrooms directly, we discussed the subjects that they found beneficial or challenging, which helped guide the questions toward teaching pedagogy and textbooks used in the classrooms, as well as toward other cultural components (i.e. intercultural interactions) in the multicultural classroom. Interestingly, in many cases, participants' perceptions of the differences between common teaching pedagogy in their home countries with those used in the host countries echoed some of the literature in respect to the contrast between Eastern and Western cultures (i.e. individualism *versus* collectivism, learner-centered *versus* teacher-centered approaches, team work *versus* individual project: Flowerdew 1998; O'Neill & McMahon 2005). Thus, their preferences among various approaches were also discussed. Then the discussions moved naturally into the participants' learning strategies in response to the different teaching approaches they received and the skills they obtained in the programmes. Following the discussion of

classroom interactions, the interactions with both local students and other international students outside the class contexts were discussed. In some cases the participant's social life, such as establishing new friendships in both the new and foreign contexts, was discussed when talking about the period of time immediately following their arrival. That was when questions about how participants expanded their social circles, if any, were discussed — such as becoming a member of student associations or attending the activities of student clubs — and how this facilitated their understanding of the local culture (as well as other cultures) and, if any, how it further strengthened the feelings of belonging in the local culture. The interviews concluded with a discussion of the impact that the participants believed their overall experience would have upon their future — for example upon their plans after graduation or upon how the intercultural competence gained in the multicultural environment would enable them to communicate better in the workforce. The semi-structured interview schedule that was used may be found in Appendix III.

Many have suggested that questions in interviews should be as explicit and precise as possible (Miller and Cannell, 1997, p. 362) as this increases respondents' comprehension of the questions and helps to yield accurate information. Moreover, some researchers argue that the wording of questions is an important factor in terms of reliability, and that

this should be consistent for each respondent (Silverman cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 150). However, there were times when interviewees used different terms or words from those I had used, so, for the sake of clarification, I asked them to enlarge upon their preferred views of the words or concepts. Because English was not the native language of the participants, nor was it my native language, this extra level of examining the wording helped prevent linguistic misunderstandings. As such, I was involved in a meaning negotiation process, seeking to “formulate the “implicit message”, “send it back” to the subject, and obtain an immediate confirmation or nonconfirmation of [my] interpretation of what the interviewee is saying” (Kvale 1996, cited in Alasuutari 1998, 144). I also made sure interviewees’ perceptions met with my intentions in the questions by using, where appropriate, the same wording as the interviewees. For instance, the differences of the words “subject”, “course” and “module” can mean different things in American English than they do in British English. One of the questions regarding the subject(s) / course(s) / module(s) learned in the programme was, “*What course or courses have been more beneficial to you so far?*” One Filipino participant thought that I was inquiring which of the majors he found most beneficial, because we had discussed that he was majoring in mathematics in the university in the Philippines and he initially believed the intent of the question was to compare the mathematics programme with the business programme. That is an example of when the clarification was needed.

The field work was at the beginning of a semester/term in each country. It involved two interview sessions: first, an informal conversational interview with individual students, and then a focus group. The informal conversational interview preceding focus group is because it allows the salience and relevance of the subsequent focus groups to be matched to individuals and circumstances (Patton cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 353). Two pilot interviews were administered prior to the fieldwork, one in Taiwan and one in the UK.

4. 4. 2 Pilot interviews

A pilot study is to pre-test “a particular research instrument such as a questionnaire or interview schedule” (van Teijlingen & Hundley 2001), and it functions to “increase the reliability, validity and practicability” of the instruments (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p. 341). It can also help researchers carefully formulate questions by revealing those which are biased and should be removed or amended. As the pilot was conducted in summer, when most international students were travelling back home, I was able to find two international students for the pilot study. Neither, however, was in the sophomore year. The interviewee studying in Taiwan had just finished her third year in the summer before the pilot interview; and the other had just graduated from the University B that summer.

These were Kemmi, a Filipino student studying in the business programme in University T, whom I had met what I lived in Taiwan, and Rose, a student from Hong Kong who I met in church in Britain and who studied in the business school of University B. As it is quiet on campus during the summer, we met in the university café, which was convenient for the interviewees because they lived near campus. We had chatted for a few minutes, with me explaining the purpose of the research and some of its detail before the interview began. I asked interviewees for permission to record them but told them that they could request to pause the recording if there was anything they wished to be kept off the record (for a discussion of ethical considerations in this study, see section 4.5, below). Because we were not total strangers, the interview proceeded quite smoothly, and the interviewees did not look nervous. Each of the pilot interviews lasted between 40 and 45 minutes; and a semi-structured interview agenda was modified slightly as a result of first two pilot interviews so as to make the questions clearer and easier to answer.

4. 4. 3 Main interview sessions

Prior to the field work, some thought and planning went into the selection of ideal places for conducting interviews; during the actually field work, however, situations were different from what was expected and, on occasion, subject to unanticipated time

constraints. At University T I planned to book a study room in the library; but after I arrived I realised that as someone who was no longer a member of the staff there I was ineligible to make the reservation. Although I could have prevailed upon the International Office to help me, it was then the beginning of the semester so I did not want to burden the university staff further. Fortunately, I was sufficiently familiar with the campus from having worked there for more than three years that I knew of a quiet corner in one of the campus cafés that would be appropriate for the interviews. In a couple of cases, I met with participants in a classroom that we randomly found empty, as there is usually no class between 5:00 and 6.30 pm. Because of the difficulties I had in the recruiting process at University B I tried to interview volunteers as soon as possible lest they changed their mind (which did happen in one case). Again, the participants and I were familiar enough with the campus as well as with the city centre that we managed to find some relatively uncrowded and quiet cafes for interviews. At University G, the staff I had been in contact with via e-mail had reserved several time slots in a meeting room. However, due to similar problems to those I encountered in University B, some volunteers were able to meet me only at other times; so we had to meet elsewhere. Fortunately, with the help of a contact, I was able to find a campus cafe that was not too crowded or noisy.

The interviews began with some ice-breaking questions of the participants, such as how

they had spent their summer vacation. (The interviews took place at the beginning of a new semester.) Then I explained again the purpose of the research and told the interviewees how I would preserve their confidentiality, such as giving them pseudonyms when reporting and by taking other reasonable steps to protect their interests. All interviewees provided their permission to record; and they were reminded that they had the option to keep some issues off the record. The time availability of interviewees was also discussed up front so that I could adjust the pace of the interviews accordingly. I then started with the questions prepared as described in section 4.4.1. Except asking the *what* or *how* questions, I sometimes posed application or example questions, for instance, “*Please give me a (positive/negative) example of an intercultural interaction from your own experience*” which requires respondents to search their memory for relevant information and organise the material to formulate a response (Miller and Cannell, 1997, p. 363).

During the interview, researchers’ feedback serves to inform participants that “the message is being received, attended to, and accepted” (Miller and Cannell, 1997, p. 367). However, “feedback statements must focus on reinforcing hard work by respondents and must avoid expressing approval of the particular response” (*ibid*). Except for the time I needed to clarify whether my interpretation of the story told by the interviewee was what

the interviewee meant, I usually used simple statements of understanding and interest carefully, such as “I see”, “I understand”, “that’s useful” etc. and not to use “that’s good” which could likely have been interpreted as approving of the answer content rather than as positive support for adequate responses. I believe that I maintained the appearance of neutrality well, because almost every participant appeared to share their learning journey with me freely, without pressure. For instance, although the participants recognised the fact I am Taiwanese, those in University T expressed their views with me on everything they had seen and experienced in Taiwan, the good and the bad. That is, they did not demonstrate any worry of offending me by giving negative comments about my homeland, as I did not express any agreement or disagreement with interviewees at all except to express statements of understanding.

At University T and University B most of the interview sessions lasted between 45 minutes and an hour, while those at University G lasted no more than 30 minutes because of the limited time participants there were willing to take from their study. As noted earlier, international students in University G had a very heavy study load (as elicited via personal conversation with some international students in the hall way outside their classrooms) and this was one of the reasons it was hard to recruit volunteers for this study. So at University G I not only offered the incentive of some allowance, but also promised

to keep the interview time down to 30 minutes; in fact, three of the five participants were recruited after I made this compromise. This change may have influenced the amount of data collected, as I was very intensively trying to find the balance between covering the five general aspects (motivation, teaching and learning, intercultural interaction in classroom, social life outside classroom, and future plans) and probing into the significant events that participants raised during the limited interview time. Moreover, the rapport between me and the participants in University G was not as good as it was with participants in University T and University B. The exception to this was the Chilean participant, who did not mind how long the interview took, so we had more time to cover things I wanted to find out and for me to understand relevant phenomena more deeply at a more pleasant pace, as well as to build up a more relaxing atmosphere during the interview.

4. 4. 4 Group interviews

Another approach to “gain an insight into what might be pursued in subsequent individual interviews” is the group interview method (Bogdan and Biklen 1992 cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2007 p.373). The group interviews were conducted after the individual interviews because I considered each participant to be a unique individual with their own story to tell,

and group interviews as being less likely to allow personal matters to emerge; also, a group interview does not allow the researcher to follow up with a series of questions aimed at one specific member of the group. In addition, I did not want anyone to refrain from speaking up because their views differed from those of others in the group.

Therefore, I decided to conduct the focus group interviews after individual interviews, allowing the individual participants' perceptions of their salient experiences to emerge before they heard others' points of view.

Group interviews have some advantages over individual interviews. For example, group interviews can help respondents recall specific events or experiences shared by members of the group. They can also allow participants to voice their agreement or disagreement on something that he or she probably would not have thought of without the opportunity of hearing the views of others. This is also a helpful way for reducing interviewers' bias (Cohen *et al*, 2007). Thus, the group interview not only enables researchers and participants to more deeply access a wide variety of the attitudes and perceptions in relation to a particular issue; it also "offers researchers the opportunity to study the ways in which individuals collectively make sense of a phenomenon and construct meanings around it" (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 512). For example, the issue of discrimination was mentioned by only one of the participants, Arnold, a Filipino, who said he had

experienced a couple of incidents of discrimination in Taiwan; and he raised this issue again in the group interview. That was a chance for me and for Arnold to hear what others thought about the issue. Since everyone was giving his/her own opinion without any confrontation (although there are all sorts of different opinions), I could retain my neutral stance as a researcher.

There are some limitations of focus groups that researchers need to be aware of. For instance, Merton and colleagues (1956 cited in Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 704) noted that researchers in focus group interviews must be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction and to encourage responses from the entire group rather than leaving one person or a small coalition of people to dominate the discussion. I frequently encouraged everyone to state their opinion by saying, ‘That’s one point of view. Does anyone have another point of view?’ (Bryman, 2004, p. 360). I also kept eye contact with each individual with a smile to encourage them to speak up if they wish to do so. It was much easier to reach such balance in the group interviews in University B and University G, where had only four participants each, than it was in University T, where all seven participants attended the group interview. I also paid attention to ensure that there was no suppression of views when group members appeared to think uncritically about a certain point of view seemingly agreed by the entire group. Most of the time when people

expressed a view that the majority of the group members disagreed with, they could peacefully speak their own opinions without encountering arguments, except once at University B when identity negotiation was discussed. Charlie, the German participant, said that he had adapted himself to the foreign context by observing what is more appropriate or more efficient in the approach of different nationalities. As such, he tried to make a common ground between him and others, and although he did not try to be someone else intentionally, this happened more ‘naturally’ after being immersed in a culture different from his own for a while. The other three interviewees disagreed with his point of view and insisted that they would never force themselves to change in order to fit into certain groups. Because this was not really what Charlie had meant to say his attempt to express the subtle changes that he realised he had been adopting, he said, “I am not saying that I am a different character now. But I am not quite the same as who I was two years ago” (He studied in Canada for a year before coming to study in the UK.)

Concerned that Charlie would feel marginalised or subjected to blame for holding a different view, I felt that I had to jump in and smooth over the tension by relating my own experience of studying and working abroad in both the United States and Britain, noting that none of us wants to make a change reluctantly and that sometimes life is like learning a lesson: you change slightly every day without your awareness. Perhaps Charlie is more sensitive to his changes, I told the others. After that, some of them attributed such changes

to the result of growing up; a couple of group members also recalled that their friends had noticed changes in them, such as being more polite or more mature. Before we moved on to the next issue, Charlie had not changed his mind because of the peer pressure. He added, “No matter where you are, you need to make a common ground when approach different nationalities... It depends on the person how you act and react to someone... You are always kind of different depending on the situation who you talk to”.

The questions asked in group interviews covered the same aspects as those in individual interviews. All were open-ended questions, including descriptive questions and contrast questions. (See details of the focus group schedule in Appendix III.) For example:

- What would you say to someone from your home country about your experience studying abroad?
- Please describe and assess the teaching and learning styles in University X.
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of group work?
- Did you act differently here when working with people from other cultures from the way you act with the people from your country? If so, in what way?
- What is your after-school life like? What do you do in your leisure time? Have you attended any student club activities?

At the beginning of every group interview, I thanked everyone for coming, introduced the purpose of the group interview session, requested permission to tape-record the session and assured the participants that their individual data would remain confidential. Also, I explained to the participants that they might find that the questions were similar to those posed in the individual interviews but that listening to others' stories might open up their memory so as to share with the researcher points they haven't thought of during the one-to-one interview.

With regard to the venue for holding the group interview sessions, it proved relatively straightforward to arrange an appropriate time with most participants on the basis that a meeting room had to be arranged a couple days prior to the group interview session taking place. In Taiwan, a few participants mentioned in the individual interviews that they did not have a kitchen in the resident hall so they always eat out. When I had previously worked at University T I had often invited international students to my home for a simple meal. Having retained this flat, I proposed to the participants in this study that we meet at my place and have lunch there before the group interview session. Everyone was excited about this idea. It turned out to be a successful meeting as the seven participants and I were able to sit comfortably in my living room and talk for nearly an hour and a half. In

University B, one of my supervisors was able to book a meeting room on campus. I prepared some snacks and beverages for the session, hoping this would help the participants relax around each other, since none of them had met before the time of the group interview. The representation of the members in the group interview in University B was slightly imbalanced, with three native-Chinese speakers (from Taiwan, China, and Macau) and one German; the Indian participant reported at the last minute that he was sick and would not be able to attend the group interview. I was acutely aware of such imbalanced representation and attempted to deflect unnecessarily marginalisation, as has already been described in the case of Charlie's comments on identity negotiation. In the event, the group interviews were successful; a couple of participants even e-mailed me a few weeks later and asked if we could meet again for such group talk, because they had really enjoyed it. I did meet with them twice afterwards, but we talked then as friends and did not discuss the research, and when they shared information about things that had happened, either in the classrooms or in their group projects, that information was not taken into consideration during data analysis. In Germany, most of the participants in the Bachelor's business degree programme were not able to meet again after the individual interviews and before I left Germany although I did manage to convene a group meeting with the four international students enrolled in the old system (the Diplom degree). We gathered in a meeting room that the Dean's office had reserved for me prior to my arrival.

Because the four of them already knew each other, and three had worked part-time in the Dean's office and thus had encountered me several times before, they did not feel very unfamiliar with me or each other. Also because they were student assistants working there, they prepared coffee or tea and I brought some cookies to the group interview session. Although they were not in this study's original target group, their contributions allowed me to gain an understanding of teaching and learning at University G that was very helpful to my research.

4. 4. 5 Diary Keeping

By listening to participants' narratives in the interviews, I was able to develop an understanding of the relationships between their learning and life that they perceived in the foreign country where they were studying. Meanwhile, participants may have re-examined past incidents and may have reconstructed their points of view while telling the stories. As Goodson *et al.* (2010, p. 121) write “story-making fulfills two functions: the first is that storying is a tool for reflection... The second is that storying has an integrative role... it is possible to achieve synthesis of different aspects of experience, the integration of learning over time, through the process of making stories.” It is a tool for both the participants and the researcher to understand the relation of learning, agency and

identity construction through narrative.

Because learning is an ongoing process for individuals, so is the adaptation process and the formation of identities. These young people study abroad in an unfamiliar context and using a language that is not native to them; there are many interrelated influences that can affect their learning and adaptation to the local environment through their daily communication and interaction, with identity negotiation embedded in these interactions.

Moreover, Eisenclas and Trevaskes' (2007, p. 416) claim that an effective means for students to learn to appreciate intercultural and intergroup interaction is through the experience of everyday living where, consciously or unconsciously, they respond to different situations. Thus, in order to hear more of my participants' voice so as to understand more deeply their learning journey, participants were asked to keep diaries about their experiences of multicultural learning, and to write entries at least once a month throughout the semester/term following the interviews.

For this study I selected some of the reasons listed by Moon (2006) for using learning journals.

First of all, diary keeping records experience in the past or present that are the

“highlights” of life. Themes and sub-questions were given to respondents in advance to guide them on issues to cover in their diaries, help respondents to focus on particular themes and be more conscious or more aware of characteristics of their surroundings, as nearly all experiences are mediated by the social surroundings. Moreover, through the story-making process, respondents were encouraged to re-examine the past and learn from their prior experience in the expectation that this would help guide them in responding to present or future experience.

Secondly, diary keeping is essentially a vehicle for reflection. Alerby and Elidottir (2003 cited in Moon 2006, p. 27) argue that “in the process of reflection, silence can be observed as a sense-making process which emphasises learning in, with and through silence.”

Whalley adopted Transformative Learning Theory in his study, in which he identifies “reflection as the central dynamic of learning”, with the reflection process enabling individuals to become “critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world: changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting on these new understandings” (1996 cited in Hoff 2008, p. 66). Without reflection, students may not be sensitive to the significant events that transform their attitudes towards and

understandings of the foreign cultures.

In addition, diary keeping gives “voice” as a means of self-expression. Diary keepers may express the deeper feelings in their heart (e.g. homesickness, frustration or fury about their experiences of intercultural interaction) that they might be embarrassed to talk about openly in the face-to-face interviews. Dillon (1983, cited in Moon 2006, p. 50) argues that we may try to “find a voice that we think is proper to share with other people... then we often lose our own voice”. Journals may help to “raise the consciousness of those who believed the myths that led to their own self-degradation” (Peterson and Jones, 2001, cited in Moon 2006, p.50).

Furthermore, journals can help people find their own identities. Referring to Holland and Lave’s (2001) cultural and historical identity theory, Jang (2009, p. 55) suggests that “identity of an individual is shaped through struggling and negotiating with the local contexts (i.e., everyday events) in which the larger social, cultural, economic, and political structures of the society are reflected”. The particular events participants select to report in their diaries demonstrated how they understood, made sense of a situation, and negotiated their identities through the practice of writing self-narratives. Students who study abroad may ponder where they stand in terms of their learning journey and in

the foreign context; through reconstructing their experiences in story-telling, it is as if they are putting pieces of jigsaws together as they build a sense of identity or personhood.

Participants were assigned three topics in the diary entries, with new entries written every three-four weeks. The first entry covered both feedback about the interviews and the participants' expectation about their second year of study. The second entry focused on the practice of teaching and learning. The final entry dealt with interaction with others both inside and outside the classroom, as well as covering comments on overall study experiences in the foreign country concerned. Each topic was provided with sub-questions aimed at helping participant have some general idea of what to write in each diary entry. For instance, during the individual interviews, when asked about interaction in the classroom, I found that there were not many whole-class discussions or much pair work in the big lectures, in either the British or German researched context; in those cases group work turned out to be the most likely opportunity for students to communicate. Thus, in the final diary entry, some sub-questions were designed to explore the actual process of the group work. These included:

- Do you have any projects or assignments that you need to work on with your classmates? If so, please provide details of the projects. For example, the following questions were discussed during our interview.
 - How is your group formed?
 - What nationalities are your groupmates?
 - How is the work distributed to each of the group members?
 - How is the leader of the group elected?
 - How are conflicts or problems solved? Do you jump in and solve the issues when the conflicts occur? Or do you keep silent and let other group members sort it out?
 - How did the project(s) turn out?
 - What you have learned from this group work? Please address both your academic perspective and your human relationship perspective?
 - Do you find that you worked differently in the multicultural group from how you worked with groups in your country?
- If you have no such group project this semester, please discuss the individual projects (autumn semester 2009 only). What was the project about? What source(s) did you use for information for completing the project? Do you wish it could have been a group project?

The topics were e-mailed to participants a month prior to each submission deadline, for two reasons. First, it gave the participant sufficient time to write the diary entry. And, second, the given topics allowed participants to pay attention to their learning process and their interactions with others. Because I needed to interview the participants in person and I could only be in one country at a time, the diary schedules covered slightly different periods. An example of e-mail correspondence is attached in Appendix IV, along with a schedule of the questions and sub-questions to be answered in each of the three entries. The participants had a wide range of options for staying in touch with the researcher: mobile phone numbers, online messenger account names, and e-mail addresses. This enabled me to stay in touch with student participants during the diary-keeping stage and provide them with support and encouragement in this activity and in general.

4.5 Ethical concerns

My university in the UK required all doctoral students to comply with the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA), which mainly concern the relationships between researchers and study participants. The followings are some ethical issues in this study that I am aware of, which I noted in the ethical form (Appendix II):

- *Informed consent.* Those who responded to the invitation e-mail, either through the universities where they were studying or from the researcher directly, then received an e-mail message from me stating the details of the research project, including the purpose of the study, its methods, and the activities they would be involved in. The participants were told about their right to choose whether to participate in the research after being fully informed of the purpose of the study. Also, all participants were free to withdraw from the research at any time.
- *Anonymity/confidentiality.* Consent from each university was sought regarding access and whether the institutions would be named. All participants' privacy was guaranteed through use of pseudonyms. However, this confidentiality worked better externally (i.e. for the reader) than internally (i.e. for participants) as members of the focus groups could identify the characters described in the stories.
- *Tape recording.* Before the interview began, permission for recording was sought from interviewees, who were also told that they could request to pause recording if they wanted to say anything off the record.
- *Data Protection.* During the period of research, the data — including the recorded interviews, interview transcripts, and participants' diaries — were stored securely in password-protected computer files. All data will be destroyed after the research study is completed.

4.6 Issues of trustworthiness and credibility of the data

This study included several sets of data, such as interview transcripts, focus group transcripts and participants' diary entries. It echoes Stake's (2005, p. 443) comments that a case study "gains credibility by thoroughly triangulating the descriptions and interpretations, not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of study...[It] concentrates on experiential knowledge of the case and close attention to the influence of its social, political, and other contexts." Triangulation serves to "clarify meaning by identifying different ways the case is being seen" (Flick, 1998 and Silverman, 1993 cited in Stake 2005, p. 454), that is, it helps to identify different realities. Through thick description of qualitative data of cases under study, the researcher gained crucial information about how individuals engage in intercultural contact and the kind of perceptions and evaluations they take from these moments. By reporting the case in sufficient descriptive narrative, readers can comprehend the interpretation, experience the happenings vicariously, and draw their own conclusions (Stake, 2005, p. 450).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have proposed that the quality of qualitative research needs to be accessed via alternatives to reliability and validity (which are criteria for quantitative research). They argue that there are two primary criteria: trustworthiness (made up of four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability) and authenticity

(referring to multiple accounts of social reality). To achieve authenticity one can generate several accounts of the social reality (via diaries, interviews), checking that the investigator has correctly understood that social world. During the interview, I was involved in a meaning negotiation process, checking with interviewees that my interpretation of what they said is correct. When receiving participants' diary entries, I doubled checked with them if there was some point or word that was not very clear to me in order to ensure authenticity.

4.7 Data analysis

After the interview data were collected, I started transcribing the recorded interviews (See Appendix V for a sample interview transcript.) This took me two to three months. By the time the transcription stage had been completed participants' three diary entries had arrived, so that data analysis could begin. Because the guiding questions in all the data, including the interviews, group interviews and diary entries, were designed to explore five aspects — participants' motivations for studying (business) abroad, teaching, learning, intercultural interactions in the classrooms as well as outside classrooms, and the impact of studying abroad experience on the future plans — data analysis took the form of “typological analysis” (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993, p. 257) by dividing the overall data set into categories or groups based on predetermined typologies. Before

doing that, I read through the whole set of data of each participant – the individual interview, the group interview and three diary entries – and identified the salience that was embedded in each participant's data set. As I noted earlier, every individual is different and has his/her own story; by reading each individual's data set as a whole I was able to get an initial sense of what was and was not included in the data and, with the addition of the field notes, an overall biographical impression of each individual could be formed. Understanding and introducing each individual's uniqueness was a means of maintaining the whole picture of that person to be presented before going on to categorise the full dataset thematically, which is how the findings in Chapter Four are organised.

Next, I read the set of data by institution and made notes of possible sub-categories related to the general typologies as well as those that appeared to be context-specific. Thus I was able compare the data across three researched contexts within each theme. I adopted typological analysis which “is essentially a classificatory process” (LeCompte and Preissle 1993 cited in Cohen *et al.* 2007, p. 473) where descriptive codes are then drawn together and put into subsets. The next step was to look for patterns, relationships, and themes within the possible sub-categories, and then to reform the sub-categories and themes. I read the data several times before the final version of the coding was completed; each time I found additional ways of framing the analysis, and I had to make decisions on

how to interpret the participants' accounts fairly and represent them truthfully. Meanwhile, all the relevant descriptions for each sub-category and theme were tabulated into separate documents named by the sub-categories. The table of participants' descriptions for one of the sub-categories, grading system, is presented in Chapter 5. For other subsets under a theme, I was able to choose the one or two of participants' descriptions that is more articulated and better representing the relevant sub-category. However, in the case of the "form of exams" under the sub-theme "grading system", participants' descriptions did have something in common, but at the same time, were slightly different from one to another. Thus, I decided to present participants' narratives as much as possible for the sake of illustrating various viewpoints of the sub-category. At the end, the subsets of each of the five domains were identified (see Appendix VI for the coding book). When reporting, the data was presented by themes; this enabled me to make comparisons across participants' responses under each theme. However, in order not to risk losing the wholeness coherence and integrity of each individual's data, I bore in mind each participant's biographical uniqueness and resolved to keep drawing the reader's attention to such connections. Once all the analysis was done and the writing of a complete draft had come to an end, I read the rest of the unused data to ensure that nothing worthy of report was omitted, that all the commonalities across all participants and the salient or contrasting accounts given by participants were discussed, that differences among all of

the participants were reported, and that data that differed from the findings of previous studies were noted.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The purpose of Chapter Five is to report the findings from the participants who were introduced in the previous chapter (see Table 4.1), before going on, in Chapter Six, to relate this study to the previous work discussed in Chapter 3. The structure of the chapter begins with the introduction of the participants in this study. The findings show that every individual is different from others in many ways; that is, participants' life experience and biography influence the way they perceive the world as well as their responses to it. For the purpose of introducing participants in an organised manner, I have divided them into several groups, taking into consideration their personality, foreign experiences and age (maturity). Also described are some specific reasons why a few individuals are not very articulate compared to others, such as language adequacy and level of study. However, those are not definite or absolute factors for distinguishing among individuals, but are merely some of the characteristics that each participant reveals extraordinarily throughout the interviews and the diary entries they were asked to make.

5.1. Participants' individuality

In this section, I will be introducing the twenty-two participants in this study (please see

Table 4.1).¹ They are categorised into five groups initially. One pairing is relevant to their maturity (six more experienced respondents compared to three less experienced one). A second pairing relates to their personalities (five “optimists” compared with three “introverts”). Finally there is a group of five participants who do not fall into any of these groups.

The first group includes six participants in the study who are more mature, five to ten years older than the other participants who typically had entered the university right after the high school: Frank (male, American in Taiwan, aged 33), Kitty (female, Hungarian in Taiwan, aged 28), Lily (female, Russian in Taiwan, aged approximately 25), Julie (female, Taiwanese in the UK, aged 23), Gigi (female, Chinese in Germany, aged 26), and Sara (female, Bulgarian in Germany, age 26). This maturity appeared related to life experiences which enabled them to have more tolerance towards or have alternative ways of looking at the differences between things they were used to and those they encountered in the foreign context where they were studying.

¹ The eventual sample included four Diplom participants and one exchange student from Portugal in University G. Although the four Diplom students only took part in the group interview stage and the Portuguese exchange student was studying in Germany only for a short period (4-6 months, a period which did not allow him to explore the local culture or to fully qualify for inclusion in the study under the sampling criteria set out in section 3.3), it seemed important to include the results of fieldwork with this group as it allowed some triangulation of issues raised by the ‘core’ group of four German-based students whose data is also reported.

Frank (male, American in Taiwan, aged 33) is from a town of 700 people in Missouri, U.S.A. where nearly everyone was born in America or had immigrated to America at least 50 years previously (examples were given of a couple of Russian, English Italian immigrants from this community who has been in the USA for a long time). Therefore, over the past thirty years, Frank had been immersed in a “pure” American context and he felt extraordinarily excited about everyone he met and everything he saw in Taiwan. While some participants were disappointed when they arrived at the dormitory or when they realised that the university is actually “in the middle of nowhere”, he thought everything was better than he expected. He even showed the pictures to his folks back home and he reported that everyone at home was very happy for him. Such huge changes may have been easier for Frank to accommodate than for a teenager who has never been abroad and who might experience serious cultural shock in a foreign country so different from where he or she had lived since birth.

Lily (female, Russian studying in Taiwan, aged 25) loves travelling; she has indeed travelled through several countries in Europe but it was her first time in Asia. When the issue of discrimination was raised during the focus group discussion, she said

that it made her uncomfortable at the beginning when she noticed that she had been observed by many locals due to her different appearance. However, perhaps due to her maturity and sophisticated life experience gained from travelling around, her sense of confidence grew very quickly. Moreover, this may also be because she had been awarded bachelor's degree in Russia, and knew how university life is supposed to be and what to expect. This probably helped her to adapt and settle down in the local environment, both academically and socially.

Kitty (female, Hungarian studying in Taiwan, aged 28) was also awarded a Bachelor's degree in her country, and was someone who appeared not to have difficulties in finding the most efficient ways of studying some difficult modules in Taiwan, such as Economics. However, because one of her previous identities was that of an English teacher back home, she was very aware of language issues in the Taiwan context. For example, she was very harsh on lecturers' English abilities. She found it hard to be tolerant if teachers did not speak English well. She also felt that Taiwanese do not respect their own language enough or they are not proud of it enough, whereas people in other countries do not like to speak English to foreigners even if they can. At the same time, she also commented that Taiwanese people are too shy to speak English which makes it difficult for her to make friends with local

people. Kitty's ways of adapting to the local culture were slightly different from that of younger respondents in the sample. Her social circle tended to be more outside the campus, influenced by her view that she sometimes found other international students to be young, engaging in childish gossiping behind others' backs, whereas she found herself cast in the role of elder sister to others, offering comfort or suggestions.

Julie (female, Taiwanese studying in the UK, aged 23) had displayed independence and persistence in that she had she decided to study abroad when her parents thought that she was too young to live alone in a foreign country. She had had to ask constantly for her parents' permission as well as support to pursue her dream and had made a brave and decisive choice to abandon the two-year university education she had already had in Taiwan and start over again via a pre-sessional course in the UK once she obtained approval from her parents. She enjoyed the hardship of surviving in a foreign country which made her parents proud of her and was happy with her achievement of having entered a prestigious university in the UK. She made many friends from all over the world and did not seem to have many feelings of homesickness.

Gigi (female, Chinese in Germany, age 26) had worked in a logistics company in China after graduating from university there with a German language degree and having found that it was hard for graduates with a German language degree to find jobs in China. The jobs she could have accessed at home were those at the basic level, such as an administrative assistant or secretary; thus, she decided to study business abroad to enhance her German language skill as well as to gain some professional knowledge in business. Due to her previous working experience with German clients and intercultural interaction with German colleagues at her part-time job in Germany as well as with her German schoolmates, she was able to adjust to the local context in her own way. For example, when she worked in China she thought Germans were very direct in business negotiation which she found very surprising; however, after studying in Germany, she realised that German people are very straightforward, unlike Chinese who are always beating around the bush, so she started being very direct to her German acquaintances.

Sara (female, Bulgarian in Germany, aged 26) is one of the four Diplom participants recruited in Germany (See note 1 on p. 208). She valued her study abroad experiences in Germany, feeling that these had made her grow up and become more independent. She recalled that she struggled at the beginning of her

time living and studying in Germany. Back then, her German language ability was not nearly as good as it was by the time of the fieldwork. Moreover, she needed a part-time job to earn some money to pay her living expenses, but without sufficient language skills she had found it very difficult to get a job. While she was worried about her financial situation, she had also encountered difficulties in study which required her to spend a considerable amount of time preparing and reviewing the material given to her by lecturers. Despite all the hard times she had been through, she nevertheless now felt much more confident in performing both in study and at work, with life seeming a lot easier than it was at the time she first arrived in Germany.

The second group of research participants comprises three who were less mature, compared to the first group. Although these three were very young (the same age as “home” students), their previous studying abroad experiences in other countries before studying at the research sites influenced their perception of the context where they were now studying. This made them a distinctive trio among the twenty-two, in nearly every respect. They are Charlie (male, German in the UK, aged 19), Britta (female, Norwegian in Germany, aged 19) and Kenny (male, Hungarian in Taiwan, aged 19).

Charlie (male, German studying in the UK, aged 19) has a mother who is a professor in a German university and he respects her professional decisions and the considerable impact that these have had on his educational experiences. It usually takes thirteen years to complete high school plus middle school and elementary school in Germany. When Charlie studied for the eleventh year in Hamburg, he had the option of studying abroad for one year and half of his class dispersed to Canada, US, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and other parts of the world. He was supposed to be placed in the eleventh grade in Canada, but he ended up being placed in the twelfth grade instead and then “suddenly” (as he put it in his interview) had the high school diploma, instead of having to do two more years of school in Germany. He then had two options: one was to study another year in high school in Germany and get the German diploma and so become eligible to enrol in a German university, or he could study somewhere else where the Canadian high school diploma is recognised. Again it was Charlie's mother who suggested that he could study in the UK and thus save two years of study in Germany in total (one year saved from high school and one year from the university since UK university education takes three years, one year shorter than in Germany). He accepted this idea. However, there seemed to be two conflicting voices in his mind: one, that he liked the idea of saving two years of German courses by studying in the UK (when his mother told him that

he might still have the option to study two more years in German high school, he refused to consider this); the other, that he had not expected to end up studying abroad and being away from home for so many years, given that his initial move had been designed as a one-year experience aimed at learning English, not finishing high school. Charlie did not appreciate the feeling of being alone in a foreign country, particularly when he was only 15 or 16 years old and living in a boarding school without family or relatives, even if it had turned out to be a valuable experience. Compared to other participants in the study in the UK, who did not agree or did not perceive that they were changing gradually due to the accumulation of experiences taken in day after day, Charlie had found himself starting to imitate local people and trying to find common ground with them. He explained this by saying “you can’t just stay who you are, you have to acquire something new to make this common ground, no matter what you do” (focus group in the UK). Moreover, whereas other participants were thinking of getting work experience in the host country after graduating, Charlie was the only one hoping to go straight home because he had been away from home, family and friends for too long.

Britta (female, Norwegian studying in Germany, aged 19) was born in Norway but moved to Germany when she was six. She had never been to school in Norway;

instead, the education she has had up to now had all been in the German language including nearly six years of middle school education in Ireland. Thus, she considered herself a native German language speaker. She did not want to study in Germany until she was 15 when her family moved back to Germany from Ireland. Throughout the interview, she used “we” to identify herself with native German speakers and “they” to refer to international students even though she is herself Norwegian. Her social circle is made up of German friends and her group mates in some of her project work at University are all Germans or foreigners who have resided in Germany from a very young age. She had very little interaction with other international students. Although she was the only person with a clearly “local” identity in this study, her responses indeed reflected what has been found in the previous studies that have been undertaken that there is limited interaction between home and international students (Summers & Volet 2008, Eisenclas & Trevaskes 2007). For example, Britta said in the interview that she did not know who the international students were in her class, and at some social events, she always stayed together with her German-only group.

Kenny (male, Hungarian studying in Taiwan, aged 19) had a motivation to studying abroad which was similar to other participants in Taiwan in that he wanted to learn

an additional language which he thought would be beneficial to his career in the future, as well as to know more about Taiwanese / Chinese culture. As such, he was much more interested in cultural exploration than all of the other participants; he talked more about his experience of exploring Taiwan than academic study in both the group interview and the diary entries. He wrote in his diary that his experience in his first year of study had been mainly focussed on cultural exploration; now, he realised, it was time to pay more attention to study from his second year onwards.

Culture-wise, Kenny was largely satisfied with what he had found, seen and experienced; but regarding his academic life, he was not happy about the arrangements for the Chinese language programme in the selected institute in Taiwan, especially the qualifications of the teachers and the curriculum. He found that his friends who were studying in other universities in Taiwan, at the same time as him, had better Chinese language ability than he did. In his diary entries, he commented on this issue quite a lot, showing his strong dissatisfaction about it.

Because his expectation of learning Chinese had not been met at the point when he became involved in the present study, he was rather judgemental and reported many negative opinions about his study experience in Taiwan, using resentful words to describe the people in the incidents which happened to him (“bastard”, “catastrophe”). However, he did not have any negative comments in terms of the

cultural experience.

The participants in the third biographical group have one thing in common, namely they had never thought of studying abroad until the opportunity came along. Moreover, although some of them were young compared to the first group, they shared with that group a generally positive attitude which can be put down to their each being optimistic as personalities. They are Roger (male, Chilean in Germany, 19), Arnold (male, Filipino in Taiwan, 19), and Henry (male, Filipino in Taiwan, 19). Although the motivation of studying abroad for the two Diplom participants (Lisa, female, Bulgarian in Germany, 24; and Anna, female, Columbian in Germany, 25) was different from the other participants categorised in this group, they all had one thing in common: an optimistic personality in overcoming the difficulties encountered in the foreign context and enthusiasm for meeting new friends and knowing new cultures.

Roger (male, Chilean in Germany, aged 19) was the first volunteer that I secured in the most difficult research context, where it was hard to recruit participants; moreover, he was always the first one to e-mail me the diaries on time out of the four participants in Germany. He told me that the study load was very heavy in the German institution, but he did not think that this was an excuse not to help me with

my research as it did not take much of his time. His optimism can be seen in several opinions he expressed. For example, he understood that it takes time to make friends with German people but he was the only participant who added that the consequence “once the friendship is built up, it is lifelong friendship”. Also, in group work he would wait for his turn to express his opposite opinions; even if his idea was not taken by the group, he did not have hard feelings because of it. He could, it seems, always find a positive way to look at a less positive event.

Arnold (male, Filipino studying in Taiwan, aged 19) mentioned in three different reports (individual interview, the first and last diary entries) that he had never thought of and nor did he want to study abroad, because he wanted to be around his family and friends. However, due to his optimistic and open-minded personality, seeing from the way he talked about and looked at the things happening around him, which he reported in the diaries, he was clearly trying to understand the culture and people as much as possible. For example, he was very enthusiastic about learning Chinese, had made as much effort as possible and tried many possible ways to improve his understanding, such as speaking Chinese with local people in any chances he can grab, and learning to sing Chinese songs with other senior international students in their free time. He was also the only participant who spoke

a bit of Chinese to me in the interview. In his first group work project at the university all of his group mates did not contribute at all, so he completed the project alone. However, this did not give rise to negative comments except that he would not want to work with those people again. The only thing that he felt more depressed about was evidence of discrimination in Taiwan, and he had such experiences in both daily life when looking for a part-time job and in class when he perceived that one teacher did not mark a test fairly.

Henry (male, Filipino studying in Taiwan, aged 19) is Arnold's roommate. They both decided to take part in my research as a result of "peer pressure". Although they come from the same country, Henry had more hesitation or conflicts about his choice of studying in Taiwan. He was half-way through teacher education in the Philippines leading to the opportunity to become a mathematics teacher in secondary school on completion of his studies. It took him three months to decide whether it was a better choice to study in Taiwan before he actually enrolled in the programme there. However, after a year of studying in Taiwan, he often wonders and weighs up these two options – being a secondary teacher in his home country or studying abroad. This was particularly the case when he visited home during his first summer vacation and saw that his friends were practising teaching while he still

had another three years of education left to complete in Taiwan. Due to his uncertainty as to whether he has made the right decision, he seemed to weigh up much of his experience at home and in the host country on a regular basis. However, he was willing to try everything, describing himself as an adventurous person who looks forward to challenges, and he concluded in his last diary entry that this experience for him is something gained, and something lost.

Anna (female, Columbia studying in Germany, aged 25) learned about the academic agreement between her college in Columbia and University G when she studied in college, but she had never thought of studying abroad. After working for a few years in Columbia, she realised the importance of having a university degree and considered that it would be better start to study in German as she had studied German for many years back home. She recounted many of the difficulties she had encountered during the first two years of her studying in Germany, but she did not describe this as a stressful and frustrating experience like some of the other participants did. She had seemed to cope with such difficulties very well and with a positive attitude. Also, she thought that University G provided teaching of very high quality; when she studied in Barcelona in her one-semester abroad programme, she realised she had learned a lot in University G such that studying in Barcelona was a

lot easier for her, perhaps also assisted by the medium of instruction which was in her native language of Spanish. In terms of building a social circle in the foreign context, she said it had not been easy to blend into the German student group, but she found her passionate personality, as inherited from Columbia, had enabled her to initiate conversations with other international students easily.

Lisa (female, Bulgarian studying in Germany, aged 24) said in the focus group meeting that she, like many people in Bulgaria, was not happy about the educational system in Bulgaria and that it was very common for people in her country to study abroad. She also found that studying in Germany was more affordable compared to study in the countries that charge high tuition fees, such as Britain and the USA. She had been working part-time in the International Student office for over two years and expressed her interest in meeting new international students and making friends with them. Thus, she had found it to be very enjoyable to be working in the international student office. She was very enthusiastic about meeting new people and her open-mindedness was evidenced in several small stories she told in the focus group meeting. For example, she would start a conversation with someone she had seen a few times in the library during the examination week when they were both studying there. Also, she commented that

although the study load was heavy in University G, she had managed to expand her social circle with people from different parts of the world. However, she agreed with the other three Diplom participants that building up friendships with German students was not easy, a perception shared in common with the four participants in the Bachelor's degree programme in University G.

An introverted personality is the common factor that forms the next group, which includes Sherry (female, Chinese in the UK, 19) Yolanda (female, Chinese in Germany, 24) and Ali (male, Indian in the UK, 20). Interestingly, these three participants self-reported that they are introverted, in-door types and this appears to have had some degree of influence on the extent and range of their responses. That is, when the same questions were asked to all participants, this group's replies were very short.

Ali (male, Indian studying in the UK, aged 20) was one of the three people who withdrew from the research study after the interview stage. He described himself when he first e-mailed me expressing his interest in taking part in the research as an isolated person, a "loner" who did not interact much with people in the UK. From the interview, I did find that although he had some international friends in the dormitory, his interactions with them were very limited. He reported several

outlooks that were similar to other participants; however, I did not include any of his narratives because of my difficulty in transcribing his exact words, which led to my having a hard time transcribing Ali's interview. As such, his storytelling is taken into consideration as supplementary data to support or disagree with others' report rather than being reported directly.

Yolanda (female, Chinese studying in Germany, aged 24) would not have been interested in taking part in this study if not for the encouragement of one of her friends, Gigi who was also one of the participants. Plus, perhaps the fact that she and I are from the same region – Taiwan and China (in some cases, we are considered the same race) and this may have meant that her participation was out of a sense of “helping the folks”. However, she did not share much of her experience in the diary for several stated reasons: her study load (she said that she spent large amounts of time in the library); she described herself as an introverted person; she did not have much to say about making friends as she met people or made friends only on campus, most of whom were study-related, saying that she did not have time for parties or things like that.

Sherry (female, Chinese studying in the UK, aged 19) is similar to Yolanda.

Although she shared as much experience as she had, perhaps due to time pressures deriving from her study load and the lack of time for a social life, she did not report anything new in her diary but merely repeated what had been discussed in the individual and group interviews. She is a “typical” Chinese student who always spends lots of time studying. She said that even if she had studied in a Chinese university, she would still have prepared some exams for studying a higher degree abroad given that, due to the intensive competition in China, one has to equip oneself with better qualification.

There are five participants who did not have anything in common with the others and I do not want to force them into any of the groups above. However, this does not imply that they are either more or less valuable to the study than other participants. Indeed, each has an individuality which is both interesting and important in the context of the research as a whole.

Thomas (male, Macanese studying in the UK, aged 19) is a confident person. If it were not for the language issue, he could have been even more confident about studying abroad. In the interview, he showed his sense of “can do” and ambition by saying things like “I know what I have to do”. In the group work, he was willing to

take up the challenges of being the leader for some projects and giving presentations in front of the class. His only limitation, revealed in the interview and the focus group meeting, was the lack of English fluency which had impacted significantly on his experience abroad, both academically and socially as he pointed out on many occasions. Some of his particular identities are lost in this research, partially because of language limitations. For example, he could get a part-time job in a government department as an office assistant in his home country but he had worked in a Chinese take-away restaurant as a clerk in the UK. He has a car in Macau so he used to initiate plans or invite friends on a trip to the suburbs; this is in contrast to his life in the UK, where he had become a passive receiver in the social circle.

Gina (female, Vietnamese studying in Taiwan, aged19) was the only participant in the study who expressed a feeling of missing home strongly, and her decision to come and study in Taiwan had mainly been made or encouraged by her family. For instance, her father had told her about the scholarship opportunity in Taiwan. Her interest was actually in fashion design, but she majored in banking business at her parents' suggestion. Many of her perceptions of learning in Taiwan were consistent with those of other participants. For example, she would like to learn Chinese and improve her English, as language, she thought, would be a helpful tool in the future

career. Although she missed home very much, she said that she would like to work in Taiwan for a couple of years in order to secure better competitiveness in the human resource market upon her return home.

Albert (male, Kazakh studying in the UK, aged 22) was used to a close relationship of directed study between teachers and students in his home country. Back home, teachers would have given clearer instruction about after-class reading or given a review session before exams, but he had found that he had to figure it all out in the UK, as no one would tell him how and what to study. Thus he used the term “fooling around” to indicate that he was used to not studying much until few weeks before exams. He also used quite a strong word, “hate”, to criticise the educational arrangements on his course whereby four hundred students were accommodated in one big lecture hall for some modules. In such a context he had found that there was no interaction between the teacher and the students, nor among the students. Although he had many negative opinions about the British university education system, he still considered it was a valuable and helpful experience to have studied abroad and he was glad that he made the decision to do so.

Jose (male, Portuguese studying in Germany, aged 20) was one of the two

exchange students accidentally recruited for this study (see note 1 on p. 208). Being an exchange student, his perception of his short-term stay was different from that of other participants for a couple of reasons. First, the 4-6 month short-term exchange programme did not allow him to explore the local culture as he did not speak German at all before he took a German language course in the German institute and he had not met many Germans except those living in the same flat with him.

Secondly, the courses offered to exchange students are largely different from those offered to degree seeking students; that is, all courses are taught in English. Also, for many exchange students studying abroad is far less stressful in terms of academic performances as the marks in the foreign country do not count toward final grades in the graduate transcript; that is, they only have to pass the modules.

Therefore, many of Jose's perspectives on teaching and learning were different from those of other participants in Germany (and have been reported sparingly in this chapter); however, in terms of social circles, his perception is similar to the experiences of others, namely that due to the language barrier, it was hard to be friends with Germans unless they were willing to communicate in foreign languages, such as English or Spanish. Due to the differences indicated above, where Jose's stories are given in the text these serve as a comparison to the experiences of degree-seeking participants.

Nancy (female, French studying in Germany, aged 23) is an exchange student from France and had studied on the Diplom degree programme for ten months at the time this study was conducted. She had chosen University G to be the host institution because of a geographical consideration – that it was closer to home compared to other institutions with which her home university had exchange student programmes, these being mainly in other continents such as China and Mexico. Similar to the experience of Jose, being an exchange student resulted in Nancy's perceptions of the learning experiences as being different from the core group of four German-based students in the Bachelor's degree programme. For example, all the modules she had taken had been taught in English and she believed this was easier for her than taking modules taught in the German language. With regard to social activities, she had found it easier to make friends with students (both German and international students) who had their own study or life abroad experiences.

5.2 Participants' learning journey

The first main section of this chapter draws attention to the importance of the individuals' learning journeys and careers to the point at which they became an overseas student.

Such diversity comes as no surprise, given that when we look at these individual's

background, there are fifteen different nationalities in the sample (see Table 4.1).

5.2.1 Motivation for studying abroad

The interview schedule began with a discussion of participants' motivation for studying abroad, as well as the reasons for studying as business majors. This is also where the analysis starts. The motivations reported by all 22 participants, including four Diplom students are mainly influenced by: personality, desire to travel abroad, learning/improving the foreign language(s) of the host culture, coming to know other cultures and people, low tuition fees/receipt of scholarship, the securing of a better education/ diploma by going overseas and encouragement from families or teachers. I will discuss each of the motivations below, including some of the less commonly reported ones toward the end of this section.

Personality

In general, no matter what had motivated international students' decision to study abroad, all participants had one thing in common: they had to have been adventurous, decisive, persistent, and knowledgeable about what they wanted, although not all of them expressed this explicitly. For example, Julie, the Taiwanese participant studying in the

UK had wanted to study abroad ever since she was in senior high school and she had been asking her parents to support her dream of studying abroad from that time. Due to her persistence, her parents finally agreed that she could give up her unfinished university education in Taiwan and start everything again in the UK. Two of the participants studying in Taiwan also said similar things.

Because I'm quite decisive when I know I want to do this, and there is an opportunity, I make my decision. I will go there and I will try it.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview)

My motivation? It was my family. Secondly, I am the kind of person that always like to try. I'm an adventurous person, so that's why I am willing to take a risk of seeing the world.

(Henry, Filipino in Taiwan, Interview)

Urge to travel

In most cases, as English was the first foreign language that participants had learned in school, they had had ideas of travelling or studying abroad from a very young age. For example, Kenny, the Hungarian participant in Taiwan said that:

Actually I had this ambition at the beginning of my life because I've studied English for 15 years and it's quite obvious that I should go somewhere.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview)

Another Hungarian participant in Taiwan, Kitty, had been travelling a lot since her childhood and had taken part in the EU's ERASMUS study-abroad programme and studied previously in the Netherlands for about half a year. After she went back to Hungary, she described her experience in the following terms. She "was depressed for nearly two years" because she wanted to study in another country, but had no opportunities to do so until she heard about the scholarship programme in the selected Taiwan institution.

Peers' influence seems to have been one of the motivations as Lisa, the Bulgarian participant in the Diplom degree programme in Germany, reported that "it was a trend in Bulgaria that students go abroad, especially there are schools where you study the language very intensively and especially students from the German Schools come to Germany" (*Lisa, Bulgarian in Germany, focus group*). Julie, the Taiwanese participant in the UK, said she had studied in a Catholic high school which focused on English and she loved it. In addition to her enthusiasm about learning English, back then many of her

friends had emigrated or studied abroad, one by one, and that this had made her think of studying abroad as well.

Learning / improving a foreign language

Language learning or improving their language ability was also one of the motivations of these participants. For those in Taiwan, learning the local language – Mandarin – and improving their English played an important role as almost none of the participants had learned Mandarin before they enrolled in the programme, while English, the medium of instruction, was a second language for almost all of them. Many of this group recognised the importance of language skills, particularly those who had majored in a language (e.g. English Literature) in their previous Higher Education experience. As they said “English is the international language in business” (*Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview*) and “Chinese has a future, especially in Europe” (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview*). Therefore, they believed in the advantages of excelling in multilingual competence. For example, the Hungarian female participant in Taiwan could speak more than five languages (Finnish, French, German, Italian and English) and was now interested in learning Chinese (*Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview*).

For participants in the UK, improving their English was a clear priority for most. A

student from Macau said that

I think quality of the education is better than [it is] in China, especially in language, so I chose to study abroad. I need to study English. Because in social and in business, that's the requirement. (Thomas, Macanese in the UK, Interview)

In the selected German institution, there was a high percentage of courses taught in the German language and only some courses taught in English. Thus, both German and English language proficiency was one of the admission requirements for international students studying there. And most of the participants in the German institution in this study had majored in German language when they studied in universities or in German language schools in their home countries. By studying and living with either German or other international students, and through the daily use of the German language, participants believed their German language competence was being improved.

I think it [my German language] must be better than before, because at least you have contact with native speakers. (Gigi, Chinese in Germany, Interview)

Knowing the culture(s)

Although advanced technology and transportation are increasingly bringing people in different parts of the world closer, we can still be somehow ignorant of other countries, particularly those in other continents. In this study the American participant reported that when he told local people that he was from Missouri, USA, almost nearly no one knew where exactly Missouri was or had ever heard of it, as most only know about the big states or cities of America such as California or New York. Another example of this is provided by the Hungarian participant, Kitty, when she tried to find some books introducing Taiwan in English, as well as some books about learning basic Mandarin phrases.

Before coming to study in Taiwan, she called several big bookstores in Hungary and got the same response – that they did not have any books about learning Mandarin, only Chinese. She then said: “No, I need Mandarin”, not realising that Mandarin is (standard) Chinese (she should have asked if the bookstores had “traditional Chinese” which is used in Taiwan in contrast to “simplified Chinese” which is used commonly in China). She reckoned that nobody in her country knows about Taiwan, including her before coming to Taiwan, and she had not previously visited any countries in Asia. All that she had known about Taiwan was that it is part of the People’s Republic of China according to Hungarian diplomacy and political concerns. Meanwhile, she had seen many products in Hungary imported from Taiwan and China, but she had not realised that there was such a big

business market and many business deals going on in China (*Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview*). Thus she was excited about coming to study in Taiwan and to learn more about its cultures:

Apart from the language, I always ask my friends what the moon festival is about, what is Chinese New Year... and they are taking me to different places, very interesting. (Kitty, *Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview*)

Learning a language is, in large part, inseparable from knowing the culture that speaks it. Almost all participants indicated that meeting people and learning more about the local cultures was also among their reasons for studying abroad.

I decide to study in Germany when I went to the university in my homeland because I studied German language in the university, and I believe that for language students, they can only approach the culture and the people by studying in the foreign country. This is a must. (Gigi, *Chinese in Germany, Interview*)

Tuition fees / scholarships

A scholarship had proved a big incentive for participants choosing Taiwan as their study

abroad destination; without the scholarship opportunity, studying abroad would not be a realisable dream. Such realities can be seen in the interviews of several participants in Taiwan, the statement of the Russian participant being given here as an example:

In Russia, very very few people study abroad, either those who are very gifted or who are very rich. For me, I don't have that much money to study abroad like in Europe or in America. (Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview)

When asked if Taiwan was their first choice study abroad destination, a few participants said that had it not been for the scholarship, they would have liked to have studied in an English-speaking country because they thought this would have helped improve their English ability more. For instance, Gina, a Vietnamese participant, said:

If I can choose, maybe I wouldn't choose Taiwan. I might choose America or England... I think I can improve my English more.

(Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, Interview)

It is worthy of noting that one participant considered that such a scholarship opportunity in Taiwan creates a sort of business relationship between the university and the

international student. The university offers scholarships to attract international students from all over the world and this helps to demonstrate its increasing internationalisation; indeed, international students receive free tuition and housing for their entire period of study (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, first diary*). But Kenny thought that he and his peers had become tools in the hands of politicians and marketing people for the purpose of showing off, rather than as a contribution to long-term value and knowledge-creation.

Although German institutions charge a very minimum tuition fee, this did not appear to have been a strong incentive among participants going to Germany to study. In fact, only one Bulgarian participant mentioned the low tuition charge compared to that in the UK or USA. Also, only one of the participants, who was from Chile, had received a scholarship and he stated that if he had not obtained the scholarship, he would have chosen to study in Chile because it was more affordable, taking living expenses into consideration.

Better education / Value of overseas diploma

A couple of participants mentioned that they were not satisfied with the education system in their home country, as a result of which people tended to leave for countries where the economy was stronger or more developed. This may explain why the Bulgarian and Taiwanese participants reported that there was a trend for their peers to go abroad, one

after the other, in order to get a better education and a more useful diploma in terms of opportunities for employment. The following quotations from the interview data exemplify these explanations of the advantages of studying abroad. Sarah agreed with the views of Lisa, reported earlier, that the university system was not good in her country with the result that she considered that “studying in other countries may give you a better education, because I believed that there is a better future for me and to receive a better degree” (*Sarah, Bulgarian in Germany, focus group*). The Vietnamese and Macanese participants said, similarly:

I always think studying abroad is more difficult because the education in Vietnam is not that good, so if I have chance to study abroad, maybe I will learn better.

(Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, Interview)

Study here is to get the better quality. If I didn't come study here and studied in Macau, you know, my English would still be poor. It definitely cost more money because we pay a lot... So studying abroad is just like an investment for me, I invest my time, money, I would get a better return in the near future.

(Thomas, Macanese in the UK, focus group)

Thomas's statement shows that studying abroad is an investment in his own “human capital”, and Roger's statement is another of the examples to suggest that a diploma gained in a foreign country would enable an international student to be more competitive on the labour market.

If we see the rankings online, it's in a very good position, the Chilean ones are not on this site... if I come back with a German degree, it doesn't matter it is Mannheim or Munich or Berlin, just saying I study in German, that's big help for career.

(Roger, Chilean in Germany, Interview)

Filipino students have to complete at least two years of university education before they can apply to any universities in Taiwan according to the educational regulations of the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. One of the participants, Henry, had had a hard time deciding if it was worth giving up in the middle of his university teacher training programme in mathematics. He had chosen to come to Taiwan because he believed that, as a result, he would have better advantages for employment in the future.

Finally under this heading, getting a professional certificate was a goal that had led international students to choose to study abroad. For example, most participants in the

UK mentioned a certain type of accountancy certificate validated by the ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) and this is an internationally recognised certificate which, they believed, would increase their competitiveness in the work field.

I want to get the ACCA, it's an Accounting Chartered Association. I want to get this certificate. The headquarters is in UK, so it's better for me to take the certificate here. And that certificate is also useful in China. I can be an accountant in China, and in a very good company. (Sherry, Chinese in the UK, Interview)

Encouragement from families or high school teachers

As many of the participants in the sample were aged 19 or 20. They had not necessarily wanted to move away from their family, as can be seen from several comments made by participants. But encouragement from parents or teachers had motivated them to study abroad.

It was almost the end of last year [in high school], my German teacher said to me that "you should go to Germany". I was the best student in class and my marks were really good. And he said maybe you would get scholarship, so I didn't have any hopes, I just

tried. And I got three year scholarship, everything [tuition and housing] is paid.

(Roger, Chilean in Germany, Interview)

Parental decision-making of this kind can be seen particularly in the situation of one of the German participants whose mother played a very important role in deciding his education plan. Charlie, whom we encountered earlier in this chapter, had been away from home studying in high school in Canada since the age of 16. Originally a one-year study abroad plan that had accidentally turned into a high school graduation programme found him unable to use his qualification to get a place at a German university. Now needing to seek university education overseas, he had chosen to study in the UK simply because it is very close to home – Germany. In a parallel case, the parents of Ali, the Indian participant in the UK, sent their son to the UK in hope that he would get the British citizenship and thus be entitled to remain there after graduating. The accounts of other participants in the sample also showed that some parents had hoped that their children would be able to take advantage of the opportunity to see the outside world, something they had not been able to do when they were young, either due to the political situation, for example, communism in Hungary or in China, or due to their financial situations.

My father was glad that I could come here because he couldn't travel much when he was young because of the Soviet in Hungary...and he said well it's a good opportunity for you learning Chinese, experiencing another culture.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview)

An exceptional case of family influence was that of Frank, the American participant. The first time he visited Taiwan had been in 2006 (two years before he came to study in the country) when his father and his uncle passed away successively within a month; his closest friend was studying in Taiwan, so he went to visit him. In 2008, after further deaths in his family, he decided he needed to travel so his friend in Taiwan helped him gather information about universities and assisted him in securing a university place to study in Taiwan.

Meanwhile, family influences had also lead to the participants' decisions to study business which I will discuss in the following section.

5.2.2 Motivations for majoring in business

Family influence was one of the reasons that participants had chosen to study business;

another was that they were good at mathematics; a third was that most of these students considered business was a prosperous working field in terms of making money.

Family influence

For a couple of participants the decision to study business arose from their parents being in the business field and this appeared to have resulted in an imperceptible influence over their decision-making. For example, a Macau participant in the UK wanted to be part of the family business and to fill the gap of accounting expertise which his parents lack.

[B]ecause of my family, they are doing business in a finance centre. They do personal trading, like buying stocks or sell stocks... they got the economics knowledge, but they don't have accounting knowledge, so if I do the accounting, we can work together. (Thomas, Macanese in the UK, interview)

The Vietnamese participant, Gina, wanted to study fashion design, but her parents considered banking to be a much more stable career than fashion. Two participants chose to study business in Germany because their fathers had also studied business there, one having completed a doctoral degree, the other a Bachelor's degree. Of these two participants, one was studying at the same institute as her father, a clear influence over the

decision as to which specific institution in Germany to attend.

Business is a money-making career

In contrast, some of the participants had majored in completely different areas of study in their first Bachelor degrees back in their home countries. When asked why they had chosen to study business as a second Bachelor degree, these students replied that it had been in order to try to secure a more prosperous career. Particularly for those who majored at home in language in their previous bachelor degree the view was that business students were getting jobs more easily than language-major students.

I was majoring in German language in the university back in China, and I found that my interest is not in language, so I wanted to change my major. And I decided to study business because business itself is very practical... maybe in the future, I can have better opportunity for work.

(Yolanda, Chinese in Germany, Interview)

Kitty, the Hungarian participant in Taiwan, had sampled a range of subjects that she liked in her home university, graduating with a degree in English Language and Literature.

However, she had now chosen to study business as it appeared to offer a more prosperous

future, career-wise

I graduated with the degree in English language and Literature because chemistry and Hungarian language can't make good money. I just studied those two for pleasure because I like them, but only English is useful. That's also why I chose to study business now. (Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, Interview)

More specifically, in the view of the Macanese participant there would always be a demand for accountants in the labour market, even during a period of financial crisis. He said,

At first, when I studied foundation programme, I chose to study Economics and Finance. But because of the financial crisis, so many people get fired from the job, and I think even if the financial crisis or the good economy, they still need accountants. (Thomas, Macanese in the UK, interview)

Personal interest in mathematics or numbers

A majority of the participants indicated that Mathematics was one of the subjects in which they had excelled at in high school, so when they needed to choose a major before

entering university and did not know what exactly their interests were, they chose business in combination with other studies. For example, Julie, the Taiwanese participant in the UK, loved travelling as well as management; however, she thought it would be too dull only to pursue one of these interests, so she combined both subjects and was thoroughly enjoying her majors in Tourism and Management. Charlie also analysed his interests and explained his decision as follows:

I didn't have much time to decide when I applied universities so I thought what I was good at and what I was interested in. I was good at math and science, all those kind of things, but I think those are kind of boring. So I decided to do something that includes both mathematical stuff and something I'm interested in. Then I'm interested in history, people, and business as well, so I decided to do "Business and Economics". Because Economics is pretty much mathematics, business is business.

(Charlie, German in the UK, Interview)

For participants in Taiwan on the English-taught degree programme, only two course options were offered: majoring in Business Management or in Shipping and Logistics. Most students on this course had opted for the business major and had done so with future employment prospects in mind and, in a couple of cases, because of a particular interest in

mathematics or a personal background in business. Thus, Henry, the Filipino participant had majored in Mathematics in the Philippines, while Frank had taken a couple of business classes in high school before going to work for Walmart. As a result of this, he believed that practical experience would help him understand business concepts.

Reasons for choosing the countries where the participants currently study abroad

The reasons for participants choosing to study at the destination where they were now living were consistent with some of the points already raised in chapters one and two and which will be discussed further in chapter five. Participants at the UK institution had chosen the selected university where they were studying because of its good reputation. In fact, one of these students had not reached the required IELTS score at the time she applied, but she had desperately wanted to study there, so she contacted the programme director and she was admitted with the conditional admission. She took a five-week pre-session course and passed the examination allowing her then to enrol in that university.

Similarly, the participants studying at the selected German institution all agreed that the highly ranked reputation of the university had been one of the factors in their decision to apply to it. It is interesting to note that Britta, the Norwegian participant, did not want to

study in Germany at all, but her father, who graduated from the university where she was now studying, had convinced her to apply to study there. When she was accepted, she consulted some professors she knew at the university in Frankfurt and they had both told her that it would have been a shame to decline her offer of a place, because the business school in that university had such a good reputation.

In contrast to participants in the British and German institutions in this study, none of the participants studying in Taiwan had been concerned whether University T had high ranked reputation: they went to study in Taiwan because of the scholarship offered.

Without the scholarship, many of them said they might not have been able to study abroad anywhere due to financial considerations. In addition, the programme at University T offered them Chinese language courses throughout their entire four years of study and this, they considered, offered great potential for their future careers. Whilst some participants had been disappointed to find the university was located in a rural area (something that was not obvious from the university's marketing materials), the American participant had specifically chosen to study there instead of at the other Taiwan university that had offered him a place in Taipei city because he liked small towns, coming himself from a small town in the USA. However, due to the short history of University T, which is at an early stage of development of internationalisation, the

qualifications of some teachers and students are not as good as it is in University G and B. Probably for this reason, participants at University T were more likely to criticise the teaching quality and the qualifications of their teachers than were participants in University B and G. This point will be discussed further in section 4.3.

In the following section, I will discuss aspects of cultural interaction from the time that participants had first arrived in the foreign countries where they were now studying, relating this to the individuals' personal traits and life experiences.

5.2.3 Aspects of adaptation/adjustment

Going to university is not only a big change for international students but also for domestic students. For example, domestic students will be facing comparatively different teaching pedagogies from those that they were used to in secondary education, while for international students, the classroom dynamics may well be completely different from those in their home countries. Moreover, for both groups, it may be the first time that the student has left home with the associated learning that arises in terms of living independently and getting along with roommates in the students' resident hall. Therefore, the challenges are not only academic but also impinge on daily life. This situation may

be toughest for international students as most are likely to go through a few stages of cultural adjustment before attempting to settle down in a foreign context. Sandhu and Asrabadi (1994) categorised the main cause of problems that international students encounter, divided into interpersonal and intrapersonal factors, which involve sociocultural and psychological adaptation, respectively. Many of which were reported by the participants of this study.

Interpersonal factors

- * Cultural shock (differences in expectations and social norms)
- * Communication (language and social skills)
- * Loss of social support (difficulties in making friends and establishing social support networks)

Intrapersonal factors

- * A profound sense of loss (homesickness)
- * A sense of inferiority (discrimination)

I now go on to present participants' voices with regard to their adaptations and adjustments in daily life in their host countries, based on these factors. Subsequently, the

challenges they encountered academically will be discussed in section 5.3.5, including discussion of the learning strategies that participants had used when adapting to the requirements of a foreign educational system.

Interpersonal factors

** Cultural shock (differences in expectations and social norms)*

As discussed in the previous section, travelling students may not know much about countries in other continents, let alone the small (non-capital) cities in a specific country. Besides the incident given earlier, where Kitty did not know that the Chinese language is also called Mandarin, she also found that many Taiwanese people did not know where Hungary is. Although participants had been given brochures and/or e-mails containing information about the programmes they would be enrolled on, as well as local information, and some appeared to have done related research on the internet, most found that the reality of their new study location was different from their stereotypes or expectations. Also, since participants' own cultures are imprinted as patterns of knowledge and behaviour, these stereotypes of how things are supposed to be may derive strongly from their past experiences. In my data, due to these students' often false or hazy

expectation of the host country to which they were travelling, and before they could reach an understanding of the local culture, many encountered “culture shocks” in various ways. Participants mentioned several aspects of what they had found shocking after arriving in the new country of study. Among these, the most frequently discussed included climate, food, transportation, local people and life styles.

Although I posed the same question in the same way in each research setting, about their first day(s) of arrival in their new country, the participants in Taiwan had more to say than those in the other two contexts. Climate and architecture were two of the first aspects that European participants in Taiwan had found the most shocking as these were very different from that which they were used to in their countries. Moreover, participants from other Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Vietnam, found less to be shocked about in these two respects. Two of the most vivid stories on this theme were recounted by one Hungarian participant and one Russian participant. Because the new academic year in Taiwan begins in late summer time (mid-September), people who are not used to the tropical climate can feel strong heat and humidity. On the way from the airport to the university, these two students had registered strong differences both in architectural styles and in the demeanour of people on the streets, followed by an even more shocking moment when they reached the dormitory. The surprise created by the dormitory’s

appearance was partially due to the different architectural styles between Asia and Europe, but also partially because of differences between the images of the Taiwan institution provided in its brochure and website, and the actual appearance of a dorm room.

When I arrive at the airport, the climate was shocking to me. Of course in Russia, we have hot summer, but it's dry; and here is so humid. It was my first shock but I was prepared. I knew I am going to Taiwan, I knew about the geographical differences. Then my friend picked me up at the airport, on the way from the airport to the university, I was looking out of the window and I think the buildings are not modern at all, they are ugly. I was like (Lily made a disappointing face and said)...here I am. And I saw the beetle nut girls, I am like "Am I in Amsterdam? What are they doing?" and the friend explained to me that they are selling beetle nuts. Then I came to my dormitory, I asked myself "why I came here?" I had so many questions like "what am I doing in this part of the world? This place is like being forgotten."

(Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview)

When I arrived, I couldn't breathe because of the air and the high humidity; in Hungary it's much cooler and dry, very dry. Inside the airport it was good, but

outside, oh, my god, I couldn't breathe. After we arrived in the university, the dormitory looked very different from the pictures. In the picture, the dorm looked so great; leather sofa, television, new rooms...so we expected that. But when we arrived, everything was so different...it's so crowded...on the highway from the airport to the university, we were so excited... the buildings are so modern...when you arrived in the university, everything is so crowded and the buildings are very different from those in Europe, lots of people, and the traffic is terrible. So we were from being surprised down to being scared when we saw the dormitory.

(Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview)

For other participants, even those from countries in the same continent or region, found that things are pretty different to their home country. For example, Gina, from Vietnam, found that the images she had about Taiwan from what she had seen in Chinese movies or in Taiwanese TV programmes had not prepared her for the sense of difference that she encountered.

Before I came here, I thought Taiwan is similar to China and Vietnam because I watched some Chinese movies and I think people and cultures are similar to Vietnam, it's near and in Asia. But when I arrived in Taiwan, I found it's different.

The building is totally different from Vietnam. In Taiwan, houses are built in concrete and bricks. In Vietnam, houses are built in wooden material. On the streets, there are many cars in Taiwan, but in Vietnam, there are a lot of motorbikes. So I think here is better than in Vietnam. And the air is fresher here.

(Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, interview)

Participants in the UK and German institution did not comment on differences of climate and architecture, except for the Macanese participant in the UK, who found British weather annoying as it rained so much and there are fewer outdoor activities or sports he could do with friends (*Thomas, Macanese in the UK, the first diary*). The aspect that impressed these students the most was the difference in the size of the cities between where they were from and where they were now studying and how this played out in, for example, citizens' life styles and transportation arrangements. Such comments were mainly shared by the Chinese, Macanese and Taiwanese participants who mentioned such features as the stores often open till a late hour or 24 hours a day at home, whereas in Europe they closed around 8pm at the latest, which they found very inconvenient. Moreover, due to the small size of the cities where University B and G are located, the participants had found that there were less exciting things to do or to explore and that the transportation system was less convenient and ran less frequently than they were used to

at home. One of the Chinese participants, who was from Shanghai, one of the large cities in China, had found it unbearable to wait for twenty minutes for a bus to come, and she considered transport to be much more efficient in China than in Germany (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, interview*).

Although the selected Taiwanese institution in this study was not in the capital city, it takes only forty minutes or an hour to travel to the capital city; upon arrival there, the students studying in Taiwan from smaller communities at home had found the transportation systems were, in some ways, more convenient than those to which they were used. In addition to the cheaper fares and convenience that he found, the American participant who came from a small community in Missouri, USA, and who would have had little experience of regular use of public transportation at home considered that the bus and Metropolitan Rapid Transit (MRT) systems were so crowded that he had lost his personal space.

Sometimes I am on MRT or bus, I can get everywhere, it's very cheap and very convenient. In America we don't have such stuff, but at the same time, I don't like it too because it's so crowded, I got fed up, like half of the population of the city is on the train. I feel like I am traveling with 400 people on the train. On the other hand,

you kind of lose the personal space, because in America, we generally keep a little distance all the time. (Frank, American in Taiwan, focus group)

Another interesting comment that Frank made about his first impression on arrival at the Taiwanese university was very different from the views of the other westerners in the study, mainly because he more actively compared things to the patterns he was used to in his village in Missouri. For example, whilst the Hungarian and Russian had been disappointed with the dorms and the location of the university in the suburbs, Frank felt excited about everything he saw.

I was really surprised, especially after I found out it was free. So I thought it's going to be a rural, little school, you know, maybe in the jungle, stuff like that, otherwise, why it would be free... I was really impressed when I arrived in school, and everyone that I showed pictures to at home couldn't believe it. They thought it was very nice because we have no buses, no trains, no taxis. When I first came here, I had to learn how to do everything. It was very very interesting.

(Frank, American in Taiwan, interview)

Turning to other aspects of lifestyle, if there was one common theme reported by

participants in the UK, it was the drinking culture that they had encountered and which they found absurd, particularly in the case of the two Muslim participants, Albert and Ali. Ali, the Indian participant, simply did not drink at all because of his religion and, in addition, he had not been used to seeing people drinking so much. The outlook of Albert, the Kazakh participant, was consistent with that of Ali while also adding that he had read things about Britain when learning English in his country, but these had led to his finding the reality different to what he had imagined it would be like.

When I arrived, I thought English guys are friendly, clever... blah, blah, blah...

Actually, no, they are like ordinary human, like we. And at some point, they are even worse than us, for example, if you notice, a lot of people like to get drunk, to be sick.

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, interview)

Finally, a common topic across each of the three research contexts was discussion of food with everyone in the sample missing the cuisine of their home country, because even if it was the same food, participants reported that the way people cooked it in the host culture was different. For instance, the Vietnamese woman felt that Taiwanese food is too greasy for her, and the German man found it strange that British people put mint in their sausages.

As mentioned in the previous section, if one wants to fit into a new culture, one needs to learn the local language. Next, I will discuss the language concerns that participants raised as most of them thought that lacking ability in the local language had been a hindrance for them when trying to understand the culture or to make friends with locals.

** Communication (language and social skills)*

In addition to finding differences between how the host country “looked” in reality and how the student had previously imagined it to be, a further problem that they had encountered was the language of communication. As the Macanese participant said

“I thought the four years of studying in UK would be perfect before I came to UK. However, life is more difficult than I thought. I feel so struggle of everything because of my poor English and I don't know how to communicate well with others by speaking English, sometimes you feel lonely”

(Thomas, Macanese in the UK, the first diary).

Another example of this was given by Henry, one of the Filipino participants in Taiwan.

He had felt uncomfortable at the beginning of his stay when listening to people around him speaking the language and finding that he had no clue as to what they were saying. After learning Chinese for about three months, he started to declare something of a fondness for listening to how others speak the language. However, he found that “adapting to one's culture is as difficult as getting a degree in college” since he did not yet speak fluent Chinese and most of the Taiwanese he encountered did not speak English, making communication hard (*Henry, Filipino in Taiwan, interview & the first diary*).

Lack of skill in the local language not only caused problems in making friends with local people but also made life seem more difficult. It was particularly hard for participants in Taiwan as most of them did not have even basic Chinese language knowledge on arrival, and the university is in the countryside where most people do not speak English at all. Therefore, these students had found the first few months were very difficult for them in their daily lives, including such everyday tasks such as ordering food in a restaurant and going shopping in the local stores. Such a communication breakdown had had a great impact on the American participant, because he was from a culture where “everything is politically correct, you have to worry everything you say, you have to worry about offending this person or that person” (*Frank, American in Taiwan, interview*). So he was scared of talking to anybody in the first couple of months. One day, he went out with a group of Vietnamese in his class. One of the girls found surprising that Frank spoke very

good English and then realised that he is American. Frank explained that because he was afraid to talk he had been speaking broken English. Frank also found that Asian people liked to initiate a conversation by commenting on one's appearance, which is often considered offensive in America. He gave many examples that he found interesting. For instance, when he had his hair cut, everyone asked "Wow, what happened to your hair?" He lost 30 pounds in weight during the first semester of studying in Taiwan but he gained it back after a trip back home. During this period there was always someone saying "Oh, you lost weight" or "Wow, you gained weight". He did not consider this offensive; instead, he had found it funny as he knew that those friends were joking around. Another story he told concerned his awareness that Asians liked to comment on appearance, no matter whether the object of such remarks were men or women. In this context he found it unbelievable that men might say to him that "Oh, you are very handsome". He said "In America, if one man tells another man that he is handsome, he would get punched" (*Frank, American in Taiwan, interview*). This was something he just could not get used to, and he reported running every time such a comment was made.

Participants in the UK and Germany who had better local language skills than those in Taiwan, were facing another type of language problem. Although they did not have major difficulties in everyday conversation, they found it difficult to understand the jokes told

by local people and considered that this created a distance between them and the locals, making it hard to integrate into the social circles of local students. In contrast, when communicating with other international students, most participants had found that the process of negotiating meaning was interesting, instead of the feeling of frustration which had occurred when communicating with native speakers. However, one participant from Kazakhstan had experienced the same degree of frustration when communicating with both local and international students since he was of the view that people from different cultural backgrounds are equally different by nature.

[I]t's quite surprising with people from different cultural backgrounds, the first time you tried to fight against the meaning, I don't know you, you don't know me, and you never get my concept or my opinion...you try to know him, but at one point, you understand you are different. You can't even tell what makes you different, you just know that you are different. I couldn't tell in which aspect that we are different. I know that you are different, you speak the other way from me.

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, second follow-up interview)

** Loss of social support (difficulties in making friends and establishing social support networks)*

Although many universities provide student counselling services, and most participants said they knew where they could ask for help if they needed to, it seemed that friends were the main source of social support for these international students. As stated above, language had proved one of the obstacles for international students in establishing friendships with local students. Moreover, many of the participants noted the fact that local students tended to form their own social circles with other local students, and it was difficult for international students to join in, leaving them with a feeling of loneliness. This was expressed by one of the participants in Germany as follows.

The first two weeks [of first year of study], I was always alone. I wouldn't say Germans are friendly because they stay in German groups, the only exception is the Germans who have been abroad. They would like to share with us about and ask about our countries and cultural differences stuff, but for Germans who have only stayed in Germany don't really care about that and just stay with their own group. So it was difficult to come into their circle.

(Roger, Chilean in Germany, interview)

Due to the difficulties discussed here, it was understandable that students who were far

away from home had, at the initial stages, tried to seek a sense of security or comfort by staying with people who came from similar backgrounds, such as choosing roommates from the same country or region as them, attending church services held by people from their home country, or searching online for national organisations in the foreign country of study (for example, the Kazakh participant had searched for a Kazakh Society in the UK on Facebook). Eventually, the participants reported that the time came when they began to step out of their shell and tried to explore the outside world. For example, the American participant in Taiwan had shared his experience with freshmen coming a year later than him.

When we first came here, pretty much like in classes, the Vietnamese sat with only Vietnamese and Russians sat with Russians, Hungarians, Hungarians... I told the freshmen, don't let that affect your decision because in about a month, you will start breaking up, you will start having friends in other groups because that's how we did.

When I first came to Kainan, I started to look who I can be friends with, I automatically went to Hungarian who were my first two friends. The next group was Russian, I went to them because we are Caucasian, it's not that I had anything against other nations, just simply because they look like me, they were my size. But eventually, I just gradually went to the Vietnamese who became my best friends now.

(Frank, American in Taiwan, interview & focus group)

Although most of the participants had made certain efforts to expand their social circles, not everyone had been as successful as Frank. The reasons for that seemed varied.

Perhaps most of the participants felt more comfortable with people from the same cultural background, or perhaps they found that they did not have many opportunities to meet people from elsewhere. For example, the Macanese participant realised that his English would not improve if he only stayed with people from similar regions to his own (Hong Kong, China, or Taiwan). So he had tried to find living accommodation with other international students but in vain, and he said “then I just have to come back to my Chinese society” (*Thomas, Macanese in the UK, focus group*). Being with people from the same nation may not help improve language skills, but it did appear to offer support for some of the international students in the study. On the other hand, there were participants who reported adventurous trips in their foreign country of study with people from the host nation, such as a Russian girl who had ridden a scooter in Taiwan for the first time in her life, finding this scary but exciting, or the French participant in Germany who had gone mountain climbing with the people she had met in a French student organisation.

Intrapersonal factors

**A profound sense of loss (homesickness)*

When arriving in a new country, for first couple of months or for the first semester, students in the study reported being in a state of excitement and curiosity when for exploring the new city/country. But from about this time onwards, many said that a feeling of homesickness had gradually grown and this appeared to be linked to their situation: 18 or 19 years of age and away from home for the first time. Two common topics reported in participants' interviews and diary entries in this respect were "homesickness" and "being estranged from old friends". The degree of homesickness varied from person to person. Some reported that they missed home when they were ill while others reported it as occurring more often. For example, the Vietnamese participant in Taiwan expressed her strong feeling of missing her family and friends in every diary entry. The first was written around the time of the Moon Festival, a festival when family members get together to appreciate the full moon and eat moon cake. Gina wrote:

Today is Moon festival. I miss the Moon festival when I was in Vietnam so much. It was so funny and amazing to going out with friends... I just watched again the

pictures. Having my parents, my sister and my brother... miss them so much... I cried!

miss miss miss miss...

(Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, the first diary entry)

She seemed to be under great stress in the second diary which was written around Christmas. She wrote that she had been very busy because her final exams were coming up in a few weeks in additions to there being many assignments due to be submitted. The homesick feeling had come along with self-accusation because she was not able to help a good friend back home due to the distances involved. She wrote:

Feel sad of some things. Why do such of bad thing like these happen on me? on my family ? I don't want to believe... I miss my parents so much. I'm such a bad girl that cannot do anything to help them. What I can do is just to study well, but I cannot do it perfectly. I wonder what I can do well then ??? So useless ...

Just finish chatting with my friend. She is my special friend. She is in trouble, she is sad and hurt. As a friend but I cannot do anything for her. Because I am so far away now...

Miss my parents, worry about my friend, hate myself, hate this bad feeling. And

I'm sick now. See, I cannot do anything well.

(Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, the second diary entry)

(My bold print for emphasis)

Gina's third diary was written during the winter vacation when she visited her home country and the feeling of missing family seemed to diminish.

I came back to Vietnam and was busy with plenty of things. My family moved to new house and my sister was back also.

I miss my country, miss my parents and all my friends. Now I'm here to satisfy the missing feeling. I'm happy when seeing my parents' still healthy like before. I'm also happy when I see my new house is really great and nice.

(Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, the third diary entry)

Another feeling of loss commonly reported by participants was that of "being estranged from old friends". For example, Gigi, the Chinese participant in Germany, said that

Last year I went back to Shanghai, I feel a little bit out-of-date, because my classmates, friends, colleagues all talked about the most popular movies, food, or the most popular restaurants. And I think I have less contact to my friends in China. I am

not sure if I can get back in touch with them and be like old times again.

(Gigi, Chinese in Germany, interview)

Charlie, the German participant who had been studying abroad in Canada and the UK felt strongly that he had lost the sense of belonging.

[I]t's not so much I missed living at home, but more like the whole sense of belonging is missing here. When I went home the first time, I have to make new common ground to share what you know about each other, that makes up the friendship.... I make a lot of new friends every time I go there, I lose so many every time I'm gone. Really weird.

(Charlie, German in the UK, interview & focus group)

For these students who were studying abroad, the problem was not only that they were losing their sense of belonging to the society from which they had come, but also from losing some of the identity that they had carried from their home country. A travelling student might be the only child who had been spoiled by their parents, grandparents and relatives; or a great athlete or a great violinist at home. But no one in the new context might know this: sojourners have to introduce themselves to the new society afresh. In

my sample, it seemed that some identities could be rebuilt in the new society, but that others were lost completely with an attendant loss of confidence. For example, Thomas had been used to having more control in his life in Macau where he had a car so he can take his friends out and about. In the UK, not only he did he not own a car, but also he did not have the fluent language skill needed to continue a conversation or even join in with the simple topics in a conversation. Anna, the Colombian participant, had been used at home to having her lunch prepared by a maid before going out to work and making money. But in Germany, she had to do everything on her own and life seemed to her much tougher. Roger's story was different from Anna's and Thomas's which were dependent on social hierarchy; Roger's changed identity regarded his academic performance. He used to be the best student in his class in Chile, but he considered that he might be the worst in his class in Germany. So he had had to tell himself constantly “don't worry, it's the language problem, you are still smart, you are not a loser...” He had to cheer himself up, he said, otherwise he felt stupid because he could not understand what the teachers said in their lectures and was unlikely to do well in exams (*Roger, Chilean in Germany, interview*).

As a result, these participants felt that they needed to find new strength in order to stand in the new society with a certain level of power and confidence; otherwise, they could not feel a sense of integration. Charlie in particular pointed this out by saying that:

You have to find something to integrate yourself into the society, something that you can gain some place in social hierarchy that you had before when you were back home... You just have to acquire something new to make this common around, no matter what you do. For me, if I couldn't integrate more into the British society, I feel I would go down in a few places...

(Charlie, German in the UK, focus group)

** A sense of inferiority (discrimination)*

The issue of discrimination was raised by one of the participants and was discussed actively in the focus group meeting in Taiwan. There are many Thai, Filipinos or Vietnamese working as manual labourer in Taiwan, resulting in stereotyped images of these nationalities, portraying them as less educated or inferior to Taiwanese people. One of the Filipino participants in the study had experienced discrimination in Taiwan on a couple of occasions: first, when he had looked for part-time jobs and he had been turned down because of his nationality and, second, when he reported in his third diary that his teacher had not treated him fairly.

... lately the result of the midterm's examination was just released and some of my classmates asked my professor regarding on their score, he just added 10-20 points on their scores. And then I asked him, why he put a wrong mark on my answer, and then he checked it. And then after that he found out that there are 2 variables

that are missing, and he just said “OK, I will give you 2 points.” But that question is about 40%. I’m trying to point out is my answer is just not complete and then he gave me 2 points. But my other classmates, they just asked him about their scores he just added a big score, without anything to be argued.

(Arnold, Filipino in Taiwan, the third diary)

The American participant reported a similar story. Although he had not experienced discrimination in person, this had happened to his Vietnamese flatmate.

I am like opposite, I am from America, so I don’t get the discrimination... but you know, when I went to a restaurant with my flatmate, he said the owner liked to talk to me, the compliment stuff... he said he didn’t have this treatment... because here Vietnamese are a little bit being looked down because they do more of the labour work.

(Frank, American in Taiwan, Focus group)

The Russian participant added that she thought that “discrimination is everywhere” with, for example, Russians or Mexicans being looked down upon in Spain (*Lily, Russian in Taiwan, Focus group*). Participants in the other two research contexts also reported a couple of incidents of discrimination. Julie had heard shouts of “Fxxking Chinese boy” on the street in Cambridge late at night, because it was dark and she wore a sweatshirt and

a hat and had been mistakenly recognised as a boy. I asked Julie how the passers-by could have known she was Chinese and Julie responded “they thought every Asian is Chinese. They couldn't distinguish among Japanese, Korean and Chinese” (*Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, Interview*). Gigi in the German institution said that, sometimes the professors had criticised China and that this had made her feel bad. For example, once a professor said something about copyright and commented that “Oh, China, they are copycats”. Gigi felt that even if he had not done this on purpose it served, nevertheless, as a humiliation or an insult (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, Interview*). Ali, the Indian participant had also been called “blackie” a few times on the street at night in England.

However, none of the participants had fought back as a response to the discrimination they had encountered; instead, they had tried to convince themselves to be open-minded. As Julie said “you got to be open-minded, easy-going... you can't be surprised or depressed all the time, particularly when you encounter the discrimination” (*Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, Interview*). Similarly, Gigi said “sometimes they [Germans] are too direct when expressing their opinions. And I can persuade myself to understand them because they are only Germans not because they are impolite to me” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, Interview*).

5.2.4 Adjustment / Cultural influence on personal behaviours

After a period of cultural shock, most/all of the participants (e.g. Frank, Kitty, Thomas, Charlie, and Roger) had found themselves accepting or even adapting to the local culture, and some of these adaptations had happened unconsciously. For example, Thomas's friends back in Macau found that he had become more polite, with the words such as “please” or “thank you”, or holding the doors for friends when going into a restaurant. Thomas said he that he had had not realised that this change has happened until his friends back home had told him so. Another example given by the female Hungarian participant Kitty was that when she visited home during the holidays, her mother and friends found that her style of dress had changed. In Europe, it is common to see women wearing low V-shaped T-shirts with almost no one staring at them for doing so; however, Taiwan is a relatively conservative country compared to Europe, and Kitty's dressing style had started to change.

I don't feel comfortable even when I go home, I don't wear V tops. Because I get used to it, here I don't wear them and I don't even want to. So of course, if you are living in the different cultures, I think you must change. If you don't change, there is a problem.

(Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview)

Because Kitty had actively been trying to discover and adapt to the local culture of the host country, like all the others, she sensed that she had come to feel a sense of familiarity with the local environment when her cousin and friends visited her in Taiwan from Hungary during the first summer vacation she had had after a year of studying in Taiwan. She showed them around and realised that:

I can actually speak Chinese at the shops. I realised I know a lot of things about Taiwan and we travelled together. At that time, I didn't feel that I am the one, I felt like I am the whole. I don't feel that the environment is new to me, I realised I can live here, not that bad. (Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, Focus Group)

There were also times when participants had changed themselves consciously to fit in with their new culture because they had become aware of differences compared to home and that local people expected things to be done in certain ways. For example, Charlie thought that he had become more careful or thoughtful when approaching people:

[W]hen you live somewhere else, you tend to approach to people like a little bit more careful. Before, it's always that you know how it works, you just jump right in, now I try to think of what other people or the other person feels, you know, try to be more gentle, don't present myself all the way, and take more gentle approach. And people have noticed that. Also it might come from growing up older.

(Charlie, German in the UK, focus group)

Frank, the American participant in Taiwan, was also aware of the language he used when communicating with non-native English speakers and he tried not to use slang. He related one of the incidents that had made him realise that non-native English speakers may have difficulty understanding slang or the common phrase used in his home town:

[b]ack home we would say like “How i yo?” instead “How are you?” you know, we say “How i?” instead of “r”. And they were like “err...?” so I actually did that to two of the Russians when I first saw, because they are the first white people I saw, so I went toward them, there was a boy and a girl, and I just talked to them and automatically I am “How i yo? You alright?” and they were like “err... err...?” And I am like “Oh, my name is Frank, I am from America. Where are you from?” “Russia.” “Oh, oh, ok, sorry. Let me rephrase. Hi, how are you?”

(Frank, American in Taiwan, Focus group)

5.3 Teaching and Learning

Whereas individual biography has been very prominent in previous sections of this chapter, it is now time to turn to participants experiences of their work – “teaching and

learning” – and to discuss this at some length. In doing so I will set out some of the distinguishing features of Higher Education in my participants’ countries of origin compared to the three host cultures: Taiwan and the similar, but in some respect, distinctive traditions of the two European countries. For example, the differences of educational systems between the home country and the host country were commented on by most of the participants. Overall, participants’ subject preferences correlated to their perceptions of the creativeness of the teaching pedagogies they encountered and the usefulness of the knowledge learned, with many commenting on the teaching pedagogies they had found to be novel and the way in which, as a result, they had found themselves modifying learning strategies in order to achieve a certain level of academic performance. But before we discuss these classroom teaching and learning strategies in detail, the major differences of Higher Education systems within all three contexts will be compared.

5. 3. 1 Context: different education systems

Different education systems and policies have various impacts on the admission of international students into a university. For example, Filipino students who would like to study in Taiwan have to complete twelve years of elementary and secondary education in

the Philippines. This means that they have to complete at least two years of university education before applying to universities in Taiwan because its secondary education contains only four years, while secondary education in Taiwan is comprised of six years. Therefore, Filipino students enrolled in universities in the Philippines struggle with the decision as to whether or not to study in Taiwan; they will be awarded a Bachelor's degree in another two years by staying at home but it will take them two extra years in Taiwan. Similarly, delicate cases also occur in Germany. Students cannot get admission to German universities through normal channels without an "appropriate" high school diploma, a situation illustrated in the case of two separate participants in this study: Charlie (male, German) and Britta (female, Norwegian). As previously reported, Charlie had German citizenship with his high school diploma having been earned in Canada. As he would have needed to study for two further years in a German high school to gain the diploma that is recognised by German Ministry of Education as the basis for admittance to a German university, he and his mother deduced that studying in the UK would save him time. Britta, however, completed German high school and was awarded German AP qualification in Ireland. She sought assistance from educational consultants in the German government and then experienced a number of bureaucratic hurdles. In the end, she had had to take a German language proficiency test to prove her language ability, despite fluency as a native German speaker. She reported that the educational consultant

was very surprised to see her speak German so fluently, better than many people with German passports; however, in order to have all of the necessary documentation, Britta had had to take the language test.

Beyond the examples of structural misalignment, I will now elaborate other general differences between Higher Education in the home country and their new host country that participants across the three research contexts mentioned in their responses.

Contact hours

In general, a module in UK and German institutions of Higher Education may include a lecture session where professors give lectures only and a tutorial session where discussions occur and questions may be raised. In the UK a professor giving a lecture is not necessarily the tutor holding the seminar sessions, while in Germany, seminar sessions are usually taught by senior students who have taken the module in recent years. By contrast, the professors in Taiwan and in most other Asian countries are responsible for all the teaching in a module including lecturing, group discussion and whole class discussion. Thus, they have more contact hours with students in class than in Europe and students may, as a result, feel more of a sense of connection with their teachers. Moreover, the total class hours are very different between Higher Education systems in Europe and

in Asia while, added to this, the quantity of contact hours reported by participants in this study from developed countries was lower than that reported by participants from developing countries (e.g. Vietnam, China.). Then there are questions of value for money that may arise. One participant commented on the contact hours he had experienced in the UK in the context of to the tuition fee that he had to pay as an international student.

I didn't expect the time table here would be so easy, like in one day, in average, I got no more than one lecture. I am paying 10,000 pounds here, and I study just like 10 hours per week. That's a bit annoying.

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, interview)

Next there is the issue of course duration. In Asia, undergraduate degree programmes usually take four years, compared to three years in both the UK and Germany. However, a couple of participants in the UK and Germany did not feel that they learned less in the university than they would have in countries offering four-year programme. They said that it is inevitable that lectures are rushed; material is squeezed into the three-year programmes. As a result, they felt that no time was left to students to digest the information learned or to raise questions in class; coupled to this, they reported the novelty of having to do most of their reading by themselves.

It is only three year university [in the UK], it's totally different from China or Taiwan, they [China or Taiwan] are four years and here [the UK] just three years. So it's understand[able] that they [the teachers in the UK] rush their materials through.

(Thomas, Macanese in the UK, interview)

The courses turned out to be a lot more difficult than what I was expecting in first place because the courses have fewer classes and therefore each class is harder to understand.

(Jose, Portuguese exchange student in Germany, first diary)

Big lectures versus small classes

In the UK and Germany, participants reported that most of the lectures they attended were comprised of 300 students in a lecture hall. As a result, they had found it impossible to have interaction between teachers and students or among their peers. Many of the participants commented on the boringness of the lecture style typical of the big lecture hall, mainly because no interactions could occur. One participant defined “interaction” in a way that I found to be very interesting.

[By interaction] I didn't mean that I like the lecture chatting with us. For example, the lecturer of the module of Investment Analysis, actually, he does not ask us any questions, but he represents his lecture in a way that you feel like he's talking to you personally. It depends on the styles and quality, I think, you can easily read the slides and he is doing the same, but he's giving his opinion... he's giving real examples. And you feel like it's a personal talk between you and him.

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, second follow-up interview)

Most participants found that in the big lecture hall, few opportunities existed for any form of interaction. For example, the Chilean participant, Roger, criticised students as being cast in the role of passive learners, professors appearing like robots, standing at the front and giving out information with students just sitting and listening. Although there might be some exercises or questions given to students to solve, there was no dialogue. The hierarchical relationship between professors and students in Germany seemed also be an issue for Roger, as he noted in his diary: “A professor is like a mythological almighty figure in Germany. I do miss smaller groups where you can form a relationship with the intelligent faculty” (*Roger, Chilean in Germany, the first diary*). According to other

participants, a typical class would comprise only around 40 students in Chile, and the largest lecture would hold the maximum of 150 or 200 students in China, so that there appeared to be more of a possibility for raising questions. It was also the case that some participants were surprised at the large-scale lecturing at the stage when they transferred from a foundation-level programme at the university level to full degree-level study. At this point, much smaller classes in the foundation programme, where there were more interactions between teachers and students as well as among students themselves through discussing the case or solving problems, had given way to the passive, mass-audience events mentioned above. Alongside this, the seminar sessions had seemed to allow more time for discussion, although in the view of one participant, there was not much difference between the experience of lectures and tutorials; there were only 60 minutes for tutorials and many exercises to complete, and the tutor behaved exactly as if he was giving a lecture. He merely kept writing things down on the board (the example given was an exposition on quantitative method) and gave the impression that if any of the students had questions, neither he nor other teachers had time to answer them (*Albert, Kazakh in the UK, interview*).

The participants in Germany also had some negative opinions about the way that the university was organising its teaching activities (lectures, exercises and tutorials). It

seemed that there were clear defined responsibilities between lecturers and tutors: professors gave lectures only, while tutors were responsible for answering students' questions or helping with students' academic puzzles. For example, a Chinese student had approached a professor at the end of a lecture and attempted to ask a question. The professor turned away before saying "I have no time, you can talk to your tutors or you can go home and read the literature" (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany; interview*). The tutorials were, in fact, taught by senior students which Gigi considered to the equivalent of dispersing second hand information as opposed to primary information from the professors. She reported that, as a result, she and her friends joked that they seemed to be undertaking distance learning seeing how they did not learn from lecturers but by studying at home by themselves.

Participants in Taiwan had different views on lecturing styles, depending on previous educational experiences in their home country. For example, in general, the classes in Asian countries tend to be small, around 40 or 50 students, but participants in my sample from the Philippines and Vietnam had contrasting opinions about classroom interactions. The Vietnamese student reckoned that "in lectures [in Taiwan], everybody can ask questions and the teacher would ask us questions too, then students can answer the questions. But in Vietnam, students are not really active in class, they don't ask

questions” (*Gina, Vietnamese in Taiwan, interview*). Two Filipino participants both reported in their second diaries that teacher-student interaction and comprehension is much more emphasised and encouraged in their home country than it is in Taiwan. One of the Filipino participants even claimed that due to no interaction in the classroom in Vietnam, he gradually became a passive learner; quite a few times he couldn’t help but fall asleep during class because there was no need to react in the classroom (*Henry, Filipino in Taiwan; second diary*).

Relationship between teachers and students

In addition to contact hours, the size of a lecture class is also a factor that influences the teacher and student relationships. When the group is small, teachers and students are closer; conversely, in large-sized lectures, the professors may not know their students individually, nor can the students get acquainted with their peers. Such comments were provided by a couple of participants in this study. Specifically, a Chilean participant in Germany talked to a professor at the beginning of a semester asking for a recommendation letter required by his scholarship sponsor. Two months later, he had not received the letter, so he approached the professor again. The professor had no idea who he was. In contrast, the classes in Taiwan, Chile and Kazakhstan are relatively small, so teachers are able to observe students’ performances more closely. The Kazakh participant

in the UK said in his interview that teachers at the college where he studied in his home country would give a warning signal, perhaps through a chat or a note reminding him that he had missed too many lectures or done badly in exams, so that students would be alerted to the status of their academic performance. However, this may only be manageable in small-sized classes. It is also more common in high schools as described by the Hungarian participant studying in Taiwan. In her diary, she noted that teachers in Taiwan seemed more caring than teachers in Europe which, for her, was reminiscent of secondary school.

A related point was made by the American participant in Taiwan – that professors there were much more likely to explain the origins or the customs of some festivals. Because most of these teachers in Taiwan had either studied or worked abroad, they seemed to empathise with international students in Taiwan and know what information they might enjoy learning so as to better understand the local culture. He gave the following example:

In different festivals, like moon cake festival, teachers actually had us to come to the office for activities and they always try to tell us a little bit about the festivals and why. And a lot of the teachers, like economics teacher, business management teacher,

PE teacher and also the computer mandarin teacher, I really like that, even though it's not a class they teach, nothing to do with their class, but it's some activity is coming up, they will take few minutes out of their first part of a class or something that is just going on in Taiwan. They would try to tell us because they said, we know you were international students and you may not know why. For me, that was a very good experience.

(Frank, American in Taiwan, interview)

A statement of this sort serves to contradict the stereotype of relationships between teachers and students, inherited from the Confucian concept that teachers should be highly respected in China (including Taiwan); my evidence suggests that teachers are much closer to students in the USA or other Western countries than the stereotype implied, calling students by the first names, for example. From the participants' statements in my study, there seems to be the recurring trend for teachers in Taiwan to be more amicable and easier to approach than previously.

Hi-tech equipment used in teaching

As technology is innovative and improving rapidly, modern high-tech equipment is being used in schools and colleges to replace traditional equipment. The PowerPoint projector

and touch-pen board is now used in place of traditional blackboards or whiteboards and are being widely used in developed or more developing countries. This is a novelty for students from less developed countries. One of the Filipino participants studying in Taiwan mentioned this point both in his interview and his first diary that:

Here [in Taiwan] they are using much modern equipments and facilities in teaching while back home quite few institutions afford to modernise everything and mostly demand higher tuition fees.

(Henry, Filipino in Taiwan; first diary)

The Russian participant in Taiwan claimed that this hi-tech equipment “is more convenient for students to catch the information whereas in Russia, teachers give handouts or a copy of books, and students need to keep writing down what the teachers say” (*Lily, Russia in Taiwan, interview*). Moreover, in the UK institution, students were able to download the PowerPoint slides and handouts from an online resource called WebCT, before or after classes for preview or review. Some modules also required students to undertake an online exercise as an assignment. However, it should be noted that participants’ statements of this kind were silent as to whether students acquire more knowledge through interesting ways or convenient way of learning such as those

highlighted above.

Grading system

Participants in this study had had quite varied experiences of grading criteria encountered in the host country institution. In the German institution, 90 to 100 percent of the assessed grades relied on the final exams. In the UK university, most assessed marks were awarded through final exams with a minority percentage comprised of marks derived from assignments or quizzes. The Kazakh participant in the UK reported that there were only two modules among all of those that he took in his first year of study that required him to do either an online exercise or individual assignment (there were no group assignments at all in his first year and the autumn term of his second year, when the interview was conducted). In the Taiwan institution, the marks were awarded not only through mid-term and/or final exams, but also relied on quizzes and attendance. Some participants in Taiwan did not like the practice of attendance checking, nor the fact that it accounted for a small number of marks. Some of their peers had sat in classrooms but had engaged in activities unrelated to the learning at hand, for example – using their own laptops or, sleeping and thus not paying attention to lectures. The sole reason they attended the class was because their attendance affected their grades. This did not seem to be sensible to some of the participants in the Taiwan setting.

As mentioned in section 3.6, this is the place in chapter 4 where it was decided that displaying a tabulated descriptions of the various grading systems in use would be beneficial. This seemed useful because the participants had differing views as to the difficulty level of their respective exams. The main differences in outlook appeared related to the form that exams took. For example, participants from Russia and Hungary said that the exams in the universities in their home country were usually oral exams, while in Taiwan they were most likely to be written exams. Some participants indicated there to be multiple choices in exams in Taiwan/China on a larger scale than in the other two countries in the study, while there were more essay-like questions reported in the UK and Germany and these required students to do further reading (i.e. reading not only limited to textbooks or the notes taken in lectures). The table below shows various statements relevant to the exam types and the participants' subsequent preparation methods for tackling the exams.

| Name | Nationality | Host Country | Data source |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Julie | Taiwanese | United Kingdom | Interview |
| <p><i>The exam types are different between Taiwan and the UK. In Taiwan it's more of multiple choices, here [in the UK], they give like five questions and you need to choose three out of five to answer within one and half an hour. You need to think about not only language, but also the format, the theory and how I could debate it... Also in Taiwan, we don't do much further reading, but here [in the UK] if you want to have higher scores, you need to read more by yourselves.</i></p> | | | |

| Name | Nationality | Host Country | Data source |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Yolanda | Chinese | Germany | Interview |
| <i>Here [in Germany] you have to read a lot here besides the textbooks. In China, you just need to focus on textbook and maybe some other few books, and that's enough.</i> | | | |
| Name | Nationality | Host Country | Data source |
| Thomas | Macanese | United Kingdom | Interview & Focus Group |
| <i>In Macau, students have to attend much more lectures than UK students and they just spend a little bit time on their self-study. They study just a week before the exams, and then just remember the answers. It causes an issue that students just care about their grades but they don't understand what actually the course is about.</i> | | | |
| Name | Nationality | Host Country | Data source |
| Kitty | Hungarian | Taiwan | Interview |
| <i>In Hungary, we never ever have written exams, always oral, one on one. And it's very strict... here in Taiwan, it's not much talking, it's more about writing... For example, in American Literature, we have to read about 20 books in a year, and you got five quotations, only one line from each book, and you have to write down the author and the title of the book. If you recognise four or five out of the fives, you could go for the exam; it doesn't mean you pass the exam, it just mean you could go. But if you get under three, you can't even go for the oral exam. Then in the oral exam, you pick from some papers with questions on them and prepare for 20 minutes, and then you go face your teacher. In the end, the teacher decides if you fail or pass.</i> | | | |
| Name | Nationality | Host Country | Data source |
| Kenny | Hungarian | Taiwan | Second Diary |
| <i>I had oral exams back home [in Hungary], and the exam period is one to one and a half months long with no classes at that time, so students have more time to prepare. In this system I may have a full week for one exam, preparing and focusing on only one subject, whereas here in Taiwan we generally have to take all the exams in one or two weeks, a system that does not allow pupils to focus solely on one particular exam... In Taiwan, I just have to read the slides twice, and my high percentage in the mid-term exam is secured. I don't say this method is worthless or useless; but I used to have more compulsory material for my exams in Hungary, so this method seems easier to me.</i> | | | |

| Name | Nationality | Host Country | Data source |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| Roger | Chilean | Germany | Interview |
| <p><i>Studying here [in Germany] the whole semester, you have only the final exam. That's the problem for motivation because in our case in Chile, we have tests every week or every two weeks, and we have mid-term exams and the final exams. Here the whole semester you are like doing nothing because you always say "I still have time", the students here just study for the last two weeks. That doesn't work at all.</i></p> | | | |

A further point of note is that, in Germany, home students are trained to have time pressure during exams, often being required to answer as many questions as possible in a very short time frame. For example, one of the Bulgarian participants there gave two incidents illustrating how stressful these exams were for her. One regards the view of her Finnish friend on the same course who considered that a 45-minute exam in Germany would be given at least three hours to complete in Finland. The other example was her own experience when she was an exchange student studying in Scotland. Then, she always finished answering the questions during exams in less than half of the time given (*Lisa, Bulgarian in Germany, Focus Group*).

There were two participants in separate research contexts who related the degree of difficulty of exams to the quality of students. The Columbian participant in Germany commented that,

I don't think the difference is on what they teach, it's because they really want to keep the good students. It's not about they teach you anything different, but in exams, you not only have to understand everything, but to know everything by heart.

(Anna, Columbian in Germany, focus group)

And in Taiwan, the Hungarian participant believed that,

...there are people [in the class] who hardly speaking English and it's frustrating and difficult for them because they don't really understand the textbooks, they don't really understand what's going on in class. So when we do the presentation or group projects or when we have exams, the boundaries or standards have to be lower because the international office or maybe the school, I don't know who, they want everyone to pass.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview)

Kenny's assumption appears warranted, because other evidence in the study suggested that students' ability to prosper was related to their proficiency in the language of instruction. Thus, there seemed to be a connection between a student's language proficiency and their perception of studying in a second language, and the difficulty of

having to prepare for exams. Specifically, students who had better English skills found it less difficult to cope with study in their second language. For example, the Hungarian and Filipino participants who had quite a good level of English proficiency found exams to be easier than some of the others in the study. For example, the Vietnamese participant found studying in Taiwan to be challenging. Similarly, in the UK, a German participant who had studied for two years in a Canadian high school and considered himself to be pretty fluent in English did not find studying or taking exams to be difficult. The Norwegian student in Germany educated in German schools in both Germany and Ireland considered herself a native German speaker and also did not find studying in German challenging. However, other foreign students across three research contexts where the medium of instruction is their second or foreign language found that they needed to work harder and to prepare for exams a month or two earlier than they were used to doing in their home countries.

A couple of participants commented on the relation between grades and received capabilities in some work cultures. For example grades may not be the primary criteria for employment but capabilities and working performance are what matters most. Thus the French participant in Germany commented that “in France, the marks are not important at all, if you have a good grade or you remember something by heart, it doesn't mean that you are competent working in a company or you are efficient.” Like the Macanese

participant's statement in the table above, students may focus on the strategies of getting better marks than aiming to possess deeper knowledge about a subject. However, the issue of getting better marks or getting more knowledge seemed to be a delicate balance for some of the students. For instance, the German participant said in the UK focus group discussion that a German company wouldn't care much about the degree as long as it was from a good university. But in the individual interview, he said "the Economics modules are actually a little bit harder, and it's hard to get good marks, so I think if I didn't take any of those modules, I might have a better mark, and that would be beneficial for my career" (*Charlie, German in the UK, interview*).

5. 3. 2 *Teaching pedagogies*

In addition to the differences of educational systems between home countries and host countries, participants found the teaching pedagogies to be different as well. One main difference they shared in this context was the transition from high school to the university level. As discussed earlier, in high schools teachers tend to pay more attention to individual students' performances and behaviours, while teaching approaches between high schools and universities may vary quite considerably. Charlie, the German participant who had studied in high school in Canada, compared the varied teaching

approaches he had encountered in Germany, Canada and the UK. The summary of his comments on this issue from the interview and diary entry is as stated:

In Germany, the school emphasised that the students should learn the material by solving problems in the class with little help from the teacher. In general, teachers write down the questions on the board, followed by lots of discussion but you do the stuff by yourselves. In Canada and Britain, the university/ school teachers/professors give the answers right away, actually you get more information, but you don't have to be creative. Instead of just being told, how things work, I would like to find answers through discussions and participation.

(Charlie, German in the UK, interview and the second diary)

Two Chinese-speaking participants in the UK (Julie, Taiwanese and Thomas, Macanese) noticed that British educational approaches aimed at motivating students to do further research or reading. Usually, teachers provided plenty of sources or posted additional materials online so that students could access these if needed, whereas in Taiwan or Macau, most teachers prepared in their handouts everything that the student might need. Gigi, a Chinese participant in Germany, made similar comments and thought that this might explain “why Western countries do better than us [Chinese] in the field of research

and development” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, first diary*).

With regard to the forms of assignments given in class, participants from Western countries, such as Russia and Hungary, in Taiwan research contexts, found that there were more individual assignments in their countries while there were more group assignments in Taiwan. This dynamic can also be seen in the interview statement of the Chilean participant in Germany that in Chile (a country with a “collectivism tendency”; collective goals run prior to personal goals), “there are more projects, more group works, more case studies, etc., it is more fun” while with most subjects in Germany (a country with an individualism tendency; personal goals run prior to collective goals), the experience was more of “memorising things and you write on exams but then you just forget about it” (*Roger, Chilean in Germany, interview*). The summary of the Russian participant’s statement on this point from her interview and the diary entry is as follows:

In Russia, we don't have much group work. We focus on individuals. Individual is the approach, it is the target in our education. We don't have as much as the group work here. We do everything individually and we do everything like research ways. (Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview)

I found it really interesting to work in groups for some presentations or projects.

But I wish we would have some more individual assignments where teacher could check us and give us some advises.

(Lily, Russian in Taiwan, second diary)

As intercultural interaction is one of the main themes investigated in this research, I spent quite some time discussing the group projects with the participants during their interviews and also requested their feedback on such in the diary entries. The findings of the group work interaction will be discussed in detail in section 5.4.1.

Participants' perception of teaching were influenced strongly by their personal experience and showed no inter-relation across the three research contexts. For example, the Hungarian participant found that “teachers here [in Taiwan] are much more personal, like telling different kinds of jokes or trying to get your attention, whereas in Hungary, if you have a lecture, you don't need to speak to the teacher or prepare anything. Usually it's boring and very strict, the professors prepare the PowerPoint, no jokes, nothing but lecturing” (*Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview*). Meanwhile, Julie, the Taiwanese participant and Thomas, the Macanese participant, both wrote in their second diary entry that they had experienced lecturers in the UK telling jokes or trying to make something

academic more interesting than they might have expected. Moreover, one of the participants in University B indicated that such a relaxing atmosphere had motivated her to make an effort and to participate more in class (although this effect was not universal in the UK sample).

5. 3. 3 Preferences for subjects

I will now discuss some factors that lead to participants' inclinations to like or dislike a subject. This appeared mainly to depend on the experience of individual teachers, teaching pedagogies adopted, a teacher's English proficiency, and a student's own academic interest and language proficiency. These factors also appeared to impact on their learning strategies and studying habits, which I will elaborate in this section.

Another factor influencing the participants' preference for a subject was the usefulness of the subject for their future career.

The scope of textbooks

When asked how internationalised the textbook materials were in the classes they attended, all participants found that the English-published textbooks they used, which were chosen by the lecturers, focused mainly on English-speaking countries and other

developed countries, such as Japan. Few participants were disappointed in the fact that the textbooks consisted of English-dominated business examples; most participants appreciated this considering that America leads the economic world. Many participants compared this state of affairs with the textbooks used in their home country, where examples were much more likely to be locally-oriented, especially where such books were written by domestic authors and the texts were printed in the local language. “The views [in such textbooks are] narrower because it could be limited to domestic business examples or local environment” (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview*). Moreover, a Russian participant (*Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview*) added that, for her, living abroad was already an overseas experience because she was immersed in a multicultural environment, particularly in the classroom. This view might help explain why most participants in the study did not mind that Americanised or localised materials were being used in the classroom; instead, they felt that such information was helpful in building their future career. This was acceptable because “business is international”, as Roger put it “and I might be working in an international company or a German company. Then I will make deals with Germans or Europeans, Asian, people from America, so knowing these cases from these countries is going to help me to know the backgrounds and to know how do these people think” (*Chilean in Germany, interview*). With regard to the possible gap in knowledge between the “Western” textbooks and the economic scenarios or business

practices of their home countries, Yolanda (*Chinese in Germany, interview*) seemed to speak for others when she said that she didn't think it would be a problem to her. She said "when I work in China, I can get this thing very quickly, because I have this background."

Some participants specifically pointed out that the international components in lectures and seminars were mostly material given in the classroom from their teachers' own experiences. Little insight was generated from classmates who were from different parts of the world. One of the reasons for this was probably, as mentioned in the beginning of section 5.3.1, that there wasn't much interaction in the lectures; students were just sitting and listening. Another reason might be that those college students who were only between the age of 18-20 and had not yet had any working experiences, could not provide much information about business practice in their countries. One Hungarian participant, Kitty, in Taiwan commented in her interview.

Next I will discuss one of the most important international components in the classroom: teachers' experiences. This seemed to underline the point that participants felt that their teachers' experience could benefit them more if they were resourceful and knowledgeable in the respective courses that they led. In contrast, inexperienced or incompetent teachers might cause students confusion and have a negative impact on the subjects they studied.

Teachers' experiences

While the business textbooks in use in those institutions researched were reported as being strongly Americanised, Westernised or localised, participants rated the importance of their teachers' experiences abroad highly, particularly so when students had come from a country where few professors have had living or teach-abroad experiences. For example, the Russian participant in Taiwan said,

In Russia, I think not many teachers studied in other countries, they only told us their personal experiences in Russia. But here [in Taiwan], most teachers got their PhD abroad, they have this abroad experience. I think this is the best thing about studying here.

(Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview)

The degree to which internationalised examples had been given by lecturers had depended on the lecturers' experiences, including the subjects they had studied and where they had worked, and had teaching experience. For instance, all of the participants in Taiwan mentioned two modules they found interesting and useful to be Economics and Introduction to Management, the latter extending to Business Management in the second

semester. They had found that their teachers' personal experiences were crucial, as they provided a diversity of examples that did not exist in those textbooks which were limited to the immediate national context. Moreover, their teachers' study experience appeared to add weight to the enrichment of teaching quality. For instance, participants had found the lectures of an Economics teacher and a lecturer of Personal Financial Management (both in Taiwan and both graduates from Harvard University), to be very helpful and advanced.

I like Economics; not because of the topic, it's because of the teacher. His English is proficient... and he has many stories. He lived in California maybe more than 10 years and he graduated from Harvard University... I couldn't really describe it, but I was happy to be in every of his classes.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan; interview)

Moreover, another participant (*Henry, Filipino in Taiwan, interview*) reported that the Economics teacher not only delivered advanced knowledge but also guided students as to how to study and maintain a good study habit. Thus, he had advised students on where to find more sources for their outside reading, such as which business magazines were worth reading.

By way of contrast, a novice or less experienced teacher might demotivate students. A couple of participants in the Germany and the UK contexts mentioned that there were a few subjects taught them by PhD students or by those who just received their doctoral degrees, both being kinds of staff who had less teaching experience. According to these participants, an advantage might have been that younger teachers could incorporate more innovative teaching approaches or enthusiasm. However, the disadvantage was that, in practice, fewer practical examples had been given (Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, interview; Albert, Kazakh in the UK, interview). The Norwegian participant in Germany implied that this did not reinforce her sense of the privilege of studying in such a reputed business school in Germany.

It's like every semester, there are always one or two subjects that we don't have proper professors whereas they've been taught by PhD students or something like that. I mean I came here for a reason because I thought as a student you would get excellent support here and because it's one of the best business schools in Germany and it's hard to get in, I would expect a better support of the system. I don't find that quite to be the case. I am not happy with it.

(Britta, Norwegian in Germany, interview)

Other criticisms of less experienced teachers made by participants across three research

contexts were mostly towards teachers with a lower English proficiency, including those with heavy accents or incorrect pronunciations. Particularly where the medium of instruction was the second or foreign language for the teachers, participants reported often being left confused. Several statements of this kind addressed the phenomenon that faculty had difficulty delivering profound knowledge through a language that was not their native language. Although the universities concerned were trying to make themselves more international by providing more subjects taught in English Britta spoke for several of the sample: “I find the problem is that the professors often don’t speak good English and that often leaves you in confusion. You don’t understand the professors. That makes it difficult, I find” (*Britta, Norwegian in Germany, interview*). For some teachers, teaching in English as a foreign language was probably a new challenge that prohibited them, at least at first, from finding an effective teaching method. Instead, they had ended up reading through what had been written in textbooks or in their PowerPoint slides without giving students any exercises or additional information.

In the Taiwan context, the criticism towards Chinese-medium learning courses appeared significant. Typically, more than two teachers were teaching the same module, e.g. Computer Mandarin, to the same group of students. Having two teachers had resulted in an unsystematic or overlapping curriculum as well as spawning differences between the

approaches of each of the teachers. The problem that participants pointed out in this regard was that most of their Chinese teachers could not answer students' questions or solve their puzzles. The participants in my study believed that this was partially due to the fact that some of the teachers were student teachers who did not have much practical teaching experience. Another reason was that the teachers were lacking in their English ability. One participant described one teacher as a "catastrophe... she cannot handle a class of 35 students, and she is lacking of teaching method, which makes the whole lesson chaotic and unnecessary" (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, first diary*). The American participant in Taiwan thought that learning Chinese was supposed to be systematic, like learning English. There were, he thought, certain structures, grammar, and rules; when he did not understand, he would ask questions. However, he had had a hard time learning Chinese in the first year because the teacher hardly spoke any English and could not explain what was required. An example given to me during his interview was that once the teacher wrote something on the board that wasn't in the book, everyone wondered what it meant. The teacher responded by saying, "I don't know in English." Frank commented "how can we know what that means in English if the teacher cannot explain? I mean there is no way." After a year of struggling and due to constant feedback being given by students to the programme designer, the participants in Taiwan were to be provided with more experienced and qualified Chinese teachers during their second year

of study. Some participants reported that they were happier at the prospect of experiencing a Chinese teacher who spoke English and was more professional and highly skilled.

Theory versus practicality

There were many different voices in the transcripts regarding whether it was better to include more theories or more practical examples in teaching. For example, the Kazakh participant strongly expressed the view that he would rather learn more practical examples than theories while another participant from Hungary prefers the theoretical ways of teaching.

You know what's the problem of the university programme here, they teach you such thing that you would never use in the world. Nothing, just theory. Until this term, now, we get a practical subject called "investment and portfolio analysis management", this is the real world subject. They explain you everything related to financial management and share markets...

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, interview)

European educational system emphasises lexical knowledge and theoretical

information on top of everything, while the Asian way seems to be more functional, focusing on practical knowledge. However, taking only this approach may lead to the lack of theoretical background, which is much needed when the student has to act on his own or solve unmet problems. I prefer the theoretical way, because if I start to work, it will be something in my mind as a guideline.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, second diary)

Although it did not seem likely that participants could reach agreement on what degree of theory and practicality they considered should be included in the teaching they received, the fact remained that giving examples of real-world's practice was appreciated among the participants. In this context, Arnold, one of the Filipinos in Taiwan liked Economics because it introduced him to aspects of this "real world", things that surround us such as learning how GNP operates. A similar point of view was expressed by one of the Chinese participants in Germany, Yolanda. She believed that her Marketing professor had rich experiences and had even set up a company in Germany; as such, she considered that he gave very practical examples in his lectures and that these were not just about theories.

Moreover, almost all of the participants in Taiwan appreciated the practicality of a group assignment given in their Business module where everyone had to team up with people

from different countries and make a business plan. This had allowed students to learn how to set up a business from the very beginning including all of the details, such as budgets, loans from banks, and searching for a location for the business.

Usefulness for future career

The usefulness of a subject is related, in part, to how practical the subject is when performing tasks at the workplace. In the present study, for instance, few participants look at subjects like Accounting and Business Management and think that one needs to learn accounting in an academic way in order to be able to read the balance sheets or financial reports. Similarly, management is something that one can learn from practising on the job. Thomas, the Macanese participant in the UK, said in his interview that

... you can see some of the rich men, they didn't go to the universities and they don't know what management is, but they are doing business so well...

(Thomas, Macanese in the UK, interview)

Other participants had found a few subjects they were studying in the host country to be constrained by this local context, especially where this was very different from the context where they had grown up. Therefore, when they went back to their home

countries, they considered that they would need to learn completely new systems of business that applied to their home context. For example, courses like Business Law, Accounting / Taxation system or Democratic Constitutional Development, vary in practice from country to country. Moreover, few participants found that learning the local laws or systems of business was a good way to understand the local cultures in which they were a student.

Uniquely in this study, the German institution offered a course called “International Cultural Studies”, which participants found very useful, particularly if they were aiming to work in a big company where several considered that it would form an essential foundation prior to starting work in such an international corporate environment. One of the Bulgarian participants in Germany said in the focus group meeting that,

I think it's difficult to acquire the knowledge about different cultures because there are really big differences between Germany, Finland, Japan... so it's really good to study this at school because you might meet people from different countries...and this is communication.

(Lisa, Bulgarian in Germany, focus group)

Personal academic interest

Of course, all the factors mentioned above can influence a student's preference for a subject. When asked which module(s) were their favourite, Charlie (*German in the UK*) answered in three aspects: (1) those he had found interesting because of good textbooks, (2) those he had found interesting because of good teachers, and (3) those he considered would be useful for future perspectives. In his case the subject matter exemplifying these aspects was also the area in which he excelled – mathematics. Indeed, a majority of participants in the three institutions had chosen to study business because mathematics was one of their best subjects in schools. Therefore, it was not surprising that many of them found that they were especially interested in courses such as Economics, or Calculus. The following statement echoes factors that were discussed earlier in section 5.2.2.

I like Economics... we definitely had a great professor, and really helpful textbook, really helpful power point, it's like we were well-supported. The most interesting part was definitely the material... But I think the modules will help me the most are those mathematical ones, like statistics and mathematical modules I took. Not so useful in Management, and maybe a little bit in Accounting. Because I think those are the things you actually get it when you have a job, it's like on the job practice.

(Charlie, German in the UK, interview)

In contrast, someone not interested in or who had no talent for mathematics would find such subject-matter to be challenging. For instance, Kenny, one of the Hungarian participants in Taiwan, had never been good at mathematics in elementary or secondary school and had majored in humanities for his first bachelor's degree back home. He said, "It's not my best subject, so it was quite challenging trying to study high level of mathematics." Thus, he had found that he could not follow the module on Calculus at all. After having asked for help from peers for two months, he realised that he still did not have a clue about the subject because he lacked mathematics training due to his weak mathematical foundation.

Students' language proficiency in the medium of instruction

Some participants, particularly Chinese participants, like math subjects because of their language concerns in other areas of the curriculum. As the medium of instruction was in their second or foreign language, these students preferred to do maths assignments rather than writing essays. Sherry, the Chinese participant in the UK elaborated on this language problem:

I like Accounting because there are many mathematics things. I don't like to write essays, sometimes it's the language problem; I don't like writing essays, when there are lots of questions, you need to express. I prefer to count, to do the numbers, I am good at it.

(Sherry, Chinese in the UK; interview)

The same went for the other Chinese student studying in Germany who was suffering from the stereotyped image that all Chinese are good at maths. She admitted that maths was her worst subject during secondary school in China but that it became the subject she could do best in Germany. This, she felt, was because “maths is very simplified and it's very straightforward, you don't need many theories, it's all calculation, and you don't have to explain too much.” Another incident reported by the Chilean participant in Germany, Roger, related to issues of different accounting systems and language proficiency. Roger had taken accounting in his country when he studied one term in a business school in the university there in order to explore his study orientation. He found that in addition to the different accounting system, language was part of the reason that he failed the exams twice.

I had problems with accounting, I have taken the exams already twice and now it's my third and last time, otherwise, I have to go back home. And I really don't know

what's wrong because I had accounting in Chile and I passed with a very, very good mark, but here...well, the laws are different... Also, I think the problem this time is the language because I could do all the exercises, all the math, that was no problem at all. But this teacher likes theory a lot, really a lot... like two-thirds of the exam was theory and I couldn't answer any questions.

(Roger, Chilean in Germany; interview)

This language issue was frequently mentioned by participants in different contexts. Some had found subjects hard to understand mainly because of the academic language used in the area and partially due to their level of language proficiency. This was reported by some participants either during the interviews or in their diary entries. Earlier I pointed out that teachers' language insufficiency may be an obstacle for students to learn; on the other hand, intensive academic language can also be an obstacle for international students' learning. This had led participants to believe that if teachers could simplify the complex concepts by using more easy-to-understand language, this might serve to motivate and facilitate students' learning. A typical participant comment on this issue is given below:

Some subjects were hard to understand, such as Accounting, Statistics, and

Econometrics. The teachers used so academic English, it was really impossible to understand for me, I didn't get it at all. For the subject of Econometrics, it's quite a hard subject to understand; even if I was taught in my native language, I wouldn't have got it anyways, too complicated... but I love Microeconomics, the lecturer has the best way of teaching ever. The way she explained the math was so easy to understand.

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, interview)

Also in regard to the language disadvantage when studying in a foreign country, a Chinese participant felt that she was at the same starting point as her German classmates in the course taught in English, due to English being the second language for everyone in the class. Otherwise, she felt that she was a bystander in discussions taking place in the German language. She said,

I went to some workshops in the university, and the presentation was in English, but at the end, they all discussed in German, and sometimes I feel like I am a bystander.

(Gigi, Chinese in Germany, interview)

Nevertheless, language courses proved to be some of the participants' favourite areas of study. For example, participants in Taiwan expressed great interest in learning Chinese

although they thought the programme on offer could have been better. They wanted to learn the language because proficiency in Chinese had been one of the major motivations for them to seek to study in Taiwan and also because they desired to communicate with locals. In Germany, the Chilean participant liked the English language course for several reasons. He thought his English was getting bad because he was not using it frequently; secondly, in a small-sized English class, everyone had the opportunity to express their opinions and interact with each other. The English class he attended also talked about business-related language usages as well as management issues, such as dealing with people from different culture backgrounds – all of which he considered would be helpful for his future career.

5. 3. 4 Skills learned

Among all the teaching styles and methods they had encountered, participants had found that the main skills they had begun to master in the first year of study in their foreign country were as follows: presentation approaches, computer skills, communication skills and critical thinking skills.

Presentation

In Germany, students had often been given some maths problems or accounting cases to work on, either individually or in pairs during tutorial sessions. Then, they had to present in front of the class how they had solved the problems. Participants in Germany had found that the best interaction had occurred in small classes such as tutorials. In this context, the Portuguese exchange student thought the reason that students in Germany usually presented in tutorials was because they felt that they might learn more by doing a task rather than just listening to the solution to a problem being described. Julie, a Taiwanese woman studying in University B, considered that she had learned multiple presentation skills such as poster preparation, free style presentation that allowed students to use video clips, performing and staged talk shows. She said, “I realised academic [study] isn’t necessary that boring; instead, it could be much fun. In the future, when I need to do a presentation, I could apply similar technique to illustrate my idea as well as entertaining colleague and managers” (*Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, second diary*). However, she wished that she had received more feedback from the teacher after the presentations she had given. Additionally, a large amount of class time had been spent on student presentations, leaving only a small portion of time for lectures. For Julie this had resulted in very little knowledge (as opposed to skills development) having been actually gained.

Computer skills /software

As previously stated, technology has become more advanced in developed and developing countries in recent years. Some participants mentioned that they had learned several computer skills while studying abroad, that they felt they might not have been able to learn in their home country. For instance, Henry, a Filipino participant in Taiwan, only used computers in the Philippines for playing games. Now he had learned to use the computer to conduct academic research. A Hungarian participant, Kitty, in Taiwan said that she liked classes where she could learn how to solve a problem in Excel as opposed to doing it on paper (*Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, second diary*). Sherry, a Chinese participant in the UK, also reported that she was able to learn accounting analysis software in her Information System lectures, thereby helping her to improve her own problem solving abilities, something that she probably would not have encountered if she had remained a student in China (*Sherry, Chinese in the UK, second diary*).

During the focus group meeting with Diplom students in Germany, Sarah, a Bulgarian participant said she wished there were some skills training courses at her host university that provided basic principles of computer knowledge. For example, in her Corporate Financial course, students were required to use Excel to complete a case study. Sarah was familiar with Excel as she had used it before for work, but there were students in her class

who did not know how to operate the programme. Additionally, Lisa, another Bulgarian participant in Germany commented that the university realised the needs of some students by providing some computer training or IT courses but this was being done in the context of its Bachelor programme curriculum. Roger, a Chilean participant on the Bachelor programme in Germany, stated in his first diary entry that he had learned many computer skills, mainly programming, and that he had found this very helpful in his educational growth.

Communication skills / workshop

In addition to computer skills, some participants found that some workshops or seminars involving employers had been helpful in helping them to prepare for their future careers: writing a good CV, practical economics case studies and communication skills, for example. Thus, Gigi, a Chinese participant in Germany, had found that German companies “are more willing to hold small-scaled case study workshops” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, second diary*). She added that in China, only renowned enterprises provided forum or speaking opportunities for university students. In the communication skills workshop in Germany, Roger learned public speaking. “We recorded ourselves talking, and they give you advice like I shouldn't move my hands that much, or I should looking at people's eyes, eye-contact and how fast we should talk etc.” (*Roger, Chilean in Germany,*

interview).

Critical thinking versus cramming

One Taiwanese participant appreciated the critical thinking skills she had learned in University B, and this was reiterated across all of the data set she provided for the study (from the initial interview to her last diary entry). In Taiwan, she mentioned that teachers provided information for students to remember, whereas in the UK, teachers invited students to think openly and critically, and to discuss absorbed information with their peers. Teaching in the UK allowed for students to express their own opinions. She wrote in her third diary that,

Their [British] culture encourages them to think and act freely and social activity is quite important in their daily life. Education system encourages pupils to do lots of self-studying on the topic they are interest instead of cramming things into their head as well as put emphasis on group work to develop students' potential.

(Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, third diary)

Julie's point of view was also supported by Charlie (in his second diary), affirming the notion that Western education systems tend to enhance a student's problem solving and

critical thinking skills. In contrast, cramming approaches and a lack of critical thinking skills had been experienced by participants in Taiwan where, it seemed, passing exams became the only reason for students to study (*Henry, Filipino in Taiwan, second diary*).

Others

Participants in the three different research contexts also reported the development of further new skills. For example, participants in the UK considered that they had developed strong essay writing skills. Other participants cited learning a new language or advancing knowledge of a known language as an added benefit. Some who had not majored in business as undergraduates were happy to have begun to acquire insights into the business world. Arnold, a Filipino participant in Taiwan, said “I think studying business is a basic way of knowing other aspects of the world. It is also a study of ways of living” (*Arnold, male, Filipino, interview*). However, another Filipino participant in Taiwan, Henry, thought it would have been more helpful if the programme had included internship training, so students could apply learned theoretical knowledge to practical job tasks.

5.3.5 Learning strategies

In section 5.2.3 we looked at the participants' psychological adaptation. Now, we turn to look at their academic adaptation. A student's study load was commented upon by participants in the UK. Participants in Germany also provided views on why there was such a heavy workload in comparison to their home country experience. Due to a combination of study load and different teaching pedagogies, participants found they had had to adapt their learning strategies. At times, they would have to complete assignments or prepare for exams earlier than they were used to. Also, some of the participants had found it hard to form a study group in the foreign context, further reporting that they preferred to study by themselves with little help from their peers or teachers. I will discuss below each of the issues reported by the participants under this general heading of learning strategies.

Study load

The issue of study load was reported as an issue in the UK and Germany. Conversely, participants in Taiwan had little to say about this question. This is probably because University T is not a top-ranking university and its academic requirement is at a lower standard, which may lighten the study pressure when compared with the other two

universities in this study. Additionally, detailed study materials were prepared and given to students by teachers in University T, unburdening the students from having to do their own research. Moreover, from the Taiwan data sets, it can be deduced that participants from Western countries did not feel the requirement to expend much efforts in preparing for exams, which they perceived as easy. Moreover, in the classroom, teachers rarely posed questions to students, so there was no need for them to prepare before going to class (*Henry, Filipino in Taiwan; second diary*). Only the Vietnamese participant in Taiwan mentioned this issue (in her diary) : she reported having a busy semester due to the exams and assignments. This evidence may lend further support to my assumption about the relationship between one's language ability, such as vocabulary and reading speed, and a student's perception of the level of difficulty in the study required of them. This view is supported by Sherry's statement that coping with a student's study load was not a big issue, but that managing linguistically was:

In China, students are very competitive, and it's not enough just reading the material learned in the class. So I was there like most of the people, searching sources and books, studying by ourselves, so that we can compete with each other. So I think dealing with academic textbooks or resources is not a big problem for me, but the language how to write the essay and do the presentation is the big challenge.

(Sherry, Chinese in the UK, focus group)

Roger, the Chilean participant in Germany, indicated another factor influencing a heavy study load. He considered that the reason why he had such a heavy study load is because the university compressed too many courses into too little time. Roger's belief was in line with other participants' comments of a similar nature mentioned in section 4. 2. 1. The prevailing result in the data was that there is a relatively short period of studying time in the UK and Germany (three years), which forces foreign students from countries where degrees take longer to feel more pressure. Compared to students back home, who have a four-year university education, the foreign students in my study in the UK and Germany had had to learn the same amount of knowledge, but in a shorter period of time.

Irrespective of the reasons behind having a heavy study load, many participants reported that they had no time to spend on social activities or making new friends. All Diplom participants in the German focus group unanimously agreed that during the first three years of their Diplom study (the five-year programme which combines a bachelor's and master's degree), they were so busy that they did not have much of a social life. This could be seen clearly in the participants' diaries, which revealed that the study load was heavier in each successive year, particularly in the UK. Almost all the UK participants reported that the second year had been busier than the first year with more assignments

and more complex concepts. For example, in his first year Albert learned Economics but this split into Microeconomics and Macroeconomics in the second year. Many of the UK participants found this challenging because it was all new knowledge for them. Some, however, were happy to face such challenges. Either way, a heavy workload gave students less time for social engagement outside of the classroom, and this will be discussed in more detail in section 5.4.2.

Self-study

Teaching approaches enable students to motivate themselves, and this can have positive and negative effects. In Taiwan, the majority of the required study materials had been given to students by their teachers. In the UK, almost all the resources are posted online, allowing students to study from home without much help from others. For example, Charlie, the German participant, said in the UK focus group that:

I can learn socially isolated, I don't need anyone else to learn. I actually don't even need a professor, all I need is the book, WebCT and some papers. Really, that's it. You learn to learn but you don't learn to interact with others during the course. So you don't really learn anything about leadership or team work.

(Charlie, German in the UK, focus group)

This had also resulted in a phenomenon whereby participants would not ask for help from their peers when they had questions or failed to understand lectures. Instead, they tended to study on their own by reading all of the information they had on hand. This point was made in many of the participants' statements. Two examples follow.

If I don't understand, I just read my books or read their PowerPoint slides. I don't need teachers helping me because I am helping myself. Because in Russia, I learned not only read the books but also learned how to study.

(Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview)

When I had questions and if I asked my peers, they usually couldn't help me. Most of the stuff, I think I figured it out myself. Because through books, power point slides, all the information given to me, 99% of the cases, it was sufficient.

(Charlie, German in the UK, interview)

There was a unique case where the Macanese participant in the UK did not like to ask tutors for help when he had a question because he lacked confidence in his English speaking ability. He said "I'm afraid I can't express myself clearly. Other guys are really

good at English and sometimes you ask questions and the professors don't know what you are saying. It's such a bad feeling." He feels that studying in the UK was very difficult and that, because of this, he preferred to study the material on his own (*Thomas, Macanese in the UK, interview*). Meanwhile, there were some participants who did not like self-study because this was not how they had learned to study in their home country. For example, Albert found self-study to be something he wasn't used to in his country; as was evident in his interviews with me²:

I wasn't plan to self-study. In my country, I get used to hours of study in classroom. I've never relied on heavy books, everything is given to you by your teacher, and you just write everything down from lectures. Then you come back home and revise it... here you have to read the whole books because in exams, every question covers like one chapter, probably. We have to write a lot for each question in exams. The lecture notes is like this (he gestured a thin book) and the textbook is like this (gestured a thick book). If there are 20 questions, you feel that you need to cover the whole book.

(Albert, Kazakh in the UK, the first follow-up interview)

² Albert was the only participant who did not want to 'write' diaries, so I met with him twice and asked him face-to-face the questions that were required to be answered in diaries.

Forming a study group

The phenomenon of forming a study group had been mentioned so far only in the German context because some of these participants had decided to work together with peers to help them better prepare for exams and for interaction generally. When asking questions of tutors either in class or during office hours, participants felt that they could not ask freely about everything. They could only ask the specific question or concept that they were not familiar with. However, students in a German institute are allowed to post the questions they have in an online forum for the professor or for other students to respond. Britta, the Norwegian participant, “[found] it difficult to put questions into words,” and so sought questions to be solved by a study group. Even so, one Chinese participant, Gigi, reported that German students had problems in this respect with some of their courses. She offered to help build a learning group for discussion, but it was difficult for her to “integrate in their [German] groups because sometimes they tell a joke and I cannot understand, so it's a little bit hard” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, interview*). Most of the time, Gigi had studied alone (see section 5.2.3 for other examples of cultural integration issues).

In the Taiwan context, international students live in the same residential hall. Judging by

what these participants reported, they seemed to easily study in pairs with their roommates or seek help from others. For example, Kenny had asked peers' to help him to learn Calculus.

Completing assignments or preparing for examinations earlier (language barriers)

Another reason that language influences a students' learning strategies, particularly in the UK, is that students tend to complete assignments or prepare for exams long before deadline. This is primarily due to the students' distress over language.

Back home [in China or Taiwan, for example], participants had usually studied for a week or two prior to examinations. Now, they were preparing for exams a month or two prior to the time they would be sat. Moreover, in the UK and Germany where the exams are similar to essays, students needed to read a lot more than their lecture notes. They also needed more time to re-read and comprehend information that had already been reviewed since English was not their native language (*UK focus group dialogue*). Although most participants recognised that they would have to put in extra effort while studying in a foreign country, none said that they disliked the challenge or pressure to study harder that this entailed.

Another issue about learning

Finally, there was one specific phenomenon reported by Kitty, the Hungarian participant in Taiwan: this concerned seat assignment. Where one sits in the classroom influence the percentage of knowledge learned in class. Kitty had found that the classroom could be categorised into four sections: integration, de-integration, partial integration and partial de-integration. “If you sit in the first row, you understand everything; but if you sit in the back, you understand nothing. Really!! So I choose to sit in the first row listening to the teachers, taking notes and do the homework. If you do this, you don’t even have to study for the exams. I know I don’t want to study in my free time; I want to do something else in my free time. If I have the chance to study in the class, I will do it” (*Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview*). The way in which a student’s seat place is related to the amount they learn can be explained a number of ways. One reason can be from what some participants in my study said of their classmates: students may sit in class only because of an attendance requirement, and when they do so under these conditions they are probably “doing their own thing” (such as using their own laptops, or sleeping). It seems reasonable to assume that students who don’t pay attention usually sit themselves away from the teacher at the back of the classroom. Perhaps only students who sat in the front rows of the classroom according to Kitty’s schema, were concentrating on the lectures and learning attentively.

So far I have only discussed teaching and learning via participants' individual perceptions, and have not discussed the dynamics of the multicultural classroom composed of students from various cultural backgrounds. In the next section, I will discuss how my participants perceived the multicultural components that were occurring both inside and outside of the classroom.

5.4 Cultural components and influence

Although there were more than a dozen nationalities in the participant group, the participants learning experiences in the multicultural classrooms were not strongly influenced by their own home cultures or those of others. Thus, it was found that individual differences rather than the cultural differences were the main influence of the experiences of the individuals. This section will discuss how the participants perceived their interaction with other students in two multicultural environments: inside and outside the classroom.

5.4.1. Inside the classroom

A lack of interaction between teachers and students or among students themselves in big

lectures theatres was widely reported by the participant sample as a result of which they did not reflect much on the cultural dynamics brought to the classroom by their peers from varied cultural backgrounds. Rather, the time that they may have had more intercultural interactions with peers appeared to occur when students were working in pairs, in groups in case studies, or in groups undertaking business projects. As was evident in both the interview data and in diary entries, most participants had appreciated the opportunity to work with people from different cultures, although there were some negative voices as well. I will now focus on how, in group-work it was reported that the groups had been formed, how groups leaders had been chosen, and whether participants had benefited from or had shied away from working in multicultural groups.

Group projects

The amount of group work that participants had experienced varied depending on the majors they were studying. For example, the Kazakh participant in the UK majored in Economics and Finance and had encountered no group work in the first one and a half years of study (i.e. up to the end of the data collection period of this research study). In contrast, Julie, a major in Tourism and Management in the UK had given several different types of presentation. In Germany, where mathematics was more emphasised in Business studies, there had been very little opportunity for group work. However, participants were

able to share their limited group work experiences with the researcher.

The forming of groups

When an assignment, such as a group project, was given to them, participants had found that if the teacher did not assign the group members, people tended to stick with those whom they knew from home or from the same cultural background. This experience was similar for participants across the three research contexts, but particularly so in Taiwan. It seemed that teachers there were aware of this problem and had tried to avoid single-nation working groups, with some indeed assigning groups where every nation was represented. However, when groups were not assigned in this way, the experience reported in the interview with Charlie, the German participant studying in the UK, was typical: all of his group members were British and he was the only international student in the group (Charlie's fluency in English being considered near to native English by the researcher). Similarly, Britta, the Norwegian participant studying in Germany said that everyone in her normal study group was German except for one woman from China, "but she's grown up in Germany so she's very German I will say. And another who has lived in Paris for six years but also German and her parents are German as well. And the rest are Germans" (*Britta, Norwegian in Germany, interview*). Roger, the Chilean participant studying in Germany, reported in his third diary entry that if a work-group was formed

randomly (without the teachers' arrangement), it seemed that German students had the power to form the groups. One had to wait until a German student invited him or her to be in their group, otherwise, one had to reach out to friends. This point was further echoed by the interview with Yolanda, the Chinese participant studying in Germany, who stated that she had been invited by her German friends to join their group.

Group atmosphere (leadership)

Once a group had been formed, the next issue was the election of the group leader. It was interesting to hear participants reporting various methods for the selection of group leaders. In Germany, it seemed that there usually was not a group leader. Gigi particularly pointed out that “most of the times [there is] no group leader. I think Germans do not believe leaders or heroes” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, third diary*). In the UK, only one participant reported what other research studies suggest, that the “British usually becomes the team leader automatically” (*Sherry, Chinese in the UK, Focus Group*). The other two participants (Julie and Thomas) in University B said that everyone took turns to be leader for different projects, and the issue was dependent on who was more familiar with the topic. Charlie, the German participant studying in the UK, observed a distinctive phenomenon in his group-work experiences that made it difficult initially for him to take a leadership position, a reticence reinforced by his home experience of how a leader was

selected in the German context:

If there are strong athletic good-looking guys, the group automatically takes him to be in charge and to lead the team; whereas at home, they would be more like group circle kind of thing, everybody expresses their opinions. There is no real leader, I didn't like here, it was more automatically like who looks like they could lead, so let's make him do that.

(Charlie, German in the UK, Focus Group)

Because of this, Charlie considered that he did not have any power or authority to make decisions and this made him feel insecure (*Charlie, German in the UK, third diary*). For example, in his first group project he felt that he had not had the power to make decisions, but the leader who was selected did not act as a good role model, making for a power vacuum. The outcome of the first group-work activity in which he had been involved was not good. Thus, Charlie voluntarily took the leadership position in the second group project; the outcome was better on this second occasion.

In Taiwan, the participants' comments were succinct and concurred with the stereotype that Asians prefer to maintain harmony in a group and to respect elders and superiors. In

the experience of Kitty, the Hungarian participant in Taiwan, it had proved much easier to elect a leader in Taiwan than it was in Hungary or in Switzerland where she had been an exchange student in the Erasmus Scholarship Programme. The leader she had worked with in Taiwan was respected and trusted, while arguments had frequently occurred in both Hungary and Switzerland, making the assigned tasks hard to complete.

After leaders had been decided upon, participants reported that individual responsibilities were then to be defined, along with how the group should work on the project as a team. Most of the time, according to participants' reports, each team member would volunteer to take responsibility for a task that they felt well acquainted with. Or, the leader would also assign tasks if s/he knew the skills that his/her respective team members were good at. This was evidenced in several participants' statements, among which the following was typical:

... everyone is good at different things... Sandy is good at Calculus and Accounting, I am good at talking and collecting information and Vicky is good at some other things, making the PowerPoint slides and pictures. Everyone just said I'd like to do this part, or I'd like to do that.

(Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview)

Communication and negotiation

The group work reported had involved frequent communication and negotiation, with language being the most important issue. Some participants had been more concerned about their accent, pronunciation or whether it was a good idea to say this and that. While they were pondering this, the group would have already moved to the next issue and the student would then miss the chance to express their ideas. A more serious problem caused by the language barrier was that participants had found it difficult to create a voice that could be persuasive within the group of which they found themselves a member. For instance, Thomas, the Macanese participant in the British institution, wrote in his third diary that:

When I was doing the Information System project with the group mates who come from Hong Kong, I found that we can discuss the topic deeply. I can express my opinion thoroughly with my mother tongue. However, even though the atmosphere of working with two Europeans was very well, it's difficult to communicate well with them because the English problem.

(Thomas, male, Macanese in the UK, third diary)

In addition to these language issues, cultural differences may also have been an obstacle to the negotiation process. Many participants acknowledged that some cultures, usually Western ones, were more aggressive while Asians appeared to value harmony with others, emphasise human relationships and try to minimise conflict. This was most likely due to the influence of Confucian culture; the concept of “face” is an important cultural issue which was reflected in the data for this study. So, for example, during a negotiation, Asians were reported as more likely to maintain each other’s face instead of pursuing direct confrontation in order to reach an agreement successfully. Thus, students who had come from Western societies had found that working with Asians made group work easier and smoother. But for Asians, it seemed that they had to make compromises. For example, Arnold, a Filipino participant in Taiwan, joined a group with Vietnamese, Russian, Hungarian, and Taiwanese members, mostly women except for him and the Taiwanese student. After the individual tasks had been decided upon at the first meeting, later, at the second, none of the team members brought along the information they were responsible for having researched. He said “Everyone has different excuses, such as they were busy with their personal stuff etc., and I didn’t want any argumentation... so I did the whole project on my own, I did the presentation and the writing... everything... nobody helped me” (*Arnold, Filipino in Taiwan, interview*). Compromise appeared particularly prevalent in cases where the language for communication was a student’s second or foreign

language. As Gigi, a Chinese participant in Germany reported, when conflicts occur, “we cannot persuade each other. We cannot convince each other... I have to compromise because it's their mother language, they dominate” (*Gigi, Chinese participant in Germany, interview*).

Broad differences between “individualism” and “collectivism” are thus largely evident in the intercultural communication reported in this study. However, this can only act as a general guideline for explaining various scenarios. Throughout the data, there was always uniqueness to be accounted for. For example, there were two Hungarian participants in this study. One female, Kitty described the group work atmosphere in her country to be more aggressive than it had been in Taiwan. However, the male participant from Hungary, Kenny, kept silent when he worked in groups and did not speak up when he did not approve of a self-appointed group leader. He described the Vietnamese man in his group as being the first to talk about an idea, with the result that he became the leader. Yet, although Kenny had not liked the idea of the project that the leader proposed, but he had not said anything to the leader because he was worried that “he [the leader] might be sad or hurt... so I think ok, let’s not generate any tension here” (*Kenny, male, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview*). He had talked to other group members after the group meeting and told them that he did not like the leader’s proposal but others seemed to like it, so he had

had to act as a cooperative team member. Other statements from participants may help explain why Kenny refrained from speaking up. Perhaps he wanted to maintain his country's image by having good manners when he worked with people from other nations. And perhaps he might have acted more aggressively when working with people from his country or region. The Russian participant, Lily, said,

When you work with different nations, you try not to lose your national face. It's not aggressive, but you try your best to show the best side of your nation. When you work with all Russians, you feel free...if you have something in mind, you just say it. We can refuse other's ideas because we are not shy inside our group. But sometimes what we say causes conflicts.

(Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview)

From all the statements that Kenny made about group-based project work, in both the interview and in his diary, it was evident that he appreciated the skills and knowledge gained from team work. The thing that had upset him the most and that he criticised was his personal distaste for the leader. He described the leader as a “self-appointed bastard” or a “careless idiot”, as is seen in his third diary entry:

...a project shows only the individual ways of learning and it cannot represent the whole nation's attitudes and habits... For example, some Vietnamese can be hard-working, caring leaders and some are lazy, careless idiots. It depends on the individuals. (Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, third diary)

Another participant's statement was similar to Kenny's in explaining that "cultural difference" or "national difference" among students may not fully represent the dynamics or conflicts of working in a group. For Roger, the Chilean participant in University G, group dynamics also depended on the individuals concerned. Roger said: "That's nothing to do with being German or not, even if we are all Chileans, it's pretty natural that sometimes we don't agree with each other on some subjects" (*Roger, Chilean in Germany, interview*). When there had been conflicts he had stayed calm and waited for an opportunity to give his opinion. Then, in a similar manner to a couple of the other participants, after everyone had expressed their own opinion, Roger reported that normally a vote was taken and the democracy won. In contrast to what Kenny had felt, Roger did not consider himself offended if his opinion wasn't taken by the group, "What's important is that every opinion is heard and taken into consideration" (*Roger, Chilean in Germany, the third diary*).

A further finding that might be related to this perspective of “individualism” versus “collectivism” came from the American participant in Taiwan, Frank. He had spent six minutes talking about an individual assignment in which he proposed to run a t-shirt business. However, he then spent only one minute talking about the group project for the same module. He didn’t like the group work much “because our group...” he said “[is composed of] so many different countries. It’s hard to get something that everyone would agree on” (*Frank, American in Taiwan, interview*). Despite this, Frank still felt that he had been able to contribute his good skill to the team, promoting the business or designing the advertising and packaging. He attributed this to his being from the US, – “I think probably because of the American ego, I tried to be a little flashy when we talk about the business ideas. I was thinking the American business, how to promote the business, not only the advertising, but you know the packaging, you want to show off” (*Frank, American in Taiwan, interview*).

A final issue of this kind in the data concerning the differences that participants had observed between Western and Eastern countries is important. In Taiwan, group work was seen by participants as characterising a united front, an image of the team, whereas in the more individualistic cultures of the UK and Germany, students were reported as tending to accept the independence of each individual, within a model of society that is

more loosely connected. For example, in a campus-wide business plan competition, Kitty had found that Taiwanese students tended to seek to make a good impression by dressing formally. The whole group's members were wearing ties or suits. In Europe where Kitty is from, she considered that people paid less attention to group image; students in a similar situation, she thought, would have just gone up to the stage and begun their presentations in a more casual manner (*Kitty, Hungarian in Taiwan, interview*).

Advantages / disadvantage of group-based project work

Participants reported more advantages and strengths than disadvantages and weaknesses when working with a group of peers from different cultural backgrounds. The disadvantage of working with fellow students from diverse cultures was seen mainly as an issue of communication. Everyone has a particular opinion and everyone wants to have his/her opinion heard. However, a couple of the participants indicated that some of these opinions had fallen beyond the topic areas under discussion, thereby wasting valuable time and making the discussion inefficient. Other negative voices considered were those which had resulted from bad experiences of group work, such as Arnold's irresponsible group members or Kenny's personal opinion of his group leader.

Most participants had found that they had learned many useful skills from group-work

experiences. Mainly, they reported having learned how to deal with human relationships and how to create a proper presentation. In particular, participants had encountered team members who could complement each other's weakness and help each other to understand the subject better. Also, it was felt that group members could act as gatekeepers, criticising each other's work for the sake of the quality of the project overall. Moreover, Roger had found that in working in a multicultural group, he was able to hear more opinions and different perspectives that he had never thought of before. On the other hand, there had also been times when too many opinions had served to delay progress. In the final account, participants felt that everyone in a group tended to share the same goal which was to make a good project and to overcome the differences caused by cultures or other factors (*Roger, Chilean in Germany, third diary*).

A further valuable point was made by Kenny. After several group-work experiences, he felt that he had learned to appreciate the experience that allowed him to learn how to work with people, most notably how to handle peers in an academic situation. More importantly, he said that "group work teaches you trust others – the psychological value is what we later make use of" (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, third diary*). He had also found that working with one or more people helped to generate creative ideas. Even so, he had also chosen to do an assignment alone for a module on Chinese History and, through this,

had been introduced to his favourite theme in Chinese culture – landscape painting. Yet, in the end, he admitted: “it would have been more focused or interesting if I had made it with somebody else” (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, third diary*).

5.4.2 Outside the classroom: social circle

Some participants said that one of their primary motivations in studying abroad had been to learn the local language of the country and its culture. They considered that the best way to achieve this was to make friends with locals, but most had found this difficult to do. It was much easier, however, to make friends with other overseas peers because of their shared status as international students in the foreign context. Meanwhile, some of the participants had tried varied means of making new friends, among both locals and fellow international students, particularly those participants with more outgoing personalities.

Reasons for difficulty in making friends with local students

The major reason why international students in Germany and the UK had found it hard to make friends with local students was that it was difficult to be accepted or involved in the social circle of locals. They had found local students to appear arrogant or difficult when attempting to start new friendships. This was evident in many of the participants’

statements, perhaps most notably, Britta, whose German language was near perfect to that of native German speakers and who considered herself to be a member of a German social circle. She said that most of her friends were German and she used the word “we” to include herself in such groupings. She stated “when going to student parties with friends, we [Germans] seem very arrogant for the outsiders and people don’t really want to talk to us” (*Britta, Norwegian in Germany, interview*). Julie, the Taiwanese participant in the UK, reported that when she met some of the British students with whom she had worked in a group project on campus, and tried to say “hi” but “they just pretended that they didn't see you, they didn't say hello... they just totally ignored you” (*Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, focus group*). These two examples do not mean to say that there was no evidence in the study that German or British students make friends with international students, nor was it the case that it had proved impossible for international students to establish friendships with local students. In fact, it had been possible, but had taken more time and efforts than was the case for establishing friendships with people from other countries. Usually, those with international backgrounds had either studied or travelled abroad, and were more interested in making friends with international students. However, a couple of participants in Germany said that although it had taken more time to make friends with Germans, once the friendship had been built up, it appeared likely to last longer than a relationship with a mere acquaintance.

The general problem of language barriers was largely shared by participants across all three research contexts. Participants had found that their language skills had a specific impact on their confidence level when communicating in a second or foreign language. For instance, Charlie said, “If my speaking skills are inferior to my conversation partner’s, I have a harder time shaping the conversation the way I like and I therefore feel less confident. It is therefore easier for me to interact with other international students in English or other German students in German” (*Charlie, German in the UK, the third diary*). A similar point of view was advanced by Lily, who felt shy speaking to Taiwanese people who have studied in English speaking countries. She felt that “their English is nearly perfect and Chinese is their native language,” so they have more communication advantages (*Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview*).

The language medium of communication turned out to be a particularly important issue in Taiwan. The programme in the Taiwan institution in the study was being conducted entirely in English, except for the Chinese language modules and most of those enrolled as international students on this programme had never learned Chinese until they joined it (over one year previously at the time of the fieldwork). These participants’ Chinese language ability was insufficient to allow them to communicate with local students. Their

communication mostly relied on the English language and, moreover, they had found Taiwanese students to be too shy to speak English with them or, if an effort had been made, only to keep an English conversation going for a short period of time. Despite this, these participants in the study were hoping that they could improve their Chinese by talking to and learning from local people. Disappointingly, there had been times when Taiwanese people had seen foreign faces and had started conversations in English rather than in the local language of Chinese. Participants had found this most disappointing when Taiwanese had apologised to them for not being able to speak English well. This had led my participants to think that the Taiwanese were not proud of their own language, in contrast to the experience of some who came from non-English speaking European countries where people were proud of their own language and spoke it to foreigners, even if they know how to speak English. Those were all issues discussed actively in the focus group in Taiwan. This general view in the group was that such issues posed a dilemma for both Taiwanese and international students in Taiwan, with neither appearing to benefit from a multicultural campus environment due to limitations in language abilities.

Another factor that had made friendship between international students and local students difficult had been the lack of a common interest partially, it was felt, because of cultural difference. For example, Sherry liked comic books, which her British friends had

considered to be childish. Meanwhile, the British friends she had like to go clubbing which Sherry is not interested in. Thus, she found topics in their conversations unproductive (*Sherry, Chinese in the UK, focus group*). Another example was given by Kenny. He found that “Taiwanese students age of 19-23 seem to play a lot of computer games, hardly go out... which is more likely to be the case in the kids at the age of 14-17 in Europe. Thus, in the university, I rarely come across people who might be interesting to me in this respect” (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, the third diary*). However, there were instances where shared common interests had helped to bring strangers together. This was evidenced in several of the participants’ statements. For example, a friend that Julie had met in Cambridge liked the same music styles and singers, so they had found that they had much to share and discuss and had spent time listening to the black disks they collected together. By the time of the fieldwork, this friend had frequently invited Julie to stay with her in Cambridge for holidays. Another means of contact was related to gender, with some participants commenting that they perceived that men’s talk or women’s talk could break down some cultural barriers.

Due to the difficulties discussed here, participants had found intercultural communication with local students very limiting. Instead, it had proved far more interesting for them to make friends with other international students from various countries. For example, Gigi

had had a part-time job in a local German company for one summer and had met some German colleagues, but she did not consider them friends as she said the relationship was very loose and they did not go out together. For Gigi, “it's easier to make friends here with also international backgrounds, such as French, Bulgarian and Spanish. They're more open than the German. They are like us, don't have many local friends like the German guys, and tend to be more interested in Asian culture. We discuss the lessons and cook together sometimes” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, second diary*). In the following section, I will discuss the places that participants met new friends and the interactions they had.

Places to meet new friends

In the previous section, we discussed the difficulties that participants had faced when communicating with local students. They found it took much less efforts to communicate with someone from a similar language or international background. The most convenient place for them to meet other international students was in student housing. Although a couple of participants mentioned unhappy experiences of living with local students, this did not seem to be a cultural issue but was more about differences in personal living habits. Most participants reported that they shared their country's respective cuisines with their roommates, floor mates or dorm mates, and went food shopping or watched TV together. The American participant who came from a small village in Missouri said that

he had never thought he would one day have such a wonderful experience meeting so many people from all over the world, even becoming good friends with them. He described these memories as unforgettable in his life (*Frank, American in Taiwan, focus group*). Another participant, Julie, had made many friends when she studied for her foundation programme in Cambridge. She found herself very interested in knowing more about Spanish language and culture and this had enabled her to make a decision to enrol on a degree programme combining a one-year study abroad scheme in Spain as an exchange student. Evidence in the data also pointed to international students in my sample trying to understand a new national culture by studying abroad, while also introducing their home cultures when abroad. For instance, Kitty, the Hungarian participant in Taiwan, taught a few Hungarian phrases to her Mongolian roommate from time to time so that the roommate was able to communicate with Kitty's family on the internet when Kitty regularly contacted her family. Kitty and her family were very impressed and happy that her roommate was interested in their language and cultures. Another example was given by Kenny, another Hungarian participant in Taiwan. He explained that, because he communicates with Mongolian friends a lot, he feels very in tune with their culture. He said,

Mongolians always tell me the customs of their mother land, give me genuine

Mongolian gifts thus I know “a lot” about their way of living. I can make jokes that only those understand who know their culture. I can mock them with certain stereotypes which I know are not true – I can confidently judge something if it is genuine Mongolian or not.

(Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, third diary)

The activities held by some student clubs or organisations had also allowed participants to meet more international students. Aspects of multicultural involvement were reported least in Germany as none of the participants there had been able to join any college activities due to the heavy study load reported in their interviews and diaries. For participants in the UK, joining student clubs had arisen mostly due to each individual's personal interests in music, sports or gaining extra financial knowledge or skills, the latter being less to do with meeting new friends. Even if these participants had met some new people (both British and international), they had found that they were still closer to those who shared the same cultural background. Charlie's comment below is an example of this:

I found myself feeling like an outsider, since the British students bonded quicker and more intensely between one another. The feeling is slowly vanishing now because I

am currently engaging in a number of extra-curricular activities that have helped me build a network. I founded a jazz band that I now manage. I also attend French and German conversation classes. Also, I play tennis and football regularly. As a consequence, I have met a number of new people and made some new friends. They were partly British, some international and some Germans studying in Exeter. The ones I consider "friends" are mostly German though. I play football together with them and we go out together.

(Charlie, German in the UK, third diary)

In contrast, nearly all participants in Taiwan mentioned their enjoyment of the various activities held by the International Student Association and International Cultural Organisation, such as a “Culture Day”, an “Amazing Race” and parties on special holidays like Halloween or Christmas. Through these activities, they had learned more about other cultures and considered that they had gained a deeper understanding of the local culture. For example, for the Russian participant, Lily, those activities were not only a chance for both international and local students to get more involved in the international society [on campus] but also a chance for her to catch up with the vivid college life in which she missed back in Russia. Meanwhile, participants reported that they had found that cultures were not that different with respect to games played in early childhood.

Other places that the students in the study had made new friends were the library or a cafeteria on campus. Lisa said that when she had studied in the library for a couple of weeks, she saw the same people around her and started to say “hi” to some of them and having coffee together. Also at exam time (in University G), seats had been assigned so that students always sat next to the same people. After a couple of such instances, they had started to say “hi” to each other (*Lisa, Bulgarian in Germany, focus group*).

When it came to improving their language ability, participants had tried to make as much opportunity as possible to use language in communication. Some participants mentioned that they had had part-time jobs, either during holidays between term times or throughout the entire academic year. They had found that the part-time jobs did not allow them to make new friendships but had, nevertheless, provided them with opportunities to communicate with people in the local language. The institution researched in the UK had also provided a programme called the “buddy scheme” for international students. They could sign in and be assigned a British student as an individual language exchange buddy. Some of the participants in the British university had signed up for the programme and found it helpful for improving their language proficiency. There was still, however, for most the sense of a “gap” composed of all the factors discussed above. This seemed to

them like an invisible wall which made it hard to maintain friendships after their particular programme ended.

Personality attributes and personal efforts

The last factor found in the data regarding the means participants had used to extend their social circle was personal attributes. If the participants were outgoing or easygoing, it appeared that they had been able to make friends wherever they went. The same was true in reverse. There were several examples of outgoing participants who made friends almost everywhere: Lisa and Albert both said that they sometimes start talking with some students in the library. Arnold had been keen to take all of the opportunities open to him to be exposed to a Chinese environment, such as watching TV with Taiwanese students in the resident hall even though he could only pick up few words or phrases from the TV programmes. He had also learned to sing Chinese songs with some senior international students in the dorm. In contrast, Yolanda and Sherry consider themselves introverted or indoor persons. With the heavy study loads they experienced, they had not found much time for going out and making friends. This was particularly the case for Yolanda and she did not mention her social life in the interview or her diary entries.

5.5. Advantages and disadvantages perceived after a year of studying abroad

At the beginning of the individual interviews, I asked about each participant's level of expectation with respect to studying abroad. During the interviews, we discussed the participants' points of views on their first year's experience in a foreign country. In the last diary entry, I requested them to reflect a second time on their overall points of views and learning experience. I hoped to find some connections between their expectations and their actual experiences. These reports from the data can be introduced in two categories: advantages and disadvantages. Most of the participants had found that their experiences abroad had met their original aims and motivation such that they now felt more capable of dealing with life independently, learning about the foreign cultures and language(s), and knowing how to get along with people from different cultural backgrounds. And it seemed that there is only one disadvantage of studying abroad – being far away from home, family and friends. This led to a sense of loss for a place of belonging.

5.5.1. Advantages

Being independent / self-confident

In addition to the experiences of learning in a different education system abroad, almost

every participant cited independence and self-confidence as a major advantage of their experience overall. Some had chosen to study abroad because they knew it would allow them to handle and solve obstacles in an academic setting or in daily life, all the while contributing to growth. This was especially evident in the case of Albert, the Kazakh participant. He talked vividly about youth and maturity during the time he had studied abroad. Moreover, his parents, who could only see him once a year, found that he had grown up quicker than they anticipated. Julie's parents also found that she was doing very well on her own in a foreign environment, leading them to compliment her by saying that “she is really a grown-up person, she is really doing good over there, she didn't fail. She got a [part-time] job and she got her social life, she is happy there because she doesn't phone us as often as before” (*Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, interview*).

As discussed earlier, participants had been through all sorts of difficulties in learning and expanding their social circle, as well as in the more general process of adapting to life abroad. By overcoming those difficulties, participants had become more confident in themselves and felt better able to handle their problems or to make decisions on their own.

For example, Lily, the Russian participant described that:

I think it's a great experience, so many new experiences that is something I cannot

experience in Russia. It gives me some self-confidence. Most of us go through the emotional experience, if you try to work out this problems, maybe the home sick, missing your family... actually I feel more confident that I can do things on my own, I can cope with a lot of things. I become stronger.

(Lily, Russian in Taiwan, focus group)

Improving / learning the language and cultures

Learning the local language – Chinese in the case of the participants in Taiwan, improving English for the case of the participants in Taiwan and the UK, and German for participants in Germany – had been seen as one of the more important advantages of studying abroad. The added-value lay in the ability to understand the foreign culture. Also, when studying in a multicultural environment, participants had met people from different parts of the world and found this a good way to experience more cultures. For instance, Kitty, one of the Hungarian participants in Taiwan, said that European people who have never been to Asia (herself included) thought it was a weird continent because they didn't know much about it. After studying in Taiwan, she realised that China is a big country, a big market and it is fast becoming an economic powerhouse. Frank, the American participant, said that before coming to Asia, he heard that all Asians looked alike, but later, when he began to observe people more closely, he realised Asian people were like

Americans, but with different height, weights, hair colours, and so on. He had been particularly pleased to have had the opportunity to meet so many people from around the world. Thus, he had brought some pamphlets about the institution where he was studying in Taiwan back to his high school in Missouri, USA; he wanted to share with students in his home town the great opportunity he had had of seeing the world.

Many of the participants explicitly indicated their appreciation of their studying abroad experience by saying that it was something they would have never been able to do if they had chosen to study in their own country. By studying abroad, the geographical distance between people in two different continents is shortened. In this context, Albert said “[t]his world is such a big world, and also small at the same time. Without coming to the UK, I would have never known any other cultures apart from my own” (*Albert, Kazakh in the UK, second follow-up interview*). Even if they could meet people from different parts of the world in their home countries, the experience of such intercultural interaction as foreign students was found to be different to their role as the host in their home country. One of the Bulgarian participants, Sarah said:

I would say this experience abroad is still an experience abroad, if we meet international students at home, it will not be the same experience for yourself

because here you widen your horizon, start thinking in a different way, acquire different style for working, studying, things like that. I think it's definitely different.

(Sarah, Bulgarian in Germany, Focus group)

Learning to deal with people from different cultural backgrounds

Intercultural competence - interacting with people from other nations - was also one of the experiences these participants had gained in their new multicultural environment. It had provided them with many different ways of viewing and thinking about themselves and their experiences. Kenny, one of the Hungarian participants in Taiwan, indicated that he felt such a transition happening to him and that this was confirmed when he started thinking in others people's shoes and trying not to hurt their feelings. It had also led him to dwell on the differences between himself and others (*Kenny, Hungarian in Taiwan, focus group*). Gigi, one of the Chinese participants in Germany, has a similar view. She had become “more tolerant to different cultures and different behaviours of different people, not only to German ones, but also to all other foreign students here” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, interview*).

5. 5. 2 Disadvantages: away from friends and families

Some of the participants believed that while they had gained valuable experience abroad, they had also lost something, especially friendships back home and the sense of belonging to the society that they were from originally. Charlie is a good example of this outlook. He expressed the following forcibly:

[Studying abroad] allows you to take some good things with you, but if I had to choose again, I don't think I would do the same. Because those two final years in schools in Germany was so much fun, I missed out all of that, that's certainly life experience as well... I would be happier I think. Because I wouldn't have been taken out of the community.

(Charlie, German in the UK, interview & focus group)

Similarly, Gigi's storytelling, she showed her feeling out-of-date about the popular new things or fashion trends back home and unable to join in on the conversations or discussions with friends as she had before. Thus, she said if she were asked to give advice to people who want to study abroad, she would tell them that “you have to be cautious when you decided to pursue study abroad because it's a trade-off. Because you gain something and you lose something too” (*Gigi, Chinese in Germany, interview*). Henry,

one of the Filipino participants, also had a gain and loss story. He had gone back home during summer vacation and had seen his ex-classmates teaching in secondary schools which is what he would have been doing as a profession if he had not gone study in Taiwan. He was wondering whether it had been the right decision to give up teacher education back home. But then, he concluded that it was actually a privilege to study abroad and that, in the long run, this would be more beneficial to him in his future career (*Henry, Filipino in Taiwan, interview*).

5.6 The absence of narratives about teaching and learning

Although the study was carefully designed and the participants were encouraged to talk about each aspect of their learning experiences in their respective foreign countries, the data showed that participants talked least about their experiences in the classroom teaching and of teaching and learning more generally. A couple of participants even concluded that no matter whether they liked the ways of the educational system they had arrived in, that was the way education was in that particular country and they could only follow it. There were just a few exceptions to this. For example, Thomas (Macanese in the UK, second diary) commented on the teaching styles in the UK, which he had found very different from and more interesting than those in Macau. He also pointed out that he had experienced fewer contact hours in the UK and that this had made the pace in lectures a

bit rushed, but he did not expect the university to change anything as this was the education style in the UK and he thoroughly enjoyed it. A parallel example was given by Lily (Russian in Taiwan). She did not like the roll call at the beginning of every lecture and thought it was not helpful to learning that most students sat near the back of the class. However, she concluded, “This is the rule, we just have to follow it, right?” (Lily, Russian in Taiwan, interview). Thus, we find that these participants, at least, valued the foreign study experiences regardless of the form or even the apparent effectiveness of the education they received because it was providing them with a wider vision or a vision different to that of his/her own culture. Indeed, one of the goals of international education is to cultivate students’ open-mindedness and acceptance of other cultures.

5. 7 Impact on future plans

Many were the ups and downs that participants had experienced during their period of studying abroad. Yet all of them considered it a valuable experience that had allowed them to become more independent and to be more tolerant and accepting of other cultures.

With regard to future plans after graduation, some of the participants had thought of pursuing degrees in graduate schools, either in the same host country or in another foreign country. Albert and Julie (participants at University B) both thought that it was better to work for a few years, putting learned theories into practice, before going back to college

once more.

The way in which the study abroad experience had impacted on the future plans of this sample of students can be discussed in two parts: (1) working/further study in the host country or another foreign country for a couple of years, or (2) working for an international company after returning to their home country. For example, the two Filipino participants in Taiwan had become more interested in business and were planning to seek further scholarship opportunities to study in a graduate business school. Meanwhile, some participants had concerns about their competitiveness in the job market alongside native students in the host countries but were keen to pursue this as they knew that work experiences abroad, post-graduation, would enhance their Curriculum Vitae. But hardly any of the participants mentioned the possibility of migrating to the host country. For example, Gigi, the Chinese participant in Germany, explained that her ultimate choice was to return to China after a couple of years of experience working in Germany. She was the only child in her family and wanted to spend time with her parents. Moreover, she didn't see herself fully integrating into German culture and didn't want to create a large generation gap within her family should she have children who went on to grow up in Germany. Since Charlie had been studying abroad for some years already, and from a young age, he was determined to go straight home after he graduated. He did not

want to be away from his home and family or friends again, at least not for several years. Thus he said that although he did not have any specific plans after graduation, he might think about getting a Master's degree in his home country, Germany, or working for a couple of years before returning to study. And while other participants in the study said that they would rather work in international enterprises than small companies, Charlie was not worried about working in a small firm. He considered that German companies of all sizes were involved in import and export, and he did not think that he would become constrained to the monocultural context and should end up working for a small firm.

In contrast to what Charlie felt, a few of the other participants mentioned that they would like to work in international companies or banks. For example, Albert's statements regarding his summer internship experiences in his home country, Kazakhstan, were of this kind. The first summer he was a student he had had an internship at a local bank, he enjoyed it. The second summer he had had another internship opportunity working at HSBC in his home town. This had led him to observe differences between the local bank and HSBC, from the office furniture arrangements to the way business was conducted with clients. As a result of these experiences, he realised that he would prefer to working in an international bank.

These influences are consistent with aspects of these participants' motivation to study abroad; they wanted to obtain a better education and credentials overseas. The experience of working abroad had been valuable in these terms. After having been exposed to a multicultural environment and with a highly recognized certificate in English, most considered that they would not expect to work in a small firm. "I think our expectation in the future is like working in the international companies" (*Julie, Taiwanese in the UK, focus group*).

5.8 This research impact on the participants

After the individual interviews and the focus group discussion, participants were required to keep a diary once a month for the first semester of their second year. In the first diary entry, it was requested that participants give feedback on the interview and the focus group discussion that they had joined previously. A couple of participants stated that they had no specific thoughts about the interview and the focus group discussion but the remainder considered those to have been valuable experiences, helping them to reflect on what they had been through after arriving in their host country. They also realised how proud they felt they should feel about themselves as they had become more and more independent, breaking through many difficulties in order to survive in a foreign environment. Moreover, a few of them had been led to think about their role as

international students and as ambassadors for both the host country to which they had travelled and the home country from which they came. These thoughts had also made them think about their future after graduation. In addition, diary keeping allowed some participants to think more deeply about their study-abroad experiences. As a result, a couple of participants became very interested in how studies in social research are conducted and what my own study would discover. One of the participants in Taiwan requested to read the findings of this study as he might want to pursue a similar study in the future.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses, to what extent, the findings are coherent with the literature reviewed in Chapter Three, and how the findings help in answering the research questions. As the research procedures (interviews and diary keeping) were designed with the concepts of “intercultural competence”, “small cultures”, “communities of practice”, and “learning journey” clearly in mind, the study is designed to reveal what it was like to be an international student in Germany, Taiwan and UK in 2009/10. The sojourners’ learning journeys in this study were strongly influenced by their biographical and life history but also, in part, by how the institutions at which they were studying worked, where they were located, and who they met. And in all cases there was a host culture which was not only very different to others in the study but also different to the ‘home’ environment from which the participants came: the students had either adapted to it or ignored it. In section 5.1, I categorised the participants into five groups, namely: mature, young, optimistic, introvert, and other, because that was helpful in introducing the 22 participants. However, as the data analysis proceeded it turned out that the personal and situational factors are inter-related, and that this dynamic influenced how they perceived and reacted to every intercultural/cross-cultural interaction.

In the following assessment, I first integrate the aims of internationalisation of each university – broadly speaking, a mutual goal of global competitiveness – and the experience of it reported by these 22 international students. Each of the educational institutions in the study had been making great efforts to keep up with the rapidly developing trend of knowledge-production in a global economy, linked to the phenomenon of more and more students attempting to enhance their personal competitiveness in this global market by studying abroad and getting better qualification. The chapter then discusses the factors influencing the learning process experienced by participants, including transitional and adaptive processes of both intrapersonal and interpersonal kinds. These are summarised under the themes of biographical and life experiences, the motivation for studying abroad, the nature of the learning environment, and the settings in which the interactions take place. One of the essential skills for successful business personnel in the global market is said to be ‘intercultural competence’ and an attempt has been made in the present study to pin down this elusive concept. The issue of language-based communication is one of the main themes arising from this study, in particular the way in which it impacted on participants’ identity negotiation in the varied foreign contexts. Finally, the assessment made here attempts to raise awareness among universities, through international students’ voices, of the need for increasing contact between and fostering mutual benefits among ‘home’ and ‘host’ students, along

with the academic and social support systems revealed as necessary for international students to make the most of their experience.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Internationalisation across three research contexts

Both the literature review and the analysis of the three research contexts showed that governmental agencies and universities worldwide were convinced of the need for internationalising their education system. Within this overall picture, the common priority among the different strategies examined was to an effort on the part of governments, through their universities, to increase the visibility and popularity of Higher Education among their own publics as well as overseas, while also assuring and improving the quality of education on offer. First of all, in the context of human capital theory influencing national policies, the governments in all of the three research contexts had been making strenuous efforts over the preceding decades to increase the proportion of student enrolment in Higher Education, so as to provide the labour market with individuals who have an increasing level of knowledge and skill. In Taiwan, the number of universities was increased from 60 in 1995 to 145 in 2005. Meanwhile, the college acceptance rate of the Joint College Entrance Examination (JCEE) among candidates

who had either just graduated from high school, aged around 18, or, in a small number cases, were returning to study after few years working experience or military service, had averaged over 90 percent since 2006 leading to an increase in total student enrolment across universities from 55,000 in 1995 to 89,000 in 2004 (Hsu, 2006). Similarly, in Germany the percentage of each age cohort enrolling in Higher Education had been slowly increasing and had reached 37 percent in Germany, according to the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (Kiuppis and Waldow, 2008), while the number of students continuing to Higher Education in UK reached the 40 percent range in 1999/2000, with the total number of students in UK Higher Education increasing from 855,000 in 1981/92 to 1.94 million by 1997/8 (ONS, 2000).

Now that it has grown to such relatively large proportions, Higher Education in each country was being confronted by the issue of assuring quality. As not only students and teachers, but also institutions of Higher Education grow more diverse, each country was undertaking various reforms to maintain quality and make improvements in Higher Education. Although the criteria for national quality assurance systems are varied, it is mostly standardised in the national context and generally evaluates whether a university has overall quality in terms of curricula, teachers, research, and educational conditions (i.e. facilities). Sometimes, the university evaluation results are reflected in public or

governmental budget allocations. Along with national quality assurance arrangements, both governments and educational institutions in all three countries in this study were aiming at strengthening the international competitiveness of their Higher Education institutions by engaging with the process of globalisation, its international networks and the internationalisation of curriculum. Thus, the local is re-shaped globally, but the idea of globalisation is advanced with the local cultures (Rizvi, n.d.). For example, University T understands clearly that one of the motivations of international students' in studying in Taiwan is to learn the Chinese language. Thus, it offers a four-year Chinese language programme in addition to business modules. Similarly, University G, as explained in Chapter 2, is influenced heavily by a traditional focus on science and this leads to the provision of mathematics and economics-oriented modules which take up a large percentage of its curriculum time and appeal to many international students.

Not only were the universities attempting to keep up with the world trend of globalisation, but many of the students in the study were seeking to strengthen their competitiveness in the global market by studying abroad. The findings indicated that most of participants' motivations of studying abroad cohere with literature in this respect (e.g. Pietro & Page, 2008), and some of these motivations were explicitly relevant to the theme of internationalisation – learning English or other languages, the power of overseas

diplomas and the perceived value in personal and job terms of cross-cultural experience. Language, particularly English, is one of the important communication skills valued by practitioners in the area of international business. As English is the sole medium of instruction in University B and is the main medium of instruction in both University T and G, non-native speakers of English in the study expected that their English language ability would be advanced significantly through daily use. In addition, with German language being one of the widely spoken languages in Europe and Chinese as one of the widely spoken languages in Asia, participants in this study who had moved to Germany and Taiwan also expected the familiarity with either of these languages to help open doors to the international business market. In the event, participants in the study confirmed that they considered their second language skills, whether English or the local language or both, had improved after a year of study abroad, and that their confidence had increased also. This self-perception of language improvement is consistent with that of respondents' self-report of language skills development after a year abroad found in other studies such as Freed's (n.d.: p. 37).

The following sections are arranged as a way of answering the four sub-questions posed within the first main research question of the study (see 3.7.1, above). In order to answer the first two subsidiary research questions in 3.7.1, (a) and (b), regarding participants'

identity negotiation in multicultural settings, we can discuss this in two respects: intercultural competence and second language skills (see 6.1.2 and 6.1.3, respectively). Following this, sub-questions (c) and (d) in 3.7.1 are then related to the educational considerations discussed in 6.1.4 and 6.1.5, below. During the period of study abroad, intercultural competence is revealed to be formed gradually after individuals have resolved the various clashes they encounter between the 'home' culture and the 'host' culture. Individuals in the study were transformed by their overseas experiences, with maturity gained and worldviews expanded. However, while these international students were engaging in the process of intercultural interaction, they often felt marginalised in the local context. As such, the summary which follows aims to draw attention to the issue of this 'inactive interaction' between host and home students and relate this to the findings of similar studies.

6.1.2 Intercultural competence

In previous chapters, we have emphasised the perceived importance of intercultural competence in facilitating internationalised global markets and the view that such competence is particularly essential for business graduates aiming to work in multicultural markets. Encouraging intercultural competence seems to be a universal goal.

For example, the Bologna Declaration (1999), a joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, stresses “educational cooperation in the development and strengthening of stable, peaceful and democratic societies” and that education should aim to provide the European citizens with “the necessary competences to face the challenges of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common social and cultural space.” Specifically, students are not only envisaged as requiring to gain expert knowledge, but also needing to equip themselves with soft skills such as social intelligence and intercultural competence (Friendman & Berthoin Antal, 2005). University G is the only university in this study explicitly including a programme that aims to enable the business graduates to develop intercultural competence and it does this by requiring every student either to attend a one-semester Study Abroad programme or to take the module “International Cultural Studies”. However, the question here is whether intercultural competence can be achieved through formal learning. The study shows that there is limited interaction between teachers and students in these modules as well as among students. In the absence of frequent communication and interaction, it remained unclear how such intercultural/cross-cultural competence could be achieved by merely taking these modules.

Some scholars (e.g. Byram, 1997) have emphasised the importance of teaching

intercultural competence, and some studies (e.g. Neto, 2006) have shown that students who have attended training courses related to intercultural competence attained more positive outcomes than those who did not. In particular, it is argued that a conceptual/theoretical approach to such matters can help educators deliver the best quality service to their students, even though such teaching will not ensure that students become competent in cross-cultural communication. As such, several studies have found that students who have taken such modules show intellectual understanding of many of the causes and consequences of cultural conflict, but show no significant growth in their ability to deal with cross-cultural issues (Sizoo et al. 2007, p. 93) because “a person may have a highly developed intercultural knowledge and have the best intentions, but not be able to display the cognition within the intercultural interaction, that is, transferring it into behaviour” (Prechtl/Davidson-Lund 2007, p. 478). Moreover, Sizoo et al. (2007, p. 93) indicate that “intercultural expertise does not significantly increase by simply living in a foreign country, or by getting older, or by simply getting the dos and don’ts of culture in an Intro to International Business course”. The implication here is that intercultural competence must be practised actively in students' daily interactions with each other in the multicultural classroom or on the campus. Thus Byram contends that knowledge given in the textbooks can help students understand the meaning of others' behaviours, avoid the misinterpretation, and learn the importance of

tolerance and making compromise, but only through the active interaction with people from other cultures can they “dismantle their preceding structure of subjective reality and re-construct it by relativising their own meanings, beliefs and behaviours through comparison with others” (Byram 1997, p. 42). None of the participants in this study had received formal lectures on intercultural competence (those in University G were due to be taught this in the fifth semester (the third year) of study); as such, their knowledge of other cultures was based on their historical life experiences and on observation. Many of my respondents reported that they had had very limited interaction with local students and, as a result, it seemed that many could only discern relatively superficial facts and were still reporting to an understanding of what they had observed by deploying stereotypes. For example, Gigi (*Chinese in Germany, interview*) said that she did not want to raise her child in Germany because she did not want him or her to have their hair dyed or smoke or have sex at early age. In addition, she felt that there was the likelihood of a greater generation gap between her and her child if he/she were to be raised in a foreign country. In contrast, other participants seemed able to understand the cultures of countries or showed a readiness to alter the prejudice or bias they might have had towards a certain country through constant communication and interaction with students from such countries. For instance, Kenny (*Hungary in Taiwan, the third diary entry*) had frequent and close contact with a Mongolian in University T, and learned a lot about Mongolia

including its history and deeper culture, well beyond stereotyped images. He felt confident to say that he felt he knew about this culture without having physically visited it or lived there. In another example, reported by Julie (*Taiwanese in the UK, focus group interview*), after increased interaction with German students her stereotype of German people had been changed. Beforehand, she thought that Germans were quite serious and that people could not make fun of them. After she had made some German friends in University B and got to know them more, she found that they also go clubbing on weekend and that one of them had nearly twenty body-piercings. They were, she felt, very fun people at the same time that they were very disciplined in their daily lives. Those stories told by the participants showed that their stereotyped impression of a certain country may be changed after the actual contacts with people from that culture. However, the danger is also that their impression of a certain culture may form an image after only having known a few people of some country. Only through constantly contacting and understanding people from other cultures can one build up a more complete set of knowledge for interacting with people worldwide.

Frequently, researchers of intercultural competence discuss their topic in three aspects: cognitive competencies, behavioural competencies, and affective competencies (see Bennett 2008). This typology is in line with the stages of intercultural development,

discussed in Chapter 3. Moreover, the concept of ‘small cultures’ and ‘communities of practice’ suggest that before becoming immersed in intercultural socialisation, sojourners have already formed an identity or identities through their primary cultural, personal, and relational experiences. Accordingly, when they are situated in complex and multifaceted intercultural constructions, sojourners find many discrepancies between their own familiar frame of reference and those of their counterparts. This equates to the ‘cognitive competencies’ stage (e.g. Anderson 1990) which refers to the self-awareness of “the cultural filters we use, as well as the filters used by others... seeing various disciplines and their origins, perspectives, and practices as culturally influenced” (Bennett 2008, p. 18). In the process, they attempt to position themselves within a particular identity in response to particular interactional situations (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1992). Through constant awareness of the discrepancies between their subjective experiences and their objective circumstances – the intercultural awareness indicated by Chen and Starosta (1997) – sojourners attempt to cultivate “the ability to empathise, gather appropriate information, listen, perceive accurately, adapt, initiate and maintain relationships, resolve conflict, and manage social interactions and anxiety” (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992, p. 19); this is what Bennett calls the behavioural dimension.

The behavioural aspect also involves one's engagement with others and crosses the

boundary between “us” and “them” and makes possible the construction of a new “we”. It is also in line with Wegner’s theory of Communities of Practice that a newcomer needs to be actively involved in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning, interpreting, and understanding how others do things in the new community. This point was evidenced in my study. One of the issues discussed during the focus group meeting in University B was identity negotiation. Charlie (*German in the UK*) noticed that he had adapted himself gradually after observing how locals behave and how others expected him to behave. Although some changes may be unpredictable and unwanted, they were considered by discussants to be an inevitable part of the transition process. During this focus group discussion, all of the other participants considered that changing oneself was an act of surrender which they did not want to happen. Thus Julie (*Taiwanese in the UK, focus group*) expressed her view strongly when she said “I wouldn’t change my personality or my character to fit in a special [specific] culture or society. I would like to be myself and to express my own opinion and I try to be very positive with everything”. Julie’s outlook showed her as not committing to change her way of behaving but to embrace the alien culture with a positive attitude, perhaps as a sign of mastery (see Hannerz 1996).

Charlie’s and Julie’s narratives suggest that they were in the process of forming the identities that were acceptable in the foreign context seeking to remain true to themselves. In the process they appeared to be forming a new identity that they were happy with but

which also seemed to function or work in the foreign context. Another example of this can be seen in Frank's (*American in Taiwan, interview*) storytelling. He was from a society where political correctness is emphasised, so he was very careful about talking to people he met in Taiwan at the beginning of his period of study. Surprisingly, he had found that Taiwanese people liked to start a conversation by complimenting or commenting on one's appearance – something not often seen in the USA where he had grown up. He was especially shocked when a male Taiwanese student told him that he is “handsome” but, after a while, he had come to realise it was common for Taiwanese people to compliment a guy who is good-looking. Although Frank would not change his way of speaking and still carried with him aspects of political correctness from his home culture related to this example, he had come to accept the way that local people spoke..

The affective competencies include “curiosity, as well as initiative, risk taking, suspension of judgment, cognitive flexibility, tolerance of ambiguity, cultural humility, and resourcefulness” (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992, p.20). Curiosity, initiative and risk taking were common characteristics among the participants in this study not least, perhaps, because they were a somewhat self-selecting group, open to adventures in the foreign context, and inherently motivated to grow and expand in a way different from other peers at home who had not chosen to study abroad. Most of them did not know

much about the countries they were going to, including its educational system, or the general and local environment where they would be based; thus, their decision-making could be mostly attributed to their personal trait of risk-taking. A couple of them expressed this by saying that they considered study abroad as an opportunity and a trial: if they do not like it, they could always go home, losing nothing. After arriving in the foreign context, they had encountered various difficulties both in daily life and academic study. As a result of this they were involved in a process of transformation and of developing the competencies mentioned above. Such transformational processes included both the intrapersonal transition and interpersonal adjustment, a complex undertaking since it involved others' cultures, beliefs, reactions, understandings and interpretations. In the transformation process, sojourners were learning to make sense of their new environment, trying to accommodate new information into their existing worldviews even where this might challenge their fundamental notions of the way the world works. For example, Kitty (*Hungarian in Taiwan, interview*) had noticed that Taiwanese people were more conservative than the people in her home country: Taiwanese had sometimes stared at her when wearing clothes unusually revealing in that society. After she learned more about the local culture, she had decided to change her dressing style.

Several studies find the sojourners' adjustment is relevant to their home culture and host culture, for instance, Ledwith and Seymour (2001, p. 1308) suggest that “the more culturally dissimilar people are, the higher the level of uncertainty and anxiety. The more culturally close, the lower the level of uncertainty and the higher the level of reciprocity”. And Searle & Ward (1990, p. 458) suggest that “the more closely the individual’s personality traits resemble host culture norms, the more adjustive those traits may be”. However, a study of American college students' study abroad experience found that “students who attended programs in England tended to have their expectations violated negatively, affecting their adaptation.” These studies suggest that the home culture is not the sole factor that influences participants' intercultural competence, there are other factors such as individuals' personality traits, language proficiency and life experiences. In my sample, Frank who was from a Western culture and who had never studied or visited any countries in the East, found himself enjoying being in an exotic country where he viewed everything with interest and excitement. In contrast, Charlie, from Germany, had studied in Canada and was, at the time of the research, now in the UK. Thus, all of his experiences had been in ‘low-context’ countries according to Hall's (1976) definition, but he still found it hard to integrate in the UK host culture. My study suggests that a sojourner’s learning journey is a more complex and joint process than other studies have suggested, and that the learner, activity and context are interrelated. The more

open-minded sojourners are, the more likely they will change their frames of reference according to the cultural context and the more likely they are to be interculturally competent. In the next section I discuss the aspect of this interrelatedness – that of relations between second language skills and the aforementioned influential factors in participants' transitional process of an academic and social kind.

6.1.3 The influence of second language skills in participants' processes of cultural transition

The literature reviewed in chapter two suggested that learning a language is inseparable from knowing a culture, and *vice-versa*. In addition to this insight, my study suggests further that adapting to a new cultural context is inseparable from being able to communicate in the local language. Language is “the primary symbolic medium through which cultural knowledge is communicated and instantiated, negotiated and contested, reproduced and transformed” (Garret & Baquedano-Lopez 2002, p. 339); that is to say, language and cultural learning occur through dynamic social interactions. Erwin and Coleman (1998 cited in Hoff 2008, p. 59) examined the influence of a variety of intercultural experiences and second language proficiency on college students' cross-cultural sensibility and the results showed that student competence in a second language was related to an increase in cross-cultural adaptability.

In my study, aspects of this language issue were discussed frequently in respondents' narratives, both in the interviews and their diaries across three researched contexts. I now discuss these results in two respects: academic performance and socialisation. Although all the participants passed the English (or German) proficiency test required by the universities at which they were studying, most had encountered language and cultural obstacles during their transition to the foreign contexts where they were now studying. Academically, they need to spend more time in preparation and revision as the medium of instruction was not their native language; socially, they could communicate on a daily basis, but found it hard to understand the jokes or slang of native speakers and this led to a sense of isolation from full participation in local students' social groups. In general, my respondents reported that they had the very minimum of interactions with the students of the host culture; consequently, they had found it very difficult to blend into the social circle of the local student group. Most of the participants in University G and B attributed this to the heavy study load they had encountered. Moreover, and related to this, a common issue reported among participants in all three contexts was of an inequitable power relation existing between home and host students. This, they considered, marginalised host students and meant that they struggled to participate in interactional settings in their desired social or academic community of practice. Specifically, they had

found that conversation was usually dominated by native speakers and when, sometimes, non-native speaking students had attempted to initiate a conversation, they had found that cultural differences meant that they had not been able to find suitable topics to get a conversation going. As a result, groups both of home students and international students had tended to separate themselves from each other and re-inforce their pre-conceptions of each other. A variant of this general pattern occurred at University T where respondents were just starting to learn the local language – Chinese Mandarin – and thus had an insufficient vocabulary to hold a conversation in the local language. However, according to most of these participants Taiwanese students had turned out to be either too shy or not to have good English speaking skills. As a result, neither the host students nor the home students had sufficient language skills to keep a conversation going.

Being marginalised in their foreign context, the participants in my study often felt lonely and eager to build social circles in the new context of their studies. Thus, they tended to seek the company of other international students or local residents of the same nationality who they considered were in the same “position” as themselves. This finding coheres with a survey result from overseas students studying in Britain released by UKCOSA (2004), which stated that “international students were much more closely integrated with co-national and other international students” (Spencer-Oatey & Xiong 2006, p. 34). For

example, in my study Lily (*Russian in Taiwan*) and Kenny (*Hungarian in Taiwan*) discovered scooter rides for the first time in their lives with other international students who had come to Taiwan in the years before them. Furthermore, participants generally found that those local students who had study abroad experience were more likely to be interested in making friends with them as international students and in sharing cultural experiences. The one exception to this in my study – Britta (*Norwegian in Germany*) had studied for several years in Ireland before coming to Germany for Higher Education and reported that her social group was made up entirely of native-German speaking people. In this case, even when studying in a multicultural setting a participant could neglect the presence of those from other cultures.

In contrast to this example, the personal trait of open-mindedness had allowed a few participants to equip themselves with cultural and linguistic skills, which also enabled them to develop behavioural and affective competencies. Despite the constraint in making contact with local students, these respondents showed their enthusiasm and persistence by adopting different means of being immersed in the environment such that they could improve their mastery of the target language, for example, through watching TV programmes, learning to sing songs, working part-time in local shops, making friends with local students for language exchange and inviting local students to pay a visit to their

home town and offering their home for visitors' stays. In the main, however, participants in this study were passive about extending their social circle in the foreign context. The explanation for this may be related to their motivation for studying abroad in the first place, which was more about getting a better quality of education and obtaining the overseas diploma. These participants did not seem to develop cognitive and behavioural competence as they were concerned more about their positioning in the future (for example, in terms of competitiveness in the job market when they returned to their home country) rather than an identification with the host culture or recognition from the people of the host culture. These research subjects did not seem to care about crossing the boundary between the home and host culture so as to form a new identity in the host country. The study abroad experience for them was an 'investment' in their 'human capital' – in their identity and in the future.

In general, participants in University T discussed more and were interested more in inter-cultural experience, compared to participants in the other two researched contexts. One of the reasons for this may have been that the international student society in University T held many activities and the participants had attended most of these such as Cultural Week, an Amazing Race, and various festival celebrations. Also, some teachers in University T would briefly explain the origin of such festivals and had even brought

special food to share with international students. According to Frank, those teachers who had studied or worked abroad empathised more with the aspiration of the international student to fit in with the local culture. Participants in the other two contexts also reported their experiences of taking part in student societies but those related more to their personal interests. For example, Charlie played the saxophone in a musical band, Sherry was once a member of The Green Society and Albert, from Kazakhstan, had joined the Islamic Society so as to learn the Arabic language. Although Albert did not make any friends from the language class, his learning of Arabic allowed him to understand more about Arabic culture and, he felt, brought him closer to his Arabic friends; in addition, this activity related to his career future in that he intended to work in the Middle East after graduating. In Germany, only one participant recalled the social events that university G had held – open-air summer parties on weekends throughout the summer. Participants in these two contexts attributed their lack of social activities to the heavy study load.

Academically, language proficiency seemed to correlate with participants' perception of the difficulties they had encountered in learning the second language. From the average TOEFL scores of test takers across most of the countries in the world released by Educational Testing Service (ETS) in 2007 we can note patterns that may have been

relevant to the experiences of participants in my sample. Europeans score higher than those in most of the Asian countries: thus, Russian test takers score on average 83, Hungarian takers score 89 and Filipinos 88, while Chinese takers score 77 and Vietnamese 70. Although the data do not permit generalisation, some participants' stories in my studies echo these relative standings. For example, Hungarian and Filipino participants who generally had a quite good level of English ability found examinations easy in University T, while the Vietnamese participant reported in her diary that she felt very stressed in the weeks before exams and often said that she was not doing well enough and needed to work harder. However, language was not the sole issue in this respect, the style and format of examinations also being relevant. For example, oral exams were the most common type in Russia and Hungary, essay-like exam types were common in the UK and Germany and in other countries where participants were from (i.e. Taiwan, China, Chile) there is more of a tradition of multiple-choice exams. Thus, Albert (*Kazakh in the UK*) and Roger (*Chilean in Germany*) said they had spent large amounts of time preparing for examinations as they felt the need to read entire books in order to answer the questions well.

Moreover, due to language barriers, some participants had found other aspects of life to be more challenging than it had been in their 'home' country as it took more time and

effort for them to find out, for example, what was available in the host country in spheres such as welfare or regulation. As such, Kitty and some other international students in University T had had difficulties finalising their academic timetable over the first two weeks of a new semester because they had missed out on important information including the completion of teaching assessment online and this had resulted in the loss of privilege of registering on some popular modules. Meanwhile, my study shows that participants not only strove to achieve the academic performance expected in the contexts where they were studying, but also strove in their identity negotiation. Some had been used to being the top students in class back home and were very confident in their academic performance in that context, but had struggled and were less confident once they had commenced studying abroad. Thomas's example (*Macanese studying in the UK*) demonstrates that language barriers had influenced his experience in the UK in this manner. Academically, he had spent more time than formerly studying, writing essays, and researching information; socially, he was struggling in looking for accommodation, extending his social circles and readjusting his identity in the UK, his life style in the new setting being completely different from that to which he was used in Macau. He attributed all of these challenges and loneliness to his insufficient language ability, but he did not show any sign of giving up; instead, he considered his situation to be a good opportunity for personal growth and development as well as a good investment in his future. A further

adjustment evidenced by participants, briefing mentioned above and particularly found among those studying in University B, related to the extensive preparation time for assignments and exams that they attributed to language difficulties. In their home country they said that they would typically complete an assignment just days before it was due but now they would try to finish such work as early as possible so that they can have other friends check on it so as to assure the quality of their work. Also they used to revise for exams a week or two beforehand, whereas now some would revise every subject every week with regularity, while others would revise for a full month before the exams because reading and comprehension in their second language had turned out to be more time-consuming than in their native language.

These various difficulties reported by the participants in this study echo Sandhu and Asrabadi's (1994) discussion of the problems encountered by international students, discussed in Chapter 4.2.3. Both their and my participants were undertaking psychological and sociocultural adaptation, including its intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. Not only had they lost the sense of belonging to the society from whence they came, but they had also encountered the difficulties of establishing new social circles in the foreign context. It had proved particularly hard to make friends with local students, partly because of the language issue discussed earlier which had led them to feel a sense

of inferiority in the new setting. As a result, they had tended to seek a sense of security or comfort by starting, at the initial stage at least, a social network with people who came from similar backgrounds or the same regions. Thereafter, some had extended their social network to include local students who had study-abroad experience or who were interested in knowing more about foreign cultures.

The following two sections discuss the answer arrived at in relation to the subsidiary research questions (c) and (d) in 3.6.1 – those relevant to the academic challenges that participants had encountered. These challenges were caused by different academic systems, emphasis within the curriculum and teaching pedagogies, and how each further influenced participants' learning strategies.

6.1.4 Curriculum Design

The design of the undergraduate business curriculum across the three researched institutions was similar to some extent in that foundational business knowledge was offered in the first or second year, with more specialised knowledge being offered in senior year(s). This suggested a common and emerging business curriculum paradigm, but did not necessarily mean that students were learning in the same way, due to varied

local pedagogic traditions. Because the national or institutional characteristics of the curriculum in the three universities were culturally situated in these various traditions, they were quite diverse. For instance, University B leaves a larger amount of decision-making to students as to elective modules, while nearly all the credits of the core courses are functional ones. Thus, students can choose to specialise according to their interests. The curriculum design in University G is largely influenced by international trends in Higher Education management, such as the Bologna Process and criteria set by international accreditation associations. Thus, it strove to maintain its national tradition by offering more engineering-oriented modules, including studies in mathematics and computer literacy, probably because the Bologna Process emphasises the integration of the education structures for the sake of student and faculty mobility, but does not lay stress on curriculum detail. That is to say, policy makers may want to harmonise Higher Education structures across borders, they do not seek to emphasise curricula reform as part of this process. Similarly, the aim of European Union is to make Higher Education more open to international travel but this does not mean that learning is becoming more international of itself. Therefore, the institutions in different European countries still maintain their national pedagogic traditions.

Located in one of the four 'Asian Dragons', University T emphasises the potential of the

Chinese language in the global business market and offers a four-year language training programme alongside its business degree programme. It also includes a module called “Asian Culture Study” mainly so as to increase international students’ understanding of Chinese culture – a programme that participants in this study appeared to have enjoyed a lot. Henry had researched Chinese calligraphy, Gina had studied the four Beauties in Chinese history, and Kenny had researched the landscape painting of China. This echoed with the findings of Ingraham and Peterson's study (cited in Hoff 2008, p. 59) that “cultural immersion takes effort... in order to gain the most from the experience [one] should attempt to learn the language, the history and other aspects of the culture that are important to the people”.

Although the international business classroom has not been found to be a significant variable in this comparative study, due to local pedagogic tradition being quite strong, the adoption of teaching in English is a significant effort through which institutions in the non-Anglophone world seek to be geared into internationalisation. This could be seen from the largely Anglo-American textbooks in use in the two non-UK universities, with local business examples being provided by the lecturers (albeit that these were criticised by some participants as less relevant to business practice in the countries from which they had come and sought to build a career). Some participants’ perception of the tensions

between largely Anglo-American or local business knowledge do not seem to echo the literature, where there is emphasis on a need to secure a greater degree of “ethnodiversity” in order to overcome a traditional ethnocentricity within the business curriculum. Rather, participants in this study considered that all knowledge was valuable for future employment. This, they explained, arose from a view that a variety of perspectives was important and suggested that they were developing cognitive competencies by learning about various perspectives and practices, and by being more able to understand and communicate with people from other cultures in a multicultural working environment. Moreover, studying in a programme taught in English was said to have increased these participants’ motivation, as language skills were being strengthened throughout the programme of study. In University G and T, learning an additional business language was also deemed helpful for the future careers of the students concerned. Meanwhile, many considered that America and UK were the economic and financial centres, and that they would benefit from knowing about the business operation styles and strategies and becoming familiar with the global business market. Lastly, after returning to their home country, some participants were aiming to work in companies doing business with corporations in the countries where they were currently studying as international students. For instance, Yolanda, from China and studying in Germany, said that she might seek work in a company in China that does business with German

companies; in the context of her studies, she considered that knowledge about business practice in local German companies was equally as helpful as of international companies. This implies that when a student comes into the classroom, she or he may work hard within the presented curriculum and pedagogies if, in their perception, the curriculum is practical enough for them to understand business better in a manner that fulfils their ambition after graduation.

The literature (e.g. Adler 2002 cited in Woods et al. 2006, p. 30) also suggests that diverse cultural groups of students and the presence of international faculty on campus help to increase the impact of international elements in curricula. However, the findings of this study showed that participants did not feel strongly about the contribution of or advantages of learning with students from different cultures in a 'multicultural classroom'.

The contexts in which such positive attitudes toward cultural diversity were apparent appeared to be when working in the teams for a group project or when experienced teachers gave examples of business practice in different countries. This again suggested the importance of teachers' foreign experiences and international views being used in their teaching.

6.1.5 Learning Strategies

Nearly half of the participants had just graduated from secondary schools in their home country and some were not familiar with the education system in the foreign country to which they had travelled for university study. In such cases they did not know what to expect or what the foreign university was expecting by way of academic performance.

In such circumstances, and in order to cope with the stress and anxiety of daily survival in a foreign context, they strove to meet academic demands and expectations. Many of them found they first needed to adapt to the different education system, for example its

contact hours and lecture styles. In general, the total class hours are very different

between Higher Education systems in Europe and in Asia, as evidenced in Quyen's

(2008) study of the average number of contact hours amongst Higher Education systems

in developed and developing countries. He concludes that the quantity of contact hours

is relatively low in developed countries (14 hours in the UK) while in developing

countries (such as Vietnam or China) students are required to attend classes five days a

week and five hours a day on average. Such discrepancy was also reported by some of

the participants in this study. A few considered that fewer contact hours in the host

culture institution compared to that of their home country meant that they received

relatively little knowledge in class and were required to study the remainder in the time

of their own in order to fully understand the learning related to the various modules they

were studying (e.g. Thomas (*Macanese studying in the UK*), Albert (*Kazakh in the UK*) and Jose (*Portuguese in Germany*). These and other participants reported feeling disorientated and stressed at the beginning of their first year study. For example, Albert and Sherry (*Chinese in the UK*) had found that they were expected to read the whole textbook on their own after class, whereas back home teachers would have highlighted the key content they need to master when preparing for exams. Nevertheless, after a month or two, some of these international students had found solutions for the difficulties they were encountering, although a couple of them were still struggling with the time management problems. For example, Kitty (*Hungarian in Taiwan*) could not follow the lecturer in the first two weeks of her economics class but after previewing the course textbook before going to a class, she had found that she was able to keep pace with the teaching. In contrast, Kenny (*Hungarian in Taiwan*) had tried to seek help from his fellow nationals concerning a Calculus module but came to realise that he was lacking the mathematics foundation, to the extent that he could only try his best to pass the related examination without fully understanding the ground that it covered. Related to this, Albert had found it hard to arrange his time before examinations as there was too much to study, and it took time for him to digest the content in the curriculum as he found some concepts so difficult that he considered he might not have been able to understand them, even if in his native language.

Several studies (Flowerdew 1998; Bodycott and Walker 2000; Bond 1996) have looked into students' learning preferences, such as Chinese students having strong preferences for didactic teaching and rote learning, both of which are rooted in aspects of Chinese culture. However, little has been done to explore the extent to which, and the conditions under which, preferences change. This study suggests that such changes occur depending on the patterns of teaching and learning in the foreign context. As described earlier, due to language barriers and fewer contact hours, some participants had found a need to prepare for exams or finish an assignment earlier than they were used. When trying to resolve puzzles or when preparing for exams, self-study was the most common strategy, being reported by nearly all of the participants. The reasons for this varied. Some had preferred to study alone while others had done so because they had no other options. For example, Charlie (*German in the UK*) had found that there were plenty of resources, such as books, power point slides and search engines available to help him find answers for his puzzles most of the time; consequently, seeking teachers' help had usually been his last option. Lily (*Russian in Taiwan*) had similar views, and she attributed her learning strategies to the educational principles of her nation where students are expected to learn "how to learn" instead of "what to learn". Gigi (*Chinese in Germany*) would have liked to have studied with some German classmates but she found it hard to integrate in their

groups. In some other cases, participants had been more likely to form a study group; Gina (*Vietnamese in Taiwan*) often studied with other international students because all international students lived in the same student hall and it was relatively easy for them to study together. Sarah (*Bulgarian in Germany*) liked to study in a group because she could discuss unsolved questions in detail with others, something which she considered to be impossible to do with professors, on account of their limited office hours. Such views show that participants' choices of learning strategy was related to the local context and available resource (e.g. library information, peers and teachers)

On average, participants had experienced at least one group work per semester, except for Albert (*Kazakh in the UK*) who had had no group work at all during his one and half years of study in University B. Because the majority of the classes across all three locations were being held in big lecture halls, participants had found there to be very little interaction in the classroom, whereas group project work had provided an opportunity for learning to work in a multicultural group of people with various points of views.

Therefore, when forming a group, participants had preferred when teachers assigned group membership, so preventing the tendency for the forming of mono-cultural group – a finding that coheres with evidence from several other studies (Smart, Volet, & Ang 2000; Hobman, Bordia, & Gallois 2004; Wright and Lander 2003; Watson, Johnson, &

Merritree 1998) where it has been reported that international students consider that doing assignments in culturally mixed groups fosters interaction between local and international students. Although some of those in my study reported unpleasant working experiences with individuals from some cultures, my participants did not generalise such bad images to the particular nationalities; instead, they thought it was more of a personal problem associated with individual students. Moreover, they had found ways of solving such problems on their own. Thus, Arnold's group work experience (*Filipino in Taiwan*) was that that none of his fellow group members contributed to the joint project, so he managed to conduct it all on his own, while as Kenny's disagreement (*Hungarian in Taiwan*) with his group leader led to him keeping silent as he cooperated with everyone else in the group in order to complete the project that had been assigned. Meanwhile, Julie (*Taiwanese in the UK*) had been allocated to a group containing an Indian student whom she thought was very irresponsible so, instead, she gathered team morale from other members of her group. Gigi (*Chinese in Germany*) had sometimes had to give up her own opinions and make compromises as she could not convince her group mates to accept her outlook due to the disadvantages she experienced of working in a second language – in her case German. For Thomas (*Macanese studying in the UK*), mixed-culture group work had enabled him to appreciate the straightforward tendency of British group members while finding the conservative tradition of Chinese students hard

to work with as these group members did not speak up and contribute much in team work.

Other participants again enjoyed multicultural group work because they had never experienced it in their home countries (e.g. Russia and Hungary), finding it very interesting and helpful to work with peers from diverse cultures. For instance, Lily (*Russian in Taiwan*) was used to undertaking individual assignments and preferred to work that way but, nevertheless, thought it had been valuable to learn to work as a team because in business she had the impression that it is not always individual work that is required. Meanwhile, Kitty (*Hungarian studying in Taiwan*) had been surprised to find that her leadership was highly respected in the groups she had experienced, partially due to the harmony her Asian group-mates attempted to maintain. She had found the distribution of tasks went well, as did the discussion; therefore, she enjoyed group work very much, something very different from her experiences in Hungary and the Netherlands. To sum up, no matter whether the specific experience or result of group work had been good or bad, it had helped foster these international students' skills in working effectively in culturally diverse groups as well as seeing alternative ways of thinking and doing.

Meanwhile, Hofstede's cultural dimensions (see Table 3.2) were evident in the interactions reported as arising from group projects. In terms of individualism values

(IDV), Kitty (*Hungarian studying in Taiwan*) had noticed at a competition she attended that Taiwanese students ('collectivistic tendency' according to Hofstede) wore formal dress such as suits and ties when presenting as a team rather than displaying individual uniqueness like Americans ('individualistic tendency'). Similarly, Gigi (*Chinese studying in Germany*) was from a society that, by Hofstede's reckoning, has low values in terms of Uncertainty Avoidance and where people are more tolerant of opinions other than those that they are used to and Hall (1976) indicates that China is a high-context culture while Germany is a low-context cultural where individuals tend to use direct and explicit ways of communication. Thus, when Gigi had worked in a transport company in China, she had found that German clients were very straightforward and direct and when she arrived in Germany, she also found that German students voiced their opinions directly. At the beginning, she had tried to accept this without confrontation even if she felt offended. After a while, she reported realising that was the way German people work and so she consciously adapted herself to such local ways of behaving and found that she had begun to speak up more frequently.

Little was reported amongst participants in this study about gender except for Charlie (*German studying in the UK, individual interview and focus group*). He felt that the more athletic a male student is, the more likely he is elected to be in charge of the group

projects. With regard to the Hofstede's Long-term Orientation (LTO), all Asian participants (i.e. countries ascribed a high value of LTO) reported that when they had encountered problems in studying, they had tried to solve such problems by themselves or with other students instead of consulting their lecturers or raising questions in class. Thus they tended to confirm Hofstede's suggestion that they would be persevering in attitude. One of the reasons for such behaviour given by Thomas (*Macanese studying in the UK*) was that he worried that lecturers might not have understood the question he might ask, a concern linked to a fear of his losing face because of insufficient language competence.

Finally, participants' perceptions of power relations between teachers and students are not consistent with Hofstede's Power Distance Index (PDI). For instance, Hungary has a lower value in his PDI than Taiwan, yet Kitty (*Hungarian studying in Taiwan*) reckoned that teachers in University T were closer to their students than those back in Hungary.

Similarly, although both Germany and the United Kingdom have a low value in Hofstede's PDI, participants in this study in University G and University B found that their lecturers had mainly passed on knowledge without interacting much with their students. This observation would appear to cohere better with Holliday's 'small culture' theory (1994; p. 29), in which teachers and students co-construct the teaching and learning patterns within their classroom such that patterns may vary from one classroom

to another.

6.1.6 Teaching Pedagogies

From what has been said in the discussion section so far, we can infer that culture is not the only determinant of teaching and learning practices, preferences and experiences across cultures. When asked about their first-year experience of studying abroad, although participants in this study automatically compared the education system of the host culture as well as its teaching and learning approaches to home, both advantages and disadvantages of each system and set of practices, their views and preferences towards the same learning context are different. This discrepancy may again indicate the individual's uniqueness resulting from personal traits, previous learning experience, such as studying overseas in other countries, or having had teachers from overseas with different teaching pedagogies. For instance, traditionally, most literature (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Roa 2006; Gill, 2007) dichotomises Eastern and Western teaching pedagogies. The Eastern teaching pedagogies are said to be more teacher-centred and didactic, with spoon-feeding of knowledge, dependence on authority and an uncritical acceptance, while the Western ones are characterised as more student-centred, requiring students to think critically and encouraging discussion. This dichotomy was not

unanimously agreed by the participants in this study. For example, the Hungarian and Russian participants at University T (according to the orthodoxy just described, thought likely to exemplify a teacher-centred approach) found that there had been many class discussions and group work projects whereas back home there had been more individual assignments and very little interaction between teachers and students. However, there were some contrasting opinions provided by the two Filipino students who thought that teacher-student interaction was less emphasised or encouraged in University T than in their home country. Also, Julie (*Taiwanese in the UK*) had found she had been encouraged to think critically by the lecturers in University B and she was willing to raise questions in class which she had hardly ever done when she studied in Taiwan, considering it to be rude to interrupt when a lecture was in progress. Such voices demonstrate that an individual's perception of the learning context is strongly influenced by his/her previous learning journey as well as the cultural practices encountered in different countries.

Overall, other than in respect of their teachers' experiences and English proficiency, participants in my study had little to say about the impact of varied teaching pedagogies on them. Neither did they mind the prevalence of localised business case examples provided in class mainly, it seems, due to their high level of motivation for studying abroad being based on other priorities: to receive a better education than at home or to

obtain a degree certificate that could provide the prosperity of their future employment.

Although they disagreed with large-scale lectures where there was very little interaction between teachers and students, and were at times daunted by the challenges of having to study on their own, they considered that these challenges were, in themselves, ways of learning that were different from that which they were used to in their home country.

Nevertheless, participants did consider that teachers' experiences enriched the content of the knowledge that they had attempted to deliver, a finding consistent with respondents at universities in the survey carried out by Kwok *et al.* in USA which found that the living and teaching abroad experience of faculty members was the most effective factor for internationalising teaching and learning (Kwok *et al.* 2005, p. 575). The examples cited most frequently by the participants in my study were of those professors who had graduated from top-ranking universities and who not only passed on their knowledge to students but also guided students to broaden their expertise by all means, such as reading economic magazines and other texts well outside the formal syllabus. Some lecturers who had plenty of working experiences abroad were also reported as having provided students with a full range of business practice examples in different regions, which they had found very helpful, particularly when examples given in the textbooks were either very localised or westernised.

In some cases, lecturers' English proficiency, particularly in University T, had caused some difficulties in learning. This was notably the case where English was the second language of some teachers who may, in other respects, have rich teaching experience and high educational qualifications, but had an accent or pronunciation that participants found difficult to understand. For example, a couple of Chinese language teachers at University T did not speak English at all and were described as impatient or unfriendly teachers. Although these teachers were being replaced after receipt of highly critical student feedback, it seemed that the university would have benefited from more thoroughgoing quality control, in terms of teachers' qualification and practice experience.

6.1.7 Answering the first main research question

This section concludes the general experiences perceived by participants in this study which helps to answer the first main research question regarding participants' identity negotiation in a foreign context and their views of the impact that their new identities may have on them in the future. Participants in this study had various expectations before studying abroad, mainly in terms of getting a better education, learning an additional language and getting to know another culture. In addition, they expected the study abroad experience to add value in their later search for their employment. However, their

learning process had shown them that the patterning of these experiences was more complex than they may have expected. First of all, they experienced a loss of belonging because they found it hard to fully integrate into the foreign context and when they visited families and friends back home during university vacations, they felt a growing distance between them and friends. Academically, the participants commonly reported that they did not seem to be in receipt of sufficient support. Some (e.g. Britta in University G; Frank and Kenny in University B) commented on the inexperienced teachers who did not speak English well enough to deliver knowledge or to solve students' problems; others did not like certain arrangements in the local Higher Education system they had encountered, such as fewer contact hours than their home education system (e.g. Albert, Thomas in University B) or tutorial sessions being conducted by senior students (i.e. Gigi in University G). Both internal and external factors had an impact on these students' confidence as learners. Arnold (in University T) wrote in his diary about an incident regarding unfair marking given by one lecturer which, he felt, was discriminatory. Thomas (in University B) found he was struggling to catch up with the class as well as to cope with daily life due to language challenges. As a result, he was showing signs of lacking confidence in the transitional process to the new culture in which he found himself.

Although some of the experiences in the foreign countries had proved to be unpleasant or unexpected, participants in this study generally valued their study abroad experiences. In particular, there was a strong sense across the three groups that the overall experience was highly relevant to their career ambition.

6.2 Implications

The study provides several implications for faculty who work with international students closely. First of all, it suggests that there is a need to provide more diverse academic and social support with that currently provided being seen by this sample of international students as very marginalised. This finding is consistent with past research evidence (Thomas 2003, Volet 2003) that despite the increasingly multicultural nature of university campuses, the most typical pattern of intercultural mixing is that of the minimal interaction between home and host students, mainly because of the cultural differences causing different interests in social activities, a lack of social language skills, a lack of time for social activities on the part of international students due to heavy study loads as well as personal attributes such as introversion. This is particularly an issue reported here by participants in University G and B; in addition to the heavy study load which had left them very little time to attend social activities, they found local students' lacking interest in getting to know and understand other cultures, so making it hard to build friendships

with them. Thus, international students found that they struggled to fit into the local culture, turning instead to seek comfort and support from a monocultural group (notably people from their own country) or to a multicultural group (but restricted to international students from other countries), so underscoring their intercultural experiences in contrast to that of home students. The result was that such international students did not feel fully integrated in the social context where they were now studying and home students were not benefiting from the culturally diverse campus and remained ignorant of the other cultures represented in the student body. This highlights the need for supportive programmes for international students, which involve all concerned parties, namely the international student office and all of the departments with a high number of overseas students who should be made aware of the barriers to full interaction that international students face and who should aim to assist these students in adjusting socially and academically. In addition to constantly encouraging students' multicultural cooperation in group projects in class, universities can also offer intensive workshops or orientation for both local and host students to encourage or increase interaction by providing opportunities and information for establishing the positive attitudes between host and home students. For instance, University B provided the "buddy scheme" programme aiming to increase the interaction between home and host students, as well as providing an opportunity to practice the local language with a local student. Although participants

in University B did not find they received maximum benefit from this programme, this does not mean that it was not helpful at all. Moreover, to support the above activities, university staff can conduct questionnaire surveys or interviews (either individually or in groups) to research further improvements in ways of providing such programmes.

Secondly, faculty members should be encouraged to understand and possess intercultural competence, so that they can help students reduce the stereotyped bias of other cultures and increase students' open-mindedness for other cultures. Universities could invite experts to give a one-day intensive seminar for faculty members, bringing their awareness of the cultural differences and similarities that may arise from their multicultural classrooms. Experts may provide faculty members with a range of creative approaches for introducing students' culture-general knowledge and enhancing students' culture-specific skills. A workshop could be offered, led by senior or more experienced faculty members to discuss how teachers' cultural background or overseas experience can influence students' learning as well as how students' cultural background can impact on their learning behaviours, learning strategies, etc. Through the experiential and reflective engagement in the workshop, participating faculty members may be more aware of or be more capable of building bridges across cultures.

Participants in this study appreciated the faculty who not only had a broad knowledge of global business practices but also empathised with what it is like to be an international student living and studying abroad. According to Bennett (1996), in order for teachers to be effective with students from diverse backgrounds, it is very important for them to recognise and understand their own world views and learn to confront their own biases by seeing the world through different cultural lenses and gaining knowledge of their students' individual cultures. Only then are they able to understand the views of their students and help students to remove their cultural biases. As educators, our time with students is short, but our influence can last. Thus, we need to use our time wisely and adopt all useful means for improving the well-being of learners and the facilitating of effective, goal-directed learning (Blumenfeld, 1992).

The current tensions related to the internationalisation of campuses between home and host students raises the question of how to reinforce and prepare business students to be more capable of working in an increasingly culturally diverse global market, and equip them to function effectively in different cultural contexts. As mentioned in section 5.1.2, some scholars see a great need for including intercultural competence into the formal educational goal of internationalisation, believing that formal training on intercultural competence will equip students with capabilities of judgement about how to manage

unfamiliar circumstances through cross-cultural communication skills, flexibility, and appreciation of others' values. However, this study shows that the adaptation process and the development of intercultural competence in sojourners' learning journeys is a more complex process than these other studies have suggested, particularly in so far as individuals adopt different coping strategies in relation to familiar and unfamiliar situations according to their previous life experiences as well as depending on the counterparts they correspond to. Therefore, one puzzle is whether intercultural competence can be tackled in formal teaching? Moreover, given that we cannot assume that international students have common learning experiences and will reach for common goals, can modules or programmes take business students beyond mere transnational or international views to genuine global knowledge and understanding? And in providing and encouraging all sorts of interactions between students from different cultural backgrounds, what else can educators do to ensure that all business graduates are interculturally competent and are able to perform well in a culturally diverse working environment?

The figures of the Erasmus scheme discussed in Chapter 2 show an increasing number of European students taking part in the student mobility programme hoping, in the process, to gain cultural experience and a good understanding of the host country to which they

travel for study. University G includes a one-semester study abroad programme in its curriculum, providing students with alternative ways of experiencing and interacting with people from different cultures. However, when arriving in a foreign context, those students may encounter what the participants of this study reported – that there is little interaction between home and host students. There is no question that studying abroad is anything other than helpful in terms of understanding other cultures and reducing stereotyped bias. However, the questions as to how intercultural competence can be achieved to a greater extent if the interaction either inside or outside of the classroom between home and host students is minimal, something that seems to be a common phenomenon on the multicultural campus (Thomas 2003, Volet 2003). Without the opportunity to expand the knowledge and understanding of other cultures, “the experience of study abroad for 6-12 months, attempting to learn a foreign language or taking a subject with international content, will not of itself develop intercultural understanding” (Thomas 2006, p. 119). One way of equipping business graduates with the intercultural competence might be to provide both theoretical awareness and opportunities for practicing it. That is, in addition to offering a wide range of knowledge of intercultural competence in the way of formal teaching to both home and host students, (international offices in the) universities may encourage interactions between home and host students through various arrangements, such as the Buddy Scheme

mentioned earlier in 4.3.2 and 5.4.2 or having home students volunteering to host international students with their family for some holiday celebrations, such as Thanksgiving, Christmas Day etc. Such activities could create valuable opportunities for both home and host students to understand and appreciate the different ways of, for example, celebrating cultural events in other countries.

6.3 Conclusion, contribution to knowledge of the study and opportunities for further research

The sample of participants of this study was small compared to the international student population in each researched context, and the data relied largely on individuals' storytelling which emphasise their life experience. As such, the findings of this study may not be generalised to a wide range of international campuses. However, participants' voices in this study may reflect some issues that exist in many multicultural learning environments. Although University T does not have a high ranking in its national context nor does it have as large a number of international students as the other two institutions researched, it was upgraded to a comprehensive university when it was less than 10 years old, and it is one of the few universities in Taiwan offering an English-medium degree programme along with a four-year Chinese language training course. We might characterise it as being at an early stage of development of internationalisation. Linked

to this, the qualifications of some of the faculty and the grades secured for entry by some of its students are not as good as they are in University G and B. Thus, there were times when participants at this university criticised their teachers for not speaking English well or their peers for falling asleep in class. Nevertheless, while my participants there had limited contact with local students on campus – a common issue across the three researched contexts – interaction among the international student group in University T appeared slightly more active than at the other two universities. One explanation for this may be that there were fewer modules being held in big lecture halls accommodating over one hundred students, with the result that participants had slightly greater opportunities to interact with teachers and other students. Moreover, the size of the international student population was the smallest in University T, with all international students able to be accommodated in the same resident hall, apparently resulting in interactions across the international student group being higher than in the other two contexts. That is probably why the participants in University T had more to say about their cultural experiences compared to those in the other two contexts.

Many of the results of this study cohere with the existing literature, but it offers something new in terms of the perspective of individual experience of learning in the foreign contexts. From participants' storytelling, we have seen that different factors

motivated my sample to study abroad. Some were relevant to personal traits, such as adventurousness and fondness for travel. Others were relevant to perceptions of education quality and future employment. However, the study abroad experience was not as smooth as participants had expected, due to the difficulties they encountered linguistically, academically and socially. Some saw the need to adapt themselves and adopt new approaches to student life through constant observation, engagement, and negotiation. In the transitional process of adaptation, participants experienced the loss of belonging and strove to form new identities to enable them to feel comfortable and be accepted in the foreign context. This was a complex transition process, shaped by several influential factors. As Bloomer & Hodkinson (2000, p. 584) suggest, learning is “cognitive apprenticeship” that involves “a variety of situations, including education institutions, work and informal settings... and depends on far more than fixed personal styles, traits, or schemata”. That is to say, learning is inter-related between learner, activity, and context. Individuals' personalities, life experiences and wider biographies served to influence the way they perceived the world, the local culture and with whom they interacted, each of which, in turn, had impact on how they responded to each intercultural events or transactions. This is perhaps best exemplified in Charlie's outlook (*German studying in University B*). When coming into a new community, he explained, one is inevitably changed because one takes in new knowledge and makes a common

ground in order to fit in. He also pointed out even when in one's home context, when encountering and interacting with people from different countries or cultures, one needs to make a common ground to make the communication work.

This study also challenges some of the assumptions in the literature that only discuss sojourners' learning experiences from a sole perspective, such as culture or language. For, as I have shown, students who have adequate language skills may, nevertheless, require an open personality to fully allow them to discover the rules and values of a culture and adjust themselves to fit into it, based on previous life experiences as well as learning and experiences derived from interaction in the foreign context. Moreover, their specific transitional or adaptive process is also connected to support systems, including those of family, friends of the same nation and other nations, academic staff, administrative staff, and university or governmental policies and all of which can combine either to result in successful transition or in frustration or, commonly, a mixture of the two. As the friendships among those from the same nation are helpful for sojourners at the beginning of the adaptive process, universities should be encouraged to provide information or opportunities for sojourners to seek psychological and emotional support in the mono-cultural group with which they most identify, further developing this until it becomes a "bi-[foreign student – host national] or multi-cultural [bonds between

non-compatriot foreign students]” friendship network (Bochner 1977, p. 292).

Sojourners’ learning journeys abroad involved processes of intercultural adaptation and intercultural interaction and these expanded their intrapersonal and interpersonal development. The direct impact on all the participants was that they were proud of the growth of their maturity, autonomy and independence, as well as of the global identity they had begun to develop and in which they were starting to relocate their life orientations. Some missed the feeling of belonging and were planning to make their way back home straight after graduation; others were seeking to gain working experience or undertake further study in the foreign context so as to reinforce their international identity; others again wished next to work in international enterprises rather than locally operated companies. In terms of interpersonal development, they had learned to be more tolerant to others’ beliefs, values and behaviours, and had shed many of their preconceived stereotypes or biases, as well as learning not to take likely views for granted. They were aware of intercultural sensitivities and were moving towards intercultural competence. They were becoming more capable of inter-/cross-cultural interaction by applying their experiences in the multicultural learning environment to a larger scale community. Moreover, when they eventually returned to their home countries, they felt they would empathise or even become friends with the international students or foreigners who study

or work overseas who they would go on to encounter, now that they understand what it is like to deal with problems in a new social context. This finding echoes that of studies such as that done by Carlson *et al.* (1990 cited in Hoff 2008, p. 57) that “students who study abroad are much more interested in international affairs after this [study abroad] experience than before and their knowledge of their host country increased dramatically”. However, while it seems that international students benefit from learning in the multicultural environment, home students studying on international campuses do not involve themselves much in such opportunities to enhance their intercultural knowledge. This is one of the areas all relevant faculty and administrators can take note of.

There have been few studies of this field such as mine which have used a qualitative design that tracked students over time and involved quite intensive work with a small group of respondents. One thing this study represents is an alternative perspective to the dominant instruments used to explore this field. In addition to the widely-used cultural concepts of ‘individualism’ and ‘collectivism’, this study also adopted Holliday’s “small cultures” and Wegner’s “Communities of Practice” concepts to explain cultural differences in the multicultural classroom and on the multi-cultural campus. Moreover, by looking into participants’ biographical and life histories we have been able to see many of the themes in the literature represented in this study in new ways, mediated through

individual experience in participants' learning journeys. More research of this kind may help expand our understanding of the experiences that these students have. Moreover, further research along these lines would be well placed to compare the perceptions of both local and international students of the multicultural learning environment in Higher Education.

Appendix I Modules in the business programmes in the three researched contexts

| | University B | University T | University G |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1st semester | Theory of Management Accounting (I) & (II) Economics for Business Statistics for Business and Management | Elementary Mandarin I Economics I Calculus I Accounting I Introduction to Business | Basics of Accountancy Techniques Mathematics (Mathematics of Finance, Linear Algebra) Mathematics (Analysis) Management A Principles of Economics Presentation Skills & Public Speaking |
| 2nd semester | Introduction to Business Information Systems | Elementary Mandarin II Economics II Calculus II Accounting II Management | Management Information System I Marketing A Finance A Statistics Legal Reasoning & Argument Foreign Language Competency I |
| 3rd semester | Principles of Marketing Organisational Behaviour and Human Resource Management Management Accounting Consuming Behaviour Operations Management | Intermediate Mandarin I Statistics I Marketing Management Introduction to Computer Science | Management Information Systems II Finance B Management Accounting Accounting A Civil & Business Law I Foreign Language Competency II |
| 4th semester | | Intermediate Mandarin II Statistics II Financial Management Information Management | Operations Management Management B Microeconomics Civil & Business Law |
| 5th semester | Business Strategy Finance for Managers <i>or</i> Finance Management | Advanced Mandarin I Human Resource Management | Study Abroad <i>or</i> International Cultural Studies Foreign Language Competency III Business Ethics |
| 6th semester | | Advanced Mandarin II Production & Operation Management | Management Information systems III Accounting B Marketing B Bachelor Thesis |

Appendix II Certificate of Ethical Research Approval Form

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH



School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: <http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php> and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Houheng (Venus) Chang

Your student no: 570027123

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD

Project Supervisor(s): Prof. William Richardson, Dr. Nadine Shaefer

Your email address: hc256@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 07942698718

Title of your project: A Comparative Analysis of the Student Experience of International Business Studies Programmes in Three Countries: Taiwan, Germany and the United Kingdom

Brief description of your research project:

Many studies have investigated international students studying in English-speaking countries for whom English is a second language, but little has been done in exploring the international student experience comparatively, including in countries where English is the second or foreign language. This study focuses on 'small culture' explanations for the experience of international students studying in multicultural/international classrooms in English-medium business programmes in three countries, the United Kingdom, Germany and Taiwan. Situated identity is a key concept in this approach; agency is recognized as learners' attempt to negotiate new identities for themselves in a more or less alien

environment. The purpose of this comparative study is to discuss how the students' identity is constituted in the multicultural business classroom, the role in this of cultural components of the curriculum in international business courses and the implications for teachers and institutional managers.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The participants are sophomore (2nd) year 'foreign' students in business degree programmes who study for a significant proportion of their programme in a language of instruction which is not their mother-tongue.

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

There are some ethical issues in this study that I am aware of:

- Informed consent: the interviewees and diary keepers will be distributed the consent form which aims to protect all their rights, including their willingness of participation in the research and free to withdraw at any stage of the research. With regarding to the participants in the questionnaires, they will be informed the purpose of the research at the beginning of the questionnaires. As the questionnaires will be distributed by means of e-mail, by responding to the questionnaires, respondents are considered giving consent to take part in the research.
- Anonymity/confidentiality: The consent from each university will be sought regarding the access and whether the institutions will be named. All participants' privacy will be guaranteed by giving pseudonyms or alias. However, confidentiality mainly works externally, not internally since the participants can identify the characters described in the stories.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

The research will adopt a sequential, mixed-method approach by using multiple sources to capture both qualitative and quantitative data. First, contextual documentary data about the three institutes in three countries, such as student population, nationalities, course contents, will be collected. The second stage will be interviews; I plan to meet with the participants for interviews in person twice over one week at the beginning of a semester/term in each country; the first time will be an informal conversational interview with individual students, followed by a focus group. The first two of the eight individual interviews in the first context I am collecting data will be a pilot and the semi-structured interview agenda might be modified as the result of first two pilot interviews.

After the interviews, participants will be asked to keep diaries in which to note their experience of multicultural learning once every fortnight for twelve weeks throughout the semester/term. The next stage will be to conduct a questionnaire survey. A pilot questionnaire survey will be conducted at the University of Exeter with five second year foreign students in the Business School. The survey will be a population study as the questionnaires will be sent to all sophomore (2nd) year students through international offices or staff of the business schools of universities investigated rather than giving out the students' e-mail information to the researcher, for the purpose of protecting participants' privacy.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

During the period of research, the data including the recorded interviews, participants' diaries, and questionnaires, will be store securely in the computer files with authorised password access only. And

Appendix III The semi-structured interview schedule

| <i>Themes</i> | <i>Questions</i> | <i>Time</i> |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Warm-up</i> | <i>Greeting & ask how much time interviewee has for the interview session</i> | <i>2 mins</i> |
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>Purpose of research & interview, participants' rights</i> | <i>2 mins</i> |
| <i>Motivation</i> | <p>When did you know that you wanted to study business? Why? (general)</p> <p>Why study abroad? (General) When did it occur to you to study abroad? Expectation of studying in the foreign country, why not in your native country? What is the advantage/disadvantage of studying abroad? What are the challenges/benefits? (Why study business abroad?)</p> <p>Why UK? Germany? Taiwan? (more specific) <i>Was the UK/Germany/Taiwan your priority of countries study abroad? Why? (including: meaning of studying business in this country)</i></p> <p>Knowledge about the country What did you know about this country? What had you heard about studying in the UK/Germany/Taiwan? Who told you about it? Where did you inform yourself about it?</p> <p>Knowledge about studying in the UK/Germany/Taiwan What did you know about being a student in UK/Germany/Taiwan? What did you know about British/German/Taiwan Universities</p> <p>First experiences/impressions on arrival</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you first feel about this country after you arrived? (general) - How was your first day at University? - What were you most surprised about? - What support did you get when you arrived here (from the University) | <p><i>10-15 mins in total</i></p> <p><i>3-5 mins</i></p> <p><i>5 mins</i></p> <p><i>3 mins</i></p> |

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| <p><i>Curriculum</i></p> | <p><i>What were your expectations of the courses in the programme?</i> (<i>Has your course being what you have hoped so far?</i>)</p> <p><i>What are your favorite subject(s)? why?</i></p> <p><i>How would you describe your course content?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - what sort of practical business examples discussed in class? (i.e. from textbooks only, or from all the sources teachers, peers, textbooks, web info) (i.e. is it more local-oriented or international-oriented?) <p><i>What course(s) have/has been more beneficial / challenging to you so far?</i></p> <p>How will this help you in future business practice when you work back home / or stay working here in the UK/Germany/Taiwan?</p> <p><i>Perceptions of your foreign language learning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your English ability before you arrived? • How would you describe your English ability now after a year of study here in Taiwan/Germany /UK? • How would you describe your Mandarin/German ability before you arrived? (for participants in Taiwan and Germany) • How would you describe your English ability now after a year of study here in Taiwan/Germany? • How do you find these languages might be useful for your future career? <p><i>More expectation on the programme design</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What skills have you learned from studying in | <p><i>5-10 mins</i></p> |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|

| | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <p>the programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What else do you think it could have been included in the curriculum? (i.e. internship opportunity) <p><i>Academic assistance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you have any questions about subjects/courses, do you ask for lectures' help or advice? (If not, what do you do? Ask peers? Why?) | |
| <p><i>Intercultural interaction / Intercultural Competence (Part I)</i></p> | <p><i>Could you tell me some things you find out about other cultures while studying with people from other countries which you didn't know about them before you arrived here?</i></p> <p><i>What are your experiences of the intercultural interactions inside classroom?</i> (negotiation process of identity)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the common lecture styles in your class? (mostly lecturing, case studies, group discussion, or whole class discussion?) ● (according to answers to the last question) in which way do you participate more actively? ● compared to the styles in your home country, what do you like or dislike about each style? <p><i>Interaction with peers</i></p> <p><i>Please tell me about the experience you had in the group projects?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How were the groups formed, how were the tasks assigned, how did the group discussion work and how was the end product group produced? ● Would you say, in group work, that you play a dominant role on decision making, or a more cooperative role in communication? ● Compared to the group work you had, if you did, in your home country, what do you like or dislike about each? | <p><i>20-25 mins in total</i></p> <p><i>3 mins</i></p> <p><i>2mins</i></p> <p><i>5 mins</i></p> <p><i>5 mins</i></p> |

| | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you have different opinions from your classmates (in the whole class discuss) or team members (in group projects), what do you do? Do you speak it out or wait until others express similar opinions like yours? Or keep silent? <p>Medium of language instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you find times when you have difficulties to understand the lecturers or in the communication with teachers and classmates because the language of instruction is not your native language? ● If you have difficulties in expressing yourself in the appropriate terms in the language which is not your native language, do you feel your peers or teachers encourage your point of views? (do they express efforts to try and understand you?) | <p>2 mins</p> |
| <p>Intercultural interaction / Intercultural Competence (Part II)</p> | <p>outside classroom</p> <p>Have you had chances to visit local business companies?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How did you get access to visit it? Was it arranged by lecturers or universities? ● What have you seen that impressed you? (i.e. different ways of office arrangement or management comparing to offices in your country) <p>What are your experiences of making friends with local students, or involving in the local communities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you joined any student clubs or organisation that help you to make friends with local students or people? ● How did you hear about these events? ● Why did you want to take part in them? ● How do you see your role in the organisation? (when attending the activities, do you feel you are included?) ● How would that help you to practice business in your future career? | <p>3 mins</p> <p>3-5 mins</p> |

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| | | |
| <i>Impact on Future</i> | <p><i>What's your plan after graduate?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● After obtaining your degree, where do you want to work? Back to home country or stay in the foreign country where you study currently, or to other countries? Why? <p><i>How does the study abroad experience impact on your future career?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How does this studying abroad experience influence your future career thinking? ● Do you think the experience may enable you to become more capable of communicating with colleagues or clients who are from other cultural groups? | <i>5 mins</i> |
| <i>Ending</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>How would you describe your overall learning experience in this foreign country at the moment?</i> ● <i>Would you recommend to someone in your country to study in Taiwan/Germany/UK?</i> ● <i>Anything else that hasn't been discussed today and you would like to tell me about?</i> ● <i>Arranging time for focus group</i> ● <i>Thanks participants</i> | <i>5 mins</i> |

Appendix IV Focus Group Schedule

Ice-Breaking exercise (10 minutes)

Please take two minutes to introduction about yourselves, your name (you can give a nickname instead of the full name if it makes you feel more comfortable) and where you are from?

Overall experiences of the past year

And what do you like most and you find most surprising after arriving Taiwan/UK/Germany?

- What would you say to someone from your home about your experiences of studying abroad? (10-15 minutes)

Intercultural interactions (5 minutes for each of the following questions)

Course

- Among the courses you took in the past year, which course you find helpful? Why?
 - teaching style
 - a wide range of case study examples?
 - Too theoretical or very practical?
- What do you think about the teaching and **learning** styles in Taiwan/Germany/UK?
 - assessment
 - group discussion
 - presentation

Classroom

- What do you think the advantage of disadvantage of group work?
- How did you find yourself act differently here when working with people from other cultures from the way you act with the people who are all from your country, if there is any? (more of negotiation?)
- How did you find yourself change slightly in terms of personalities or the way of thinking or doing things after a year study in a foreign country, if there is any?

Social

- What is your after school life like? What do you do in your leisure time?
- What are your experiences interacting with local students or people outside classroom?

Overall learning

- What do you think that could have been included in the programme to make it better?

More language training?

More social activities that can help involved in local communities?

Internships?

Impact on future

- What do you think this study abroad experience may benefit your future career?
(2 minutes for every one; 10-15 minutes in total)

Appendix V Samples of e-mail communications about the topics of the three diary entries

Sample I

Dear XXX,

It was great to meet you all two weeks ago in Taiwan. As we discussed at the end of our focus group meeting, the first diary was due on 30th September. However, please note that the deadline is negotiable! Just drop me an e-mail and let me know how much more time you need before e-mailing me the diary. I list some perspectives below that may help you better in reporting your learning in [University T].

Topic 1 (Due on 30th September): reflection of your first year and expectation towards your second year study

- After our interview conversation and focus group discussion, how did that make you think of your role as an international student in this program?
- Starting your second year, what do you want this year to be? What else you want to achieve that you haven't from the first year?
 - What skills or knowledge do you expect to learn from the business courses this semester?
 - How do you believe it's going to be different comparing to your first year study?
 - In the focus group discussion, some of you brought up that the teachers of Mandarin classes can speak English and you are all more optimistic in your Mandarin classes. How do the Mandarin classes go in the first two weeks of this semester?
 - How do other subjects go in the first two weeks of this semester?

As we agreed, the topics of diary keeping will be provided in advance. The topic of second diary entry is as follows.

Topic 2 (Due on 30th Oct): teaching and learning styles

- * Which teaching methods were interesting/unhelpful to you, new to you or different to what you used to in your home country
 - Do you use the same study habits here in the UK/Taiwan/Germany as you

did in your home country?

- What sort of knowledge or examples you learned from class that impress you or that is something you might not know if you study in your home country?
- Do you get to learn some skills in the business courses, such as critical thinking ability, marketing strategies, problem solving ability, computer skills etc?
- What would you wish the teaching styles could be in the host institution if that is very different from what you used to in your home country?
- Have you approach to your teachers for any questions you have? How did the communication go?

If you haven't sent me your first diary entry, please e-mail me before 8th of October (Thursday) at hc256@exeter.ac.uk

Thank you very much.

Venus

Sample II

Dear XXX,

The followings are the details of the last diary entry I need from you. It includes two topics that I originally designed for the third and the fourth diaries, however, after discussing with my supervisors, we think it'll make more sense to you if you combine the two areas in one general topic. I sincerely hope you can spend quite some time (twice as much as you did for the previous two diaries) answering my questions. Although You don't need to answer all the sub-questions, it will be very helpful if you can provide some examples what exactly happened or how it impacts on you.

The center of this diary is about your interaction with people from different countries either Taiwanese or other international students, as well as the interaction with them either in the class (subject-related activities) or outside classroom (social activities).

Topic 3 (Due on 20th Jan): Intercultural interactions

I. Inside the classroom:

- Do you have any projects or assignments that you need to work with your classmates? If so, can you please tell me the details of the projects? For example, the questions we discussed during our interview:
 - How is your group formed?
 - What nationalities are your group mates?
 - How is the work distributed to each of the group members?
 - How the leader of the group elected?
 - How the conflicts or problems are solved if there are any? Do you jump in and solve the issues when the conflicts occur? Or do you keep silent and let other group members sort it out?
 - How does the project turn out?
 - What you have learned from this group work in both academic perspective and the human relationship perspective?
 - Do you find that the ways you work in the multicultural group different from the ways you worked with your folks in your country?

- If there is no such group project in this semester, could you talk about the individual projects, for the autumn semester 2009 only? What's the project about? What source do you find the information for completing the project? Do you wish it could have been a group project?

II. Outside the classroom:

- Did you attend any school activities or events this semester? How was it?
- Do you make more local friends in the new academic year?
- If you got to know more local friends, how and where did you meet them? Did you do anything together, such as go shopping, go sightseeing, go to movies, study together etc.
- If you didn't make new friends with local students, what do you think the reasons are? Have you thought of seeking some ways or exploring more opportunities that you can make friends with them?

III. Conclusion

- Through studying in a foreign country, how much do you think you understand the cultures of your classmates?
 - How would you describe their cultures?
 - Could you tell me the examples when you feel the characteristics of a specific culture?

I hope all of you can e-mail me before January 20th, 2010. We are about 10 days away from 2010, I wish all of you have a prosperous and successful year 2010.

May you and your family a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Venus

Appendix VI Sample of a coded interview transcript

Arnold – male, from the Philippines and study in Taiwan (Length of interview 51:40)

| Interview | code |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Motivation</p> <p>V: Why did you choose study abroad? When did you start having the idea of studying abroad?</p> <p>A: Honestly, umm, during my high school days, I really don't want to immigrate abroad and I don't want to be away from my family. But during my college days, my school told us about the scholarship in [university T] and I think it is a once-in-a-life-time chance. So I decided to grab this opportunity and right now I am very happy that I made this decision studying here.</p> <p>V: But before knowing about the scholarship programme, you've never thought of studying abroad.</p> <p>A: Yeah.</p> <p>V: That's a big chance for you, isn't it?</p> <p>A: Yeah.</p> <p>V: And you are happy, you are glad that you made such decision.</p> <p>A: Yeah, very glad.</p> <p>V: Even though you dropped out the two year college you had completed in the Philippines, you need to start all over again in Taiwan?</p> <p>A: Yes, Yes, I am happy here because actually the whole experience abroad is very different.</p> <p>V: What was your major in the Philippines?</p> <p>A: I took mechanical engineering.</p> <p>V: That is very different from business! Have you thought of studying business before?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reluctant of leaving home & family ● Motivation: scholarship opportunity - No regret of giving up education back home (Q.V. Julie in the UK) - Major in different from previous education |

5:50

V: Do you know anything about Taiwan before you come studying here?

A: When I applied the scholarship, I don't have any ideas about Taiwan, but I searched some information on the internet. Err...umm.... Some information helped me understand a bit here now.

V: For examples? Like what information help you?

A: Like the food, superstition, and the cultures.

V: Did you try the food the websites introduced?

A: Yes, I tried "Gi Pei" (fried chicken fillet) and "Nie Cha" (bubble milk tea)

V: So when you read about it online and you were thinking I would try those when I go to Taiwan.

A: Yeah. I need to try this.

V: Do you like them?

A: Yeah, I tried it before, yeah, I like them. It's very popular in Taiwan.

V: You learned a bit about food and cultures, what about study? What are your expectations of studying here?

A: I am expecting that the studying here would be very different from the Philippines. And I am expecting that I need to focus on my study very well because the language is very different from English. I don't know...I think I need to prepare myself for studying well...I can make it...from here I can do the right and good things.

V: Are you happy with what you have learned in the past year?

A: Yeah, I am glad, because now I can speak basic Chinese and I can sing Chinese songs.

V: Wow, good, what song you can sing?

A: few songs. On the Kainan Foundation Day, I sang a Chinese song "Liang Shan Be" (梁山伯).

V: How did you learn to sing Chinese songs? Any one taught you that?

- Knowledge about the study destination: not much, but did some research about Taiwan before coming to study there

- Expectation: learning language will be hard

- Confident on learning a new language

- Learning strategy: singing songs

| Interview | Code |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>A: Actually, I learned from Rachael and Cathy. They help me to speak the sounds...something like that.</p> <p>V: Because you think that's also a way of learning Chinese?</p> <p>A: Yeah, definitely.</p> <p>V: You like singing.</p> <p>A: Yeah. We always sing together in my room, English songs, Tagalong songs, and Chinese songs.</p> <p>V: What would you describe your Chinese ability now? Because you said before you came, you didn't know any Chinese.</p> <p>A: 『我的中文現在還好』 (He answered in Mandarin which means “My Chinese now is fine”).</p> <p>(continued...)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Singing songs with senior international students (same nationality) <li>● Confident in speaking Chinese? Or enthusiasm in practicing Chinese? |

Appendix VII Coding book

I. Participants' individuality

- a. Participants' learning journey
- b. Motivation of studying abroad
- c. Motivations of majoring in Business
- d. Aspects of adaptation/adjustment

II. Teaching and Learning

- a. Education system
- b. Teaching strategies
- c. Preferences of subjects
- d. Skills learned
- e. learning strategies

III. Cultural components and influence

- a. Inside classroom: group project
- b. Outside classroom: social circle

IV. Advantages and disadvantages perceived after a year of studying abroad

V. Impact on future plans (working in the host countries, working/further studying in the international companies)

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