

**Learning to live interculturally: an exploration of experience
and learning among a group of international students at a
university in the UK.**

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Abstract

In the past 30 years there has been a rapid and exponential growth in the numbers of people electing to complete all or part of their studies outside of their country of origin. This phenomenon has attracted considerable research attention, not least from those who are interested to describe the benefits seen to accrue from the opportunity this provides for an extended encounter with linguistic and cultural diversity. Notably, the widespread assumption that this can generate a new form of learning, commonly referred to as intercultural learning, which is understood to comprise increased tolerance, empathy and openness to the linguistic and cultural other. Despite the limited research data to substantiate these claims, among those interested to develop educational responses to globalization, the potential of intercultural contact to generate intercultural learning has considerable appeal and has been co-opted in the development of policy and practice to promote global citizenship at all levels of education. This has contributed to the emergence of a particular discourse about intercultural learning and is further fuelling the development of both short and long-stay study abroad programmes.

This discourse is, however, increasingly called into question on account of the perceived overly-simplistic constructions of interculturality and learning on which it is premised. In particular, there is a growing recognition of the need to develop situated accounts of people's everyday encounters with linguistic and cultural others which acknowledge the exigencies of the setting, as well as the impact of wider political economic and historical discourses on their positioning in intercultural encounters. The generation of 'thick' descriptions of people's lived experiences of interculturality in global educational contact zones, it is argued, can lead to a more nuanced account of the intercultural learning these can afford. This was the aim of the study reported in this thesis.

The study undertaken explores the relationship between an experience of interculturality and learning among 14 international students during their year-long sojourn at a university in the UK. Drawing upon a socially constructed relational understanding of learning informed by the

transactional and dialogic conceptualization of learning developed by Dewey and Bakhtin among others, the study sought to generate a narrative account of participants' experiences and learning generated from periodic individual and group interviews over the year as well as reflective accounts in participants portfolios and other opportunistic conversations recorded in the researcher log.

Primary analysis of the data revealed that participants' experiences generated a number of forms of learning. One of these, 'learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other' was identified as a form of intercultural learning, comprising learning to be more open to the other and learning about linguistic and cultural positioning. This was subsequently explored in more depth, revealing a complex interplay between these two elements and the strategic actions taken by participants to manage their encounters with linguistic and cultural others. These results revealed considerable differences in the learning trajectories and outcomes resulting from their intercultural encounter. The findings also point to the importance of sustained commitment to intercultural dialogue on the part of individuals and the perception of their ethical treatment by others as important to the direction their learning trajectories take.

On the basis of these findings, it is argued that while an encounter with linguistic and cultural other may lead to increased tolerance, empathy and openness to other associated with the way intercultural learning is employed in much of the research literature, the strategic actions learners take to negotiate their linguistic and cultural positioning will critically inform the extent to which they develop these qualities. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the ways in which a situated and relational conceptualization of interculturality and learning is seen to contribute to a more informed and deeper understanding of the sorts of intercultural learning that are made possible by an intercultural encounter. I also identify a number of research agendas which can build upon the insights provided by the study.

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Chapter 1. Introduction to the Study

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is interested to explore learning in relation to an extended encounter with linguistic and cultural diversity of the sort afforded by the decision for increasing numbers of people to study outside of their country of origin. The aim of the thesis, as will be elaborated below, is to critically interrogate some prevailing assumptions about the relationship between the opportunity for engagement in a sphere of interculturality engendered by the decision to embark on study abroad and the intercultural learning this is seen to afford. Specifically, it focuses on the experiences and learning of 14 international students undertaking a one year Masters programme at a university in the UK.

There has been a rapid and exponential growth in the numbers of students electing to complete all or part of their education overseas in the past decade. Statistics provided by O.E.C.D for example, show a 61% increase in the numbers of students studying outside their country of origin between 1999 and 2003 and that by 2007 there were an estimated 3 million students engaged in study abroad, projected to rise to 7 million by 2020. Short-stay study abroad programmes are an increasingly common phenomenon at all levels of education (Jackson, 2010). The majority of those studying outside their countries of origin however, are engaged in short or long-stay study abroad in higher education leading to the increasingly international composition of the student body in universities in many parts of the world, but particularly in English speaking countries which attract the lion's share of these students (Davis, 2003).

This growth of study abroad programmes has attracted considerable research interest in the past few decades. While some of this has been directed to developing better provision and support for students in host institutions, research has also increasingly focused on the potential of study abroad to develop new forms of learning. As well as the language benefits that are seen to accrue from a study abroad sojourn (see for example Jackson, 2010) , the opportunity for an unmediated holistic contact with linguistic and cultural others that this is seen to afford, is

widely regarded to assist with the building of cross-cultural understanding (Gudykunst, 1998). That is to say, these programmes are understood to provide opportunities for intercultural encounters to develop what is commonly referred to as intercultural learning (Alred et al, 2003; Gill, 2007). This is understood to comprise increased empathy, tolerance and 'openness' to the linguistic and cultural other (Heyward, 2002; Byram, 1997; Chen & Starosta; 2005, 2008; Gudykunst, 2004). The outcomes of this intercultural learning being variously described as intercultural competence (Byram, 1997; Jackson, 2008), intercultural awareness (Alred et al, 2003), and intercultural or global personhood or citizenship (Kim, 2008; Arnett, 2002)

It is important to acknowledge that the term intercultural adopted in this literature is not without its problems. Not least of which is that the term culture upon which it depends can be adopted to apply to a wide range of groupings of different sizes as in, for example, youth culture, classroom culture and learning culture which confound attempts to locate culture merely in geographic terms (Holliday, 1999). From this perspective to talk of *inter* culturality is, as Steiner (1975:46) observed to realise that all communication is essentially intercultural and as such, as Blommaert (1991:15) has argued, might lead us to raise questions about whether it is useful to talk of interculturality at all. Nevertheless, despite this, the term continues to be widely adopted (albeit frequently without explicit definition) by those who are interested to describe the encounters in the global educational contact zones (Doherty & Singh,2004:9) engendered by study abroad programmes which are seen to be distinctive on two counts. Firstly, because they occur between people whose dispositions and norms of behaviour bear the trace of very different socialisation experiences reflecting their own and their countries different historical, economic and political trajectories. Secondly, because they often require at least some of the participants to negotiate their encounter through a second or foreign language (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

Research which has sought to explore and describe intercultural learning has a long history, but until recently was largely confined to those with an interest in international business communication and foreign language education (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). However, along side the

intensification of globalization in the 21st century and the increasing movement of people around the world for tourism, work and study, this research has increasingly attracted attention in mainstream education from those who are interested in developing educational responses to globalization. In particular, a growing number of educators have become interested in the role education can play in realising the positive transformative potential of globalization to generate new forms of understanding or as Appadurai (1996:11), a prominent globalization theorist has argued: “a new role for the imagination of social life”. This has led to the growth of interest in the promotion of global or intercultural citizenship education to equip young people with the skills needed to participate in an increasingly globalized world and this is increasing foregrounded in the literature put out by intergovernmental organizations such as the United Nations, the OECD and the World Bank (Spring, 2008). It is also increasingly evident in national and institutional policy statements and curricula for all levels of education, including higher education.

In higher educational institutions in the UK, for example, which form the context for the study reported in this thesis, there has been a notable shift in the rhetoric around the benefits of the increasingly international nature of the student body. That is to say, spurred on by the Prime Ministers initiative under the last Labour government in 2006, universities in the UK increasingly emphasise the educational as opposed to merely financial benefits of premium fee paying international students to the academy. That is, they point to the potential that the sphere of interculturality created by the presence of growing numbers of international students has to enhance the promotion of intercultural or global citizenship for all members of the student body (Teekens, 2007).

1.2 Rationale for the study.

As is evident from the above, an exploration of the learning opportunities afforded by the global movement of people for study purposes in the 21st century is attracting considerable interest from a number of quarters in education. It has also emerged as an important research agenda. Not only is there a burgeoning research literature on intercultural learning and study

abroad programmes for school children and global citizenship education across the educational spectrum, but also an increasing, albeit, still limited research literature on the relationship between internationalization in higher education and intercultural learning. However, one problem with much of this research as Papastephanou (2005) has observed, is the uncritical co-opting of the prevailing discourse of intercultural learning outlined above, one which assumes that an experience of interculturality will necessarily afford intercultural learning and that this will lead to positive outcomes.

This discourse, referred to by Dervin (2010: 26) as 'intercultural talk' is, he argues, problematic because writers rarely make their operating assumptions with respect to the nature of intercultural encounters explicit. In reality, these are, he argues, frequently premised on certain overly-simplistic constructions of culture and the relationship between this and individual subjects. A second problem he identifies is the way this discourse downplays the complexity of intercultural encounters and the sorts of learning they can engender.

A number of other writers who have begun to question the 'thin' and overly-simplistic account of the relationship between interculturality and learning alluded to by Dervin have drawn upon theoretical perspectives which emphasis the social and relational nature of learning and interculturality. Shi (2006) for example, has stressed the importance of acknowledging the situated nature of an encounter with interculturality and how the experience of this and thereby what we learn will be context dependent and vary from one locale to another. Moreover, as Anthias (2006), among others, has argued, there is an increasing recognition of the need to take account of the ways in which wider discourses play out in global educational contact zones, positioning individuals in ways that can impinge on their experiences of interculturality and the learning processes and outcomes resulting from this. Finally, in line with the problematic and contested nature of interculturality discussed above, Onghena (2001) has argued that studies might seek to move away from an emphasis on cross-cultural understanding in intercultural encounters in preference for a focus on the more situated and relational aspects of intercultural encounters.

These perspectives point to a need to acknowledge the complex nature of intercultural encounters and to remain open minded as to what the learning outcomes of these might be. They are also ones that resonate with my own experience of global educational contact zones borne out of my own extensive career as an educator and more recently teacher educator within the field known as Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). While in the early part of my career I undertook extensive professional sojourns overseas in a range of countries in the Middle and Far East, for the past 14 years I have been based at a university in the UK where I have been involved in teaching mainly international students undertaking a year-long sojourn of their own in order to attain a Masters of Education in TESOL qualification. These students are typically mature professionals working in the primary, secondary or tertiary educational sectors in a wide range of countries and regions around the globe. My role as programme director for 12 years, responsible for pastoral as well as academic care, has given me considerable insight into the struggles and triumphs they have experienced during their sojourns.

My sense of these students' learning trajectories over the year is that these are complex, rich, but also highly variable. While I suspect that most would agree that their year in a UK university has been a profound experience, it is likely that this will have generated a number of different forms of learning. This might include the intercultural learning described above, but it is also conceivable that, as a number of writers have suggested, it may not (Trahar, 2007; Otton, 2003). Moreover, if intercultural learning is part of what these students develop it seems likely that the extent and the ways in which this is developed will reflect the possibilities and constraints of the experience itself.

The move to develop more complex and nuanced understandings of learning from an encounter with linguistic and cultural diversity suggests the development of research procedures that can provide in-depth accounts of the lived reality of an experience of interculturality in a way that take account of the situated nature of this and that capture what people learn through their engagement in collaborative meaning making activities with others over time. With this in mind, in the study reported in

this thesis I adopted narrative inquiry as the methodology of choice. Narrative inquiry, is a research strategy that focuses on capturing the sense that individuals make of experiences over time (Clandinin & Connolly, 2000). It was therefore seen to be closely aligned with my interest in capturing the evolving perspectives and experiences of interculturality and learning of the 14 international students who were the focus of the study across the life course of their sojourn.

1.3 Research aims

The aims of the study are as follows:

- To describe participants' accounts of their experience of interculturality resulting from their year-long sojourn at a university in the UK
- To identify the perceived significance of these experiences to their learning
- To establish how far and in what ways their experiences lead to intercultural learning and the forms this takes.
- To consider the theoretical and practical implications of the study for an understanding of the relationship between learning and an experience of interculturality

1.4 Significance of the study.

There are a number of potential significances of this study. First of all, while there have been a number of recent studies which have sought to capture the lived experience of international students (as for example those undertaken by Montgomery, 2010 and Gill, 2007), to the best of my knowledge there are none which have sought to foreground the situated and profoundly relational nature of interculturality and learning that I am seeking to explore in my study. Such an approach has the potential to reveal a more complex understanding of learning and interculturality which can demonstrate how far and in what ways the rhetoric of intercultural learning is experienced in the lived local reality of internationalization of UK universities. As Trahar (2007) has observed, to date there has been

little research which has specifically focused on exploring student experiences of interculturality and learning and as such how educators have few foundations on which to build a sense of appropriate practice to promote this is the student body. The insights from this study therefore may make a potentially important contribution to the development of critically informed pedagogic practices to help generate the intercultural learning that is currently being advocated in universities but has still to be realised in practice.

The approach taken to exploring interculturality and learning also has the capacity to contribute to the generation of new theoretical insights with regard to the current understanding of the development of a sense of global or intercultural citizenship. That is to say, that providing insights into the ways in which global or intercultural citizenship is actualised in the day to day experiences of participants in global educational contact zones, may contribute to the development of a more nuanced understanding of interculturality. One which can flesh out the broad generalised idealism inherent in constructions of intercultural citizenship, or indeed contribute to the development of alternative ways to conceptualise this.

1.5 Outline of the study

This thesis comprises a further seven chapters following on from this introduction. In the following chapter I will provide some contextual background information to the study by providing an account of the discourses of internationalization and higher education and how the ways in which these position international students are likely to impinge on their experiences of interculturality within the academy. In chapter 3, I provide a conceptual framework for the study by presenting my understanding of two central concepts, learning and interculturality, and undertake a critical review of existing research literature into learning from an experience of interculturality, with a particular focus on the international student experience. This is followed by chapter 4 in which I present the design of the study undertaken and include details of the research questions, the narrative inquiry strategy adopted, data collection and analysis procedures and limitations of the study design. Following on from this, in chapters 5

and 6 I present the results of the primary and secondary analysis of data that I undertook to address my research questions. This is followed by chapter 7 where I discuss the findings and consider their implications both with regard to theorising learning and the experience of interculturality and with regard to pedagogy practices to promote intercultural learning in higher educational settings. Finally, in chapter 8 I conclude the study by discussing the contributions of the study and proposing a number of recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2. Background to the study.

2.1 Introduction.

In this chapter I provide a background to the study into international students' experiences and learning during their sojourn in the UK which forms the focus of this thesis. In doing this, I endeavour to outline the national and institutional discourses concerning internationalization and higher education which serve as a backdrop to these students' experiences and which are likely to be impinge on their learning project.

I first discuss the emergence of internationalisation as a phenomenon in higher education, the reasons for this growth, both in general and more specifically with regard to internationalization in UK higher education institutions, including the one which forms the immediate context for the study. Following on from this I consider the increasing presence of international students on UK university campuses, one of the more visible manifestations of the internationalization of higher education. This entails a critical consideration of the different ways in which they are discursively constructed as a group as evidenced in the mechanisms put in place to support these students, their reception by home students and academic staff and in the ways in which research into the international student experience has been conducted. Broadly speaking this reveals two main discourses around international students. Firstly, and predominantly, a discourse which construes them as deficit and as in need of support to ensure successful assimilation. Secondly, one that considers them as an opportunity, contributing to the diversity of the academy in ways that are beneficial to all concerned.

2.2 Internationalization and higher education.

Internationalization is a term that is increasingly employed in discussions of higher education. Arguably this is not a new phenomenon as universities have always been international in their outlook and have sought to cooperate with and forge links across national boundaries in the search for knowledge since their inception (Scott 1998; Bolsmann & Miller; Altbach & Knight, 2007). However, since the 1980s this international aspiration of the academy has increasingly been foregrounded in

discussions of university policy and practice and the term internationalization has become commonplace in the discourses of those who are engaged in setting strategic objectives for universities whether they are located in western and non-western settings.

2.2.1. A definition of internationalization.

Broadly speaking internationalization can be defined as the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems, institutions and individual faculties and departments within these to operate within a global context (Altbach & Knight, 2007:290). However, in reality the term is used differently by different people. It is interesting, for example to contrast this definition with one offered by Knight which describes this as: ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education’ (Knight, 2004:2). This is one which aligns itself much more with the discourse of interculturality alluded to in the previous chapter and that speaks to the emerging aspirational rhetoric of internationalization in many national and institutional policies around the globe.

These definitions also indicate how internationalization is seen to be intimately tied up with the process of globalization discussed in chapter 1 above in complex ways. That is, how it is both a response to globalization and also serves to contribute to this process (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Singh & Doherty, 2004). However, as Gacel-Avila (2005) has observed, while globalization is a contemporary context for internationalization, it is important to stress that globalization and internationalization are not synonymous. Within the context of the aspirational understanding of globalization as promoting a new understanding global citizenship mentioned in chapter 1 above, for example, there are those who would argue that the actual practice of internationalization in universities is in fact often in seeming contradiction to this ideal (see for example, Tian & Lowe, 2009: 661).

Drawing upon the work of Knight & de Wit (1997; 1999) and Knight (2004), Koutsantori (2006) identifies three main rationales informing the internationalization strategies of universities in different settings which are

widely cited in the literature on internationalization (see for example, Caruana & Spurling, 2007; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). Firstly, he identifies an academic-cultural rationale. That is internationalization as primarily concerned with academic cooperation and student and staff mobility in the interests of enhancing mutual understandings between countries. This form of internationalization, referred to as traditional internationalization by Altbach & Knight (2007), is seen to reflect the beneficial nature of cross national links that have been closely associated with the aims of universities since their initial foundation. This is, for example, Koutsantoni (ibid) argues, evident in the traditional rationales offered for internationalization by many in E.U. member states and enshrined in the E.U. Bologna process of forging cross national links for cultural rather than monetary benefits.

A second rationale, in contrast to this 'not for profit' form of internationalization, is an economic rationale for internationalization, one which Koutsantoni (ibid) associates most closely with English speaking countries (the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the UK) which have been able to successfully take advantage of the lingua franca currency afforded to English alongside increasing globalization to attract large numbers of international students to study on their home campuses as well as engage in expansionist activities such as forging joint degree programmes with institutions in other countries and developing satellite campuses in various locales. This rationale for internationalization is arguably increasingly driving internationalization initiatives and not only in the English speaking countries mentioned above. It is interesting to note for example the development of English medium degree programmes in a number of European countries in the interests of increasing their market share of the international student market in recent years (Koutsantoni, 2006).

Finally, Koutsantoni (ibid) argues that a third emerging rationale for internationalization, most notably for non-European and Anglo speaking countries such as China and Malaysia, appears to be capacity building. This manifests itself in the form of encouragement of nationals to travel to other countries for study purposes or increasingly through the encouragement of a greater presence of foreign universities or

collaborations between home and foreign universities within their own countries.

While it is useful to distinguish between broad rationales for internationalization as Koutsantori (2006) has done, it is also the case that more than one of these rationales may be drawn upon and evident in the reasons put forward for pursuing internationalization of higher education by government strategists or a given higher education institution. Moreover, as is suggested by the classification above, the local 'discourse of internationalization' will reflect different contextual realities and priorities (Yang, 2002) as is evident in the ways in which internationalization in higher education is presented in the UK to be discussed below.

2.3 Internationalization and higher education in the UK.

In the past 10 years the discourse of internationalization of higher education in the UK has been informed by two important government initiatives announced in 1999 and 2006 by the then Labour prime minister, Tony Blair, known as Prime Minister Initiative 1 and 2 (hereafter referred to as PMI 1 and PMI 2). Although these do not account for the internationalization strategy pursued at any given institution they have nonetheless been influential in providing benchmarks for policy as well as funding for internationalization initiatives undertaken at university level (Knight, 2004).

In this respect it is important to note that in both initiatives an important emphasis was on international student recruitment, with numerical targets set, and an interest in increasing the UK market share and bolstering a substantial source of revenue for the UK economy clearly stated. While attention to other aspects of internationalization were highlighted in PMI 1, in PMI 2 these were given much more focused attention with the quality of student experience (for all students), internationalizing the curriculum and increasing links between UK universities and those overseas, receiving much more explicit reference and emphasis (Clarke, 2006). As Caruna & Spurling (2007) point out there is also evidence of much greater attention to educational discourses in PMI 2. This is particularly true in relation to

the new knowledge economy and learning society which emphasises a need for universities to focus on preparing graduates for an increasingly global world of work and to negotiate the complexities brought about by globalization. That is to say, while PMI 1 and PMI 2 shared many things in common, it is possible to detect a visible perceptual shift between them; move from a discourse of international recruitment to one of international education for all (Bolsmann & Miller (2008: 79).

In discussions of the shifting rhetoric of internationalization detected between PMI 1 and PMI 2, a number of writers (see for example Turner & Robson, 2008; Tian & Lowe, 2009; Hyland et al, 2008) draw upon Appadurai's (2001) distinction between symbolic (weak) and transformative (strong) forms of internationalization. While originally employed by Appadurai to discuss academic research in the context of globalization, this distinction has been seen as helpful in distinguishing between 'weak' internationalization, primarily about international recruitment and the assimilation of international students into the existing ethics and practices of western higher education, versus 'strong' internationalization as having the capacity to contribute and thereby transform practices and to generate a more global outlook in the student body. This strong form of internationalization informs what Teekens (2007:1) has called 'internationalization at home' which has been influential in raising awareness of the link between the international and intercultural dimensions of higher education (Caruana & Hanstock, 2005 cited in Caruana & Spurling, 2007). Thus, in the UK, at the level of national debate at least, the shift in rhetoric between PMI1 and PMI2 has highlighted the sense in which internationalization in higher education is increasingly informed by both the academic-cultural and economic rationales identified by Koutsantori (2006) mentioned above.

However, as Knight (2004) has observed, it is at the institutional level that the real process of internationalization is taking place. With respect to this a number of writers have argued that there is still a considerable discontinuity between the sector wide rhetoric and the 'local' institutional strategy for internationalization and its enactment within the context of institutional 'cultures' (Haigh, 2008; Trahar, 2007; Bolsmann & Miller, 2008; Ippolito, 2007; Otten, 2003). That is to say, that while attention to

the academic-cultural rationale for internationalization is evident in many UK higher institutional policy statements, within the current climate of funding cuts and the increasingly urgent need for universities to establish their own economic viability, it is the marketization discourse of internationalization that wins out. The results of two studies into internationalization strategies of a number of universities, one undertaken by Bolsmann & Miller (2008) which interviewed key senior management figures in 16 universities in the UK and one by Koustantoni (2006) which examined the documented international strategies for 51 universities, would appear to bear these views out. Taken together the findings of these studies suggest that while a number of discourses of internationalization were evident in the external-facing activity of UK universities, nevertheless, the dominant discourse, whether explicitly stated or otherwise, is economic and market-orientated (Bolsmann & Miller, 2008). Thus, as Haigh somewhat cynically observes, in higher education argues: "In theory internationalization is a process for the education of planetary citizens. In practice, internationalization is about income generation for cash-strapped higher education institutions." (2008:427).

2.3.1 Internationalization in the university that forms the setting for this study.

The university that is the setting for the inquiry reported in this thesis is a medium sized university located in southern England with a total student population of just over 17,000 students in 2009, among which 3,000 are classed as international students. With respect to the observations made above, it would appear that it is also not markedly different from its competitors. That is to say that the university website shows that both the marketization and academic cultural discourses mentioned above are being drawn upon in its outward facing presentational material. The university is on the one hand explicit in its commitment to expanding its recruitment of non-EU students and in its aspirations for 20% of the student body to be comprised of international students by 2015. Meanwhile it is equally explicit about its commitment to a strategy of

international education for all and of the benefits that a diverse student body can contribute in helping to prepare all the student body for a future in an increasingly globalized world of work.

According to the university website, an independent survey undertaken by i-graduate indicates that international students give this university one of the highest ratings for student experience in the UK higher education sector. However, to the best of my knowledge no published research has been undertaken into internationalization by academics at this university and as a member of the academic staff, I am not aware of formal initiatives undertaken by the university to translate the international educational aspirational objectives laid out in the mission statement into concrete pedagogic activities at a programme and classroom level.

The discourses outlined above are likely to be significant to the ways in which universities construct their understanding of international students, who are the focus of the study reported in this thesis, and are thereby likely to impinge, directly or indirectly, on their experiences. Against this backdrop, I will now turn to a consideration of these students.

2.4 International students in UK higher education institutions.

Irrespective of the ways in which higher educational institutions present themselves with regard to their internationalization strategy, the fact remains that international student recruitment is the most significant internationalization activity of the vast majority of universities in the UK (Toyoshima, 2007 and Haigh, 2008). Indeed, international student recruitment is indisputably big business for UK universities and is estimated to generate 12.5 billion pounds a year for the UK economy (British Council, 2008). The most recent statistics available for international student numbers provided by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) shows that the total number of international students registered in UK higher education institutions for the 2009-10 academic year was 405,805 of which two thirds were from outside the European Union. Of these, over half were enrolled on post-graduate programmes and the majority enrolled on taught programmes. These figures represent

a 16% increase on numbers recruited the previous year and reflect consistent year on year strong growth in numbers since the late 90s (HESA, 2011).

2.4.1 What is an international student?

It is important to acknowledge that the term international student is itself contested and like the term internationalization discussed above, means different things to different groups within higher education in the UK. Moreover, as Devos (2003) has argued, the way the term is deployed in a given setting is likely to reflect historical, economic and political forces.

In the context of UK universities, for example, rather than using this term to refer to all students who are non-UK domicile, it is in fact reserved for a particular category of overseas students. Namely, those who are not from the UK or EU member states, who are referred to collectively as home students. This distinction is made on the basis of fee regimes, and thus a defining feature of an international student in a UK university is someone who currently pays a different (and substantially higher) fee than does a student from the UK or other European member states. In this thesis, however, following a number of writers (such as Hyland et al, 2007; Leonard et al, 2004) I adopt the term international student to encompass all non-UK domicile students, those who have moved to another country to take up full-time study.

As Trahar (2006) among others has pointed out, international students are, of course, not a homogeneous group but an enormously diverse group, both in terms of nationality but also in terms of ethnicity, age, gender, linguistic norms, and in all the other ways in which we recognise and attribute diversity to students within the UK student body. However, it is also the case that the term international student is often employed as a blanket term which describes these students in ways which detracts from this diversity. As table 2.1 below shows for example, while the term international student is often seen as coterminous with students who do not have English as a first language, in fact, sizable numbers of international students come from English speaking countries. By way of

contrast, the increasingly large numbers of international students from Asia as evidenced in table 2.1, the majority of whom are from mainland China, can also be seen to have a totalising effect on the ways in which we construct our understanding of international students and to dominate the rhetoric and research around international students' needs and how to support these in the academy (Singh & Doherty, 2004).

Table 2.1. Region of domicile for non-UK students in 2008-09 and 2009-10. (Higher Education Statistics Agency retrieved May 2nd 2011.)

Region of domicile of non-UK domicile students		
Region of domicile	2008/09	2009/10
Other European Union	117660	125045
Other Europe	13745	15235
Africa	35180	37350
Asia	150755	171950
Australasia	2310	2665
Middle East	19325	23605
North America	24610	25360
South America	3590	3700
Non-European Union unknown	1800	900
Total non-UK domicile	368970	405805

2.5 The reception of international students

As mentioned above, and as a number of writers have observed,(Singh & Doherty, 2004; Devos, 2003; Coates, 2004), how we construct our image of international students is important as this is likely to impact on how the

academy reacts to their presence and locates them in the broader scheme of things. Closely aligned with the symbolic and transformative forms of internationalization mentioned above, it is possible to detect two main discourses with respect to the reception of international students on UK campuses. Namely, to see these students as deficit and as posing problems for the academy or to see these students as an opportunity for all, in lieu of the climate of interculturality they generate for the institution. Below I consider this from two perspectives; how this is manifest in the strategic ways in which universities respond to international students, and their reception by faculty members and home students.

2.5.1 Strategic responses to international students in higher education.

Universities have a duty of care to their students and work hard to ensure that support structures are in place to address their needs (Lord & Dawson, 2002). With regard to international student support, this is an area in which universities have invested a considerable amount of time and energy as part of their overall drive to enhance retention and recruitment of international students. In addition to endeavour to ensure that international students are aware of the range of support services offered to home students, other prominent and visible forms of targeted support for international students include international student advice services, language and study support services providing pre-and in-session programmes, social programmes aimed specifically at international students and their families within and across departments and schools.

While well-meaning and generally highly appreciated by international students, as indicated by the results of large scale surveys such as those undertaken by UKCOSA (2004) and UNITE (2006) these strategic responses have also been problematised in the literature. Firstly, because they point to a primarily assimilationist as opposed to inclusive or transformative vision with respect to addressing diversity within the student body as Warren, (2005), for example, has pointed out. In other

words, these support structures are seen to highlight an emphasis on helping international students adjust to the prevailing norms and values of the institution and as such contribute to the positioning of these students as lacking or deficit and in need of remedial support if they are to be successfully integrated into university life (Ryan, 2002).

In addition, although increasingly challenged, a notable facet of this discourse of deficiency with regard to international students has been a tendency to generate stereotypical descriptions of groups of international students according to such things as learning styles and norms of classroom behaviour (Caruana & Spurling, 2007; Ryan and Louis, 2007). In particular, this has been, and continues to be a notable feature of workshops and documentation targeted at helping academic staff support international students. While well-meaning, these often reproduce the stereotyping that prevail in essentialist understandings of the relationship between individuals and cultures in a sizable proportion of the wider literature on cross-cultural research and the tendency to compare and contrast groups according to 'us and them' binary opposites (see Chapter 3, 3.5.1 for an in-depth account of this). Thus for example, the problems faced by students from East Asian countries are often understood to reflect their preference for 'surface' rather than 'deep' learning (Montgomery, 2010; Ryan & Louis, 2007), and their dependent and passive qualities rather than the active and independent qualities required for successful scholarship in western settings. The result being that they are positioned as struggling to develop the requisite skills, notably critical thinking skills that are the hallmark of academic success in western academia.

In contrast to the above, as mentioned above in 2.3, a strong or transformative approach to internationalization is one which recognises that the increasing diversity of the student body, that the increase in international student numbers makes possible, is beneficial to all. Research in North America (see for example Guo & Jamal, 2007) has, for example, suggested that this can improve intergroup relations and campus climate, as well as increase opportunities for the intercultural learning referred to in chapter 1. It is argued that international students provide the academy with an opportunity to critically appraise the norms and ethical

basis of the university culture and in particular to develop more inclusive and personally transformative pedagogic practices (Trahar, 2007; Caruana & Spurling, 2007). However, in reality, it appears that this alternative discourse of international students has to date only been embraced in a limited way in practice. One move, although still not widespread (Caruana & Spurling, 2007) is a focus on internationalizing the curriculum (Otten, 2003; Ippolito, 2007). not only in the interests of equitability and inclusion of diverse perspectives, but because this is seen to enhance transformation at an individual level (Turner and Robson, 2008) and to engender the development of intercultural capacity-building, considered important for graduates seeking employment within a global market place (Caruana & Spurling, *ibid*). However, Webb (2005:110 cited by Ryan and Louis, 2007) argues that in many cases this amounts to little more than “a tokenistic response” to the transformative capacity of internationalization. It seems likely however that as competition for international students continues to intensify, the efforts to engage with this discourse of international students as ‘opportunity’ will grow. This is already reflected in a growing emphasis in research studies on a more in-depth understanding of what sorts of transformations occur from the experience of interculturality they afford, and what facilitates or hinders the development of these as will be discussed further in 2.6 below.

2.5.2 The reception of international students: staff and home student perspectives.

In general, as Gill (2007) argues, universities endeavour to present a welcoming front to international students, and not only because they add considerably to fee income, but because they afford the diversity and contribution to academic research that as explained above, many universities are keen to evidence as part of their internationalization strategy. However, it is also the case, as is starting to emerge from recent studies, that academics and home students are often circumspect about

the day-to-day realities of accommodating international students into their classrooms and programmes of study. Although to date the numbers of studies undertaken have been limited, these point to a number of issues

with regard to the rhetoric and the reality of international students' reception which are likely to have a significant bearing on their experience.

2.5.2.1 Staff perspectives on international students

With regard to academic staff perspectives on internationalization, as Tange (2010) noted in her study, many academics would see themselves as broadly in favour of the promotion of the transformative model of internationalization outlined above. Indeed, as indicated in section 5.2.1.above, the growth of literature, much of it written by practitioners working in higher education, suggests a commitment to critically engage with internationalization and to explore ways to develop global curricula and intercultural awareness. However, it is still the case, as Caruna & Spurling (2007) observe, still the case that many academics are engaged in a creative process of non-implementation of institutional attempts to promote these, viewing these as an additional burden to their heavy workload.

Although there are to date few studies which have explicitly sought to establish the perspectives of academic staff with regard to international students, those that have been done suggest that many consider dealing with the needs of international students to be an additional burden. Turner & Robson (2008) for example suggest that many academics hold a victim mentality seeing attending to these students and their needs as an unwelcome additional burden, adding to their increasing workloads and limited resources, and further challenging their efforts to retain their preferred academic identities. That is to say, as Otten (2003:14) has observed, that while many may profess a degree of tolerance of otherness and different styles in the day to day experiences, their enthusiasm can quickly dwindle in the face of the energy, time and patience required to generate more inclusive practices. Moreover, as a number of studies have shown many academics continue to display the sorts of stereotypical views of international students alluded to above; ones which paint them as passive, lacking in autonomy, and unfamiliar with UK academic culture, (De Vita, 2004, Hills & Thorn, 2005, Kingston & Forland, 2004, Smith 2006).

2.5.2.2 Home student perspectives on international students.

With regard to home students' reception of international students, as with the work on staff perspectives, there are still only a limited number of studies which have sought to explore this in the UK, despite increased recognition of the need to undertake research into this area (Hyland et al, 2008). Among those that have, of note are the studies undertaken by UNITE (2006), Hyland et al (2008) and a study undertaken by Harrison & Peacock (2007). There are also those, such as the ones undertaken by Ippolito (2007) and Wright & Lander, (2003) which have sought out home student views within the context of enquiry into specific pedagogic practices and innovations in multilingual and multicultural groups mentioned above. Although limited, the general message that these studies convey is that home students regard international students as challenging on a number of counts, even if they profess in broad terms to being enriched by their presence (Ippolito, 2007, Hyland et al, 2007). These include issues to do with language difficulties, cultural differences in socialising and the perception of a tendency for these students to form exclusive cultural cliques. In addition, a number of studies report the difficulties that international students experience in forming friendships with home students (UKCOSA, 2004) and it is apparent that as one report states this may, at least in part, be attributable to the 'passive xenophobia' (Harrison & Peacock, 2007) towards international students and a process of cultural and linguistic othering that may thwart the attempts of these students to engage with the home student body.

Although, many academics and home students may be reticent to share their views on international students in a formal research study, a point that Hyland et al (2007) readily acknowledge, in certain contexts they may be much more prepared to do so. In this respect an online discussion that ensued on the BBC website in 2008 following a report that international students were buying essays provided a number of revealing insights which add further weight to the emerging picture presented above. Firstly, the discussion pointed to the buying of essays as a topic that generated considerable strength of feeling among home students and staff alike. A second insight was the way in which these students are clearly understood to present as a problem for many academic staff and home students on

the grounds of their evident linguistic (and cultural) differences (Coughlan, 2008). The comments of many with respect to plagiarism and falling academic standards, both seen to comprise part of the discourse of academic students as deficit (Ryan & Louis, 2007; Devos, 2003), suggest that the discourse of deficit with respect to international students is very much alive and well.

To sum up, on the basis of the studies reported above it would appear that on balance, international students are likely to receive a mixed reception on UK university campuses. Although on the one hand the academy welcomes these students and their contribution to a process of 'internationalization at home' they are more likely to be viewed as a problem by their tutors and their UK peers rather than as an opportunity due to the fact that they may not measure up, whether academically or socially, to the established normative construct of students in the UK. In line with a view of international students as somehow deficit, in the main the burden for adjustment is placed firmly on their shoulders of these students as, as Chalmer & Volet (1997) among others have argued, lecturing staff and administrators have tended not to treat this as an issue that they need to address. As will be seen below, there is a clear sense that the approach and focus of research into international students' experiences can itself be seen to compound and reify this discourse still further.

2.6 Research into the international student experience in UK universities.

As elsewhere, in the UK the research into the international student experience has also shown rapid expansion in the past 10-15 years. Earlier studies in particular, as Dolby & Rahman (2008) observes, tended to prioritise quantitative data that would help enhance the marketability of higher education to international students. However, more recently, accounts of experiences have been sought which focus more on generating the sorts of qualitative data which can, in theory at least, afford a more critically reflexive stance on the processes of learning and teaching and how these can be enhanced. This has been spurred on, in part, by the

emphasis on the need to attend to the quality of students experience highlighted by PMI2 in 2006 as mentioned above.

The research into international students' experiences of higher education in the UK is wide-ranging, undertaken by researchers with their own particular specialisms, and across a number of academic disciplines including psychology, counselling, business studies, and applied linguistics and English for Specific Purposes. As such it tends to be fragmented and informed by a number of different theoretical and methodological frameworks. In what follows drawing mainly from reviews of research undertaken by Caruana & Spurling, (2007) and Leonard et al (2004), I will provide an overview of the emerging picture of international students' experience of higher education in the UK, the ways in which research agendas reflect the discourses of internationalization discussed above, and issues identified with this body of research which have a bearing on the study that is reported in this thesis.

As mentioned above, one focus of the research into international student experience has been directed at an exploration of their expectations and motivation for taking up their studies in the UK. This is informed in large part by an interest in enhancing recruitment and retention of students and entails the adoption of theoretical frameworks drawn from marketing literature such as consumer decision-making processes and push-pull models (Caruana & Spurling, 2007). As such, this research appears to speak directly to the economic and market-orientated discourses of internationalization mentioned in section 2.3 above. Findings from these studies highlight the significance of such things as perceived quality of the host institution, a desire for a cross-cultural experience and to broaden their horizon, and perceived future employability (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; West, 2000; Goldbart et al, 2005). However, these surveys lack depth and provide a narrow understanding of student perspectives which provides no sense of how these motivations and expectations inform their broader student experience (Caruana & Spurling, 2007).

A number of large scale surveys, notably those undertaken by UKCOSA (2004), UNITE (2006) and Hyland et al (2007) at a national level, and Sovic (2008) at an institutional level, have sought to capture a broader

understanding of the international student experience in the UK. The UKCOSA study, for example, involved 4,796 international students studying in higher and further education in the UK in 2004, sought to establish a wider and more detailed account of international students' experiences in a bid to establish a research and institutional strategic agenda to enhance their overall experience. The results of this study highlighted for example, that while participants in the survey were generally happy with their experience of studying abroad, both academically and more generally, some key themes for improvement related to such things as finance, accommodation, support and social integration (UKCOSA, 2004). These studies, however, as with the ones on motivations and expectations, are only able to provide a broad brush approach to understanding international students' experiences and in the last few years have been supplemented by much more detailed studies, often focusing on a particular aspect of their experience.

It is interesting to note that the vast majority of studies, whether quantitative or (increasingly) qualitative in design, which do seek to develop a more in-depth understanding of international students sojourn, are, as with those above, underpinned by an understanding of international student experience as one of adjustment. Moreover, as Leonard et al (2004) have noted, they are primarily focused on detailing the discreet problems encountered in this process of adjustment with an interest to identify the sorts of support needed to assist them with this process. There are those, for example that seek to examine psychological or socio-cultural adjustment (see for example Spencer-Oatey & Xiong, 2006) and others which examine experience from the perspective of adjustment to new styles of learning (see for example, Cadorath, 2005). Within this body of research more recent studies (such as those by Gu et al, 2010; Gill 2007), can be seen to address the shortcomings that Leonard et al (2004) identified with many of the earlier studies into international student experience including a need to adopt longitudinal research designs, to look at their experiences beyond the academic environment and to pay more attention to diversity within the international student population. Nevertheless, the emphasis on adjustment and the identification of problems reveals how the majority of the studies

undertaken into international students' experiences continue to manifest and further perpetuate the positioning of international students as deficient observed above.

While still limited in number, there are a number of studies which bring alternative theoretical lens to bear on international students' experiences such as social network theory (Maudeni, 2001), communities of practice (Morita, 2006; Montgomery, 2010) and the sociology of the stranger (Coates, 2005) which reflect a growing awareness of the need to understand international students as situated in and affected by the totality of their lived experience within the academic and wider community (Turner & Robson, 2008; Trahar, 2007). The findings of these studies, reported in more detail in chapter 3 and 7 below, highlight how a more complex but also richer understanding of the potential for the intercultural capabilities that are envisaged among those who are interested in the promotion of internationalization at home can be realised. They are also an indication of the ways in which some in the academy are engaged in a process of critical scrutiny of the normative constructions of international students and their own pedagogic practice.

The research study reported in this thesis, with its adoption of narrative inquiry as a research strategy, is one which is informed by the efforts to develop 'thick' descriptions (Holliday, 2007:62) of the lived experiences of international students as will be discussed in chapter 4 below. Before turning to this, in the next chapter I will first present my conceptual understanding of learning and interculturality which underpins my particular focus on the experiences of the international students who took part in my study.

Chapter 3. Towards a theory of learning in intercultural encounters

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. Firstly, with reference to literature, to articulate my understanding of two concepts that are central to the research study reported in this thesis. These are: learning and interculturality. Second, informed by these, to critically interrogate a number of theoretical and research-based accounts concerning the nature and focus of learning in intercultural encounters, with particular reference to those undertaken into the experience and learning of international students in higher education.

I start by establishing the case for learning as a social and relational process and consider the contributions of a number of different theoretical perspectives. Drawing upon the transactional model of learning promoted by Dewey, as well as Bakhtinian dialogism and the positioning theory developed by Harre and his associates, I go on to present the transactional and relational understanding of learning that underpins my enquiry. I then turn to a consideration of interculturality, the different ways in which this is defined and what sorts of learning processes and outcomes are associated with an experience of interculturality. Following on from this I undertake a critical review of a number of studies which have been undertaken into intercultural encounters by considering both the models of learning and interculturality implicit in these and the research methodologies these adopt. I end the chapter with a consideration of the potential ways in which the conceptual understanding of learning proposed in the first part of the chapter can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of learning and interculturality and the implications of this with respect to methodological decision-making.

3.2 The location and nature of learning: a social turn in learning theory

While there are few who would contest the importance of learning to a description of human genesis, nevertheless learning is a contentious term and one which has, and will no doubt continue to be the focus of much debate as Jarvis (2006) and Illeris (2008) among others have observed. A brief glance at the literature on learning theories shows that there are a wide range of different ways in which people have sought to try to theorise learning. Some of the more prominent among them being behaviourism, innatism, information processing theories and constructivism (Illeris, 2008; Block, 2003). Where there is common ground however, is that all of these perspectives on learning (even those which adopt an innatist perspective on learning, such as Chomsky) acknowledge that a learning theory must provide an account of the role of both the social environment and the individual; both in terms of where we understand learning to be located but also in terms of the relative roles of these in describing how learning happens.

While in some versions of learning theory (notably traditional cognitivist accounts of learning and some versions of constructivism) the environment is viewed as ancillary and largely inconsequential to the true location of learning (the human mind), the position I adopt in this chapter, as outlined below, is one which embraces what might be viewed as a 'social turn' (Block, 2003:4) in learning theory. The growth of theoretical perspectives which seek to account for the significance of the social world to learning has gained momentum in the last 30 years and a socially informed account of learning is now seen to present a viable alternative to the cognitivist accounts that were dominant for much of the latter half of the 20th century.

Broadly speaking, cognitivist accounts of learning are those that view learning as essentially a discreet individual mental process. In contrast, those theorists who embrace a view of learning as socially informed share a belief that humans are first and foremost social beings and that their individual capacities are the outcome of their experiences and relationships in a peopled world (see for example Wertsch, 1986; Holland et al, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Bruner, 1990). Moreover that it

follows from this that a theory of learning needs to articulate a prominent rather than ancillary role for the social world in accounting for how learning proceeds. In doing this they draw upon the insights from a range of different disciplines and traditions chief among which are social psychology, anthropology and sociology.

However, although these share much in common, it is also possible to detect subtle but important distinctions in different accounts with regard to the precise nature of the relationship between the world and the learning that takes place. My reading suggests that one such distinction is between those that seek to account for how the world *helps* people learn versus how those that seek to account for how people learn *in* the world. This is closely linked to Sfard's (1998) distinction, metaphorically speaking, between an understanding of learning as acquisition and learning as participation. With respect to the learning as acquisition perspective, this is one which seeks to acknowledge the significance of the social world but also ultimately upholds the dualism inherent in traditional accounts of learning both in terms of drawing a distinction between the social world and the individual and between the idea of cognition as a discrete entity separated from experience in the world. In contrast, those perspectives which are seen to embrace a participation metaphor are those which seek to promote an embodied understanding of learning as something that is situated in the interaction between people and the world.

In what follows I will consider the contributions of a number of prominent theoretical accounts of learning as a social and relational phenomenon, where these are seen to converge, and where these might be positioned in respect to the distinctions offered above. Chief among these are Vygotskian cultural-historical theory, situated cognition (as exemplified in the work of Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger 1998), pragmatism (as expressed in the work of Dewey and linked to the dialogic ontology of Mikhail Bakhtin) and critical and post-structuralist perspectives as exemplified by the work of Bourdieu (1991), Butler (1999) and the positioning theory developed by Harre (1991).

3.3 Key theoretical perspectives on learning as a social phenomenon.

3.3.1 Vygotsky's cultural-historical theory of learning.

Leontiev Vygotsky, a Soviet social psychologist writing in the early part of the 20th century with a particular interest in child development, is an important influence on many of those who have developed social accounts of learning such as Cole (1996) and Wertsch (1986). Vygotsky adopted a social constructivist understanding of learning and development. That is one which sought to challenge the Piagetian view of the social world as merely the setting within which children actively engaged in constructing their understanding of the world around them, rather arguing that the social world is the source of development itself. For Vygotsky, the human mind is to be understood as mediated cognition resulting from our engagement with the cultural historical artefacts we encounter and engage with in the social world. These artefacts may be tools (among which language is seen as highly significant) but also people such as parents and teachers who play a significant role in mediating the world in ways that can enhance our development. (Lantolf, 2006:67)

For Vygotsky, therefore, a theory of development needed to be able to account for how the meanings that first appear on the inter-mental plane (in the social world) come to appear on the intra-mental plane (i.e. become part of a child's cognitive capacity) and his theoretical contribution to this, encapsulated by his notion of a zone of proximal development (or ZPD), is to see this as a contingent on the organization and support provided by more expert others (Lantolf, 2000:80). As he saw it, the ZPD referred to 'the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.' (Vygotsky, 1978:86) For Vygotsky learning and development were closely interrelated and while the ZPD served as a way to theorise a forward looking understanding of development, it also provided a conceptual tool that educators could use diagnostically to create learning conditions to assist students in reaching a new developmental level.

While Vygotsky was clear in his writings that he was interested in showing 'how the individual response emerges from the forms of collective life' and that development proceeds from the 'conversion of social relations into mental functions' (Lantolf, 2000:266) it is also true that he views learning and development as ultimately directed towards acquiring the necessary cognitive skills and capacities to successfully participate in a given social world. Thus development (and learning) is ultimately directed towards enculturation (becoming a successful member of the social world) and the role of significant others is to assist in this by structured mentoring and goal setting (Glassman, 2001). As Vygotsky himself acknowledged: 'human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them' (1978:88)

Vygotsky's major contribution to a socially informed understanding of learning is to see cognitive development as intimately connected to, and contingent upon, our everyday encounters and experiences with the social world rather than as developing autonomously from this. His particular interest is on how our encounters with physical tools and symbolic tools (such as language) are transformed into psychological tools to enable us to better engage in the social and cultural life worlds we experience. As such, as Sfard (1998) argues, because his primary focus is on the goals of learning and the acquisition of cognitive capacity rather than the process of learning as participation in the social world, Vygotsky's cultural-historical account is one that aligns with the acquisition metaphor. In other words that the process of learning is always subordinate to the acquisition of something, such as knowledge or skill (Colley et al, 2003) Moreover, it is an account which emphasises how the world assists or supports the development of individual cognitive skills rather than how people learn in the world.

These observations are used by Sfard (1998) to suggest that Vygotsky's cultural historical account of learning and development are ultimately incompatible with a situated and participatory understanding of learning which I will discuss below. Nevertheless, his ideas have served as an important stimulus for this alternative understanding of learning as a process of being in the world which endeavours to extend and develop his

understanding of learning as fundamentally orientated towards enculturation.

3.3.2 Situated Learning and Communities of Practice.

A situated learning perspective, represents a seemingly radical shift from a view of learning as gaining possession over a commodity which can be seen to lie at the heart of those learning theories which subscribe to an acquisition metaphor. The most well-known, and arguably well-developed theoretical articulation of a situated learning perspective is that put forward by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) who emphasis the need to take account of learning as something which occurs as part of the natural process through which people come together in groupings to carry out activities (which they call communities of practice). This is a process which entails mutual engagement, a common endeavour (a joint enterprise) and the development of a shared repertoire of common resources and routines (Barton and Tusting, 2005). Learning is understood to be both a process of gaining membership in and participation in social groups and so is essentially highly contextual and practical. That is, that it is best understood as located or situated in the world, in the activities and actions we take with others. In their terms, a community of practice is understood to comprise: 'a set of relations among person, activity, and world, over time and in relation to other tangential and overlapping communities of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.8).

On the basis of this, because from their perspective learning is less about the acquisition of discrete cognitive capacities but is something that evolves in an on-going fashion through our efforts at participation in communities, it is therefore better understood as an embodied situated phenomenon, entailing our identity or whole selves as emotional, physical and cognitive beings. What people learn through their engagement in social worlds is how to act in a given setting; how to successfully participate in forming relations with others and as such Lave argues that 'crafting identities in practice becomes the fundamental project subjects engage in' (Lave, 1996, p.157).

Writing about situated cognition, Kirshner & Whitson (1997) argue that a participatory understanding of learning moves to develop a more radical articulation of individuals in relation to the social world than that put forward by Vygotsky. In their view, to embrace a socially informed view of learning is to acknowledge that:

“We are engaged not just as individuals but as socii, and we are engaged in the worlds of each other and of ourselves and of things that surround us in concrete social and material situations: worlds that necessarily include us and are in formation with us as we form ourselves in part through cognitive/transformational engagement with each other, our surroundings, and ourselves.” Kirshner & Whitson (1997, p 2)

An important implication of this is that learning is profoundly relational; not only is it constituted in the social world but it is also constituting that is it is both mediated by the differences of perspective among co- participants and subsequently generates new forms of learning for others as individuals and as a collective community.

Another related but important departure for situated learning theory from Vygotskian cultural historical theory, as articulated by Lave & Wenger (1991) is the significance of belonging to learning and the influence that conditions for belonging to a particular community exert on learning itself. In other words, they argue that we cannot learn without belonging to something and we cannot learn without learning the practices, norms, values and understandings of the community to which we belong and aspire to belong.

However, Lave & Wenger (1991) acknowledge the influence of cultural-historical theory on their ideas. This is evident in their adoption of a view of learning as learning how to gain membership in a community of practice, referred to as a process of legitimate peripheral participation and in their emphasis on expert ‘insiders’ in assisting with this. These perspectives with their emphasis on enculturation or socialization lie at the heart of Vygotsky’s understanding of learning as mediation (Glassman, 2001)

Lave and Wenger’s view of learning as a process of enculturation or socialisation was also informed by anthropological accounts of learning which demonstrated how learning outside of formal educational settings

typically followed a non-formal form of social apprenticeship whereby more expert members of a community were seen to assist novices in their socialisation into community norms and practices. While their original conception of communities of practice were developed to describe learning in non-formal settings (such as in the workplace or wider community) Wenger in particular extended its use to more formal institutional settings including schools (Wenger, 1998:6) and it has been extensively employed to understand learning in educational settings in the past decade (Haneda, 2006).

The appeal of a communities of practice perspective to researchers is its emphasis on the significance of the setting to learning and more expert others in supporting newcomers. This enables researchers to develop richer and more complex accounts of learning than an emphasis on cognitive processes alone can do. A Communities of Practice perspective can highlight the informal as well as formal learning opportunities within a learning community, the ways others afford or constrain newcomers ability to become legitimate peripheral participants and how these impinge on an individual's learning project.

However, an increasing number of perceived weaknesses with this perspective have been highlighted in recent publications (see for example, Haneda 2006; Barton and Tusting, 2005; Fuller et al, 2005) leading to a reappraisal of its merits as an account of learning as a socially constituted and participatory process.

3.3.2.1. Some drawbacks of a situated learning perspective.

Broadly speaking, two main challenges to situated learning theory, as exemplified by a community of practice perspective on learning, can be discerned in the literature. The first of these concerns the portrayal of communities of practice as largely stable, benign and relatively problem-free in ways that bypass the issue of power with regard to who establishes what is and is not legitimate participation and who controls trajectories that do or do not lead to full participation (Haneda,2006). As Fuller et al (2005) point out, arguably, while this may not be a major issue in learning

communities which evolve in non-formal settings, it is an issue when considering the hierarchical and centred nature of institutional communities of practice. While Lave & Wenger (1991) themselves acknowledge that social structures involve relations of power this is not sufficiently explored or addressed in their theory (Haneda, 2005; Fuller et al, 2005).

A second set of concerns evident in the literature relates to the ways in which individuals are theorised in relation to communities in Lave and Wenger's work. Thus, Haneda (2005: 808) observes the perceived contradictions between the view of individual and community as co-constitutive on the one hand and the emphasis on the socialisation of novices into the community by experts on the other. In other words, while on the one hand Lave & Wenger (1991) argue that individual participation leads to learning and transformation for all participants and the community itself, somewhat paradoxically their theory of learning is focused on the socialisation of novices into community practices by experts and very little is said about the learning that results for 'experts'.

Another, and I feel more significant observation, is that situated learning theory does not operate with a robust articulation of the concept of person (see for example Walkerdine, 1997). In particular its emphasis on learning as an evolving form of membership neglects to account for the fact that people in communities have different histories and sense of imagined future and that these together with their variable ability to access resources will impact on how they orientate themselves toward, invest in, and negotiate their sense of membership of the community - and thereby what they will learn from their engagement in the community. Wenger (1998) acknowledges this and the significance of the fact that individuals will have multiple and possibly competing forms of membership and also reaffirms the view originally expressed by Lave and Wenger (1991) that newcomers agentive responses to community norms are an important way in which communities get transformed over time. However, he does not, as several writers have started to do, critically interrogate the problematic nature of the terms legitimate and peripheral with respect to a view of learning as participation. In other words, as soon as the emphasis is placed on individuals and their learning trajectory seen as something

which has a history and a life beyond the community, it becomes difficult to uphold the view implicit in Communities of Practice theory that they are to be treated collectively as homogeneous newcomers striving to achieve one convergent end point – becoming expert participants in a given community of practice (Fuller, et al, 2005, p.51).

This point is picked up by Sfard (1998) who argues that a major problem with the participatory model of learning put forward by situated learning theory is that it fails to articulate how learning moves with the individual as they move from community to community; a process she refers to as transfer. She used this as a basis for proposing that we need to develop theoretical understandings of learning which can accommodate both acquisition and participation. However, I see this as problematic. An important contribution of the situated learning perspective is its emphasis on learning as embodied, focused on learning as a whole person but, as observed earlier, acquisition is understood as referring to only one facet of 'knowing', namely cognitive processes and the term transfer is imbued with the same connotations. I am inclined to agree with Lave (1996) when she says that: "Learning transfer is an extraordinary narrow and barren account of knowledgeable persons making their way among interrelated settings" (1996, p.151), but also to recognise the problems with situated learning theory that Sfard (1998) is making. That is, that these issues suggest a need to provide a more robust account of how *individuals* operate in social world than is afforded by a communities of practice perspective.

To sum up, within the context of this thesis with its focus on the relationship between an experience and learning for students who are members of an intercultural student group, situated learning theory is helpful in highlighting the significance of participation in social networks and groups to learning. However, it's understanding of how individuals negotiate their membership of these and the sorts of learning that they afford, is under-theorised. A potentially significant aspect of communities that evolve across linguistic ethnic social and cultural divides is that these are peopled by members who may feel, initially at least, that they have little in common (Biesta, 2009), moreover, issues of power and access

may be particularly salient to the sorts of community they form. Before turning to the important issue of how power can be accommodated into a theory of learning, I will first turn to a further way of theorising learning as a social phenomenon, one which develops and extends the principle of individuals and the social world as co-constitutive, which while acknowledged in situated learning theory is largely underdeveloped.

3.3.3 Dewey's transactional theory of learning.

John Dewey (1859-1952) along with Charles Sanders Pierce and William James are seen as key figures in the development of a North American school of thought known as pragmatism. Although pragmatism is a broad church comprising a number of different schools of thought, what unites these is a view in common that the world is created through action and interactions and that knowledge and action are intimately connected (Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

Dewey's particular enduring appeal to educationalists is that he was himself interested in discussing the practical implications of a pragmatist orientation to education. His ideas are, for example drawn upon those with an interest in reflection, notions of experiential and non-formal learning, and debates about democracy and education, both in the narrow sense of citizenship education and more broadly regarding curriculum enactment and design (Apple & Teitelbaum, 2001). However, until recently, discussions of the broader transaction theory of learning as a social and relational process that underpins these things has received much less attention than Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory has. The work of Biesta (2009), and Biesta & Burbules (2003) have been at the forefront of efforts to create a coherent account out of his educational philosophy and it is this that I primarily draw upon in my discussion of Dewey below.

Dewey's contribution to a social and relational understanding of learning shares some common ground with the other social theories of learning outlined above. That is, like them he subscribes to the view that a learning theory must take seriously the importance of the social world and its resources to an individual's learning and the need to articulate the

relationship between them. Dewey's contribution is to provide a more robust account of how learning can be seen to emerge from the interplay between individuals in their environments.

Taking his inspiration from the natural world, Dewey argued that individuals and environments and their artifacts should not be treated as discreet entities which come together through a process of interaction, but should be best understood as one unit always already together and in dynamic interplay that is a 'moving whole of interacting parts' (Dewey, 1929:232 cited in Biesta, 2009:64), a process he described as transaction. In other words, following the lead of Mead (1934), his friend and mentor, Dewey treated the social world and the individual as engaged in a mutual process of 'coming into being' and came to see learning as thoroughly grounded in this process. For Dewey this process could be understood as an adaptive process entailing on-going adjustment of the individual. driven by his or her efforts to maintain a dynamic balance with an ever changing environment.(Biesta & Burbules, 2003).

For Dewey the transaction between an organism and its environment is best described as experiential and as such, he argued that experience was the central source and location of learning. He maintained that as humans we are sensitive to our experiences and primed to learn from these as, as a species our survival depends on our doing so. Moreover that we learn something from every experience whether this is positive or negative, whether implicitly or explicitly. (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 35)

Dewey theorised that learning was therefore to be understood as a thoroughly practical affair: that we learn by doing or taking actions in a social world. In other words, that the meaning of concepts arises from our attempts to apply these concepts, (by taking action) as we engage in experience. Dewey's transactional conception of learning is one which also acknowledges that because we engage in meaning making in a social world, this means that our practical meaning making is something we undertake with people. That is to say, it is best understood as practical intersubjectivity (Biesta, 2009) since we act together to achieve shared goals and in this sense we create a shared intersubjective world. Dewey

understands this as a process of coordination. It is through our coordinated efforts that we can make something in common, but that the learning that emerges out of our efforts to do so is not shared. Thus in this way learning is always personal and our worlds can only really be meaningful to us ultimately (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 36-37).

For Dewey, it is not that our experiences provide us with a set of opportunities which we can draw upon to help us acquire an understanding or new knowledge, but that our experiences *constitute* our learning in the sense that they provide us with a complex set of new possibilities for action that we may reflect on but that must be ultimately returned to experience for their verification (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) In this way, learning is a process whereby the ways in which we transact in the present reflect the outcomes of our previous transactions but also orientate us and afford us with new ways of taking possible action in the future. Thus learning is an ongoing process that concerns an ever-evolving process of transformation manifesting the interplay between continuity and interaction of individuals *in* the world.

In essence, for Dewey, learning is therefore a process of practical experimentation that entails a continuous cycle of action, reflection and action. In other words learning evolves out of doing something, undergoing the consequences of this and trying to adjust ourselves accordingly. Through repeatedly undergoing this cycle we develop habits, our dispositions to act, which are strengthened, fine tuned or challenged through the taking of actions with others. Dewey's concept of reflection is designed to capture the process of thinking that intervenes between the taking of one action and the taking of a subsequent action. That is to highlight how by a process of conscious reflection we can develop more intelligent habits and more intelligent actions. Conscious reflection is thereby a symbolic form of acting which allows us to try out possible lines of future action and thereby to refine our actions. While it cannot in itself generate learning which lies in our taking of concrete actions, it is an important contributor to this and those things which are the focus of conscious reflection are likely to be significant to an individual's evolving learning trajectory. (Biesta & Burbules, 2003:41)

For Dewey, given the uniquely individual nature of learning pathways, the ultimate end of all education is growth, in terms of more possibilities for future actions for individuals. On the one hand, this suggests that it is important to acknowledge the unpredictability of learning outcomes and the problems with programmes and curricula which seek to establish rigid behavioural targets or to measure learning against sets of competencies (Glassman, 2001). On the other hand it highlights how the central concern should be on the provision of quality learning experiences. Dewey argued that the best learning experiences are those which provide a state of 'disturbed equilibrium' (1938) that is those which take us out of our comfort zone and enable us to see ourselves in ways which are different from the familiar. As such, he was a strong advocate of diversity in educational settings (Glassman, 2001), such as is made possible through the increasingly diverse student body on UK university campuses.

Dewey's contribution to a social and relational understanding of learning is its articulation of the ways in which individuals and their environments can be understood as in dynamic interplay and in recognising learning as the taking of practical actions (or the performance of agentive acts) on the basis of an on-going cycle of experience and reflection. For Dewey, learning is a process of inquiry which starts and ends in experience resulting a more differentiated understanding. As such, it has been suggested that this provides a third metaphor of learning, learning as transaction (Koschmann, 2001) an addition to the acquisition and participation metaphors offered by Sfard (1998) alluded to in section 3.2 above. This transactional metaphor is distinguishable by its efforts to describe experience as learning, rather than to see this as the raw material for learning, and to focus on this as a process of divergence, an open-ended process of opening up new avenues of possibility, rather than seeing this as a process of convergence, a process of socialisation or enculturation into a pre-existing world

Dewey's location of learning in experience can be seen to resonate in no small measure with the dialogic ontology underpinning the work of Bakhtin (1895-1975) a soviet philosopher, literary critic and cultural theorist. Though not an educationalist, Bakhtin's ideas have increasingly been

drawn upon in educational theory. In this study they are seen to not only support Dewey's transactional metaphor for learning but to elaborate on this further through his notion of the dialogic self as I will explain.

3.3.4 Bakhtin, dialogism and the dialogic self.

The particular attraction of Bakhtin to increasing numbers of education scholars is his centering of learning in dialogue (Hermans, 2001). Bakhtin's dialogic ontology was informed by his critical reading of literary texts and his argument is often illustrated with reference to these. However, while this led him to often discuss his ideas with regard to language, his conception of dialogue extends well beyond verbal interaction in face to face interactions (Hermans, 2001). As Emerson (1997:36) points out, what interested him was not so much the social fact of several people exchanging words with one another in a room as understanding the way these words and selves were dialogically constructed across time and space. In other words, Bakhtin's conception of dialogue transcends clear spatial and temporal dimensions that define the immediacy of the here and now as the following quote indicates: 'There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context. (Bakhtin 1986, p.170).

Bakhtin argued that dialogue is both the essence of what it means to be human and, as such, that it is where meaning is located. In other words, meaning requires a dialogue and does not exist outside of this as the following quote illustrates: 'to be means to communicate dialogically....one voice alone concludes nothing and decides nothing: two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence. (Bakhtin, 1984, p.213)

Another important contribution of Bakhtin's dialogism is his understanding of the dialogic self. For Bakhtin, since we are never outside dialogue, it is therefore not possible to think of a self that isn't dialogically constructed. We are, he argues, always positioned somewhere in dialogic space and thereby meaning is generated out of our dynamic engagement in a process of taking up a position among multiple voices, whether these are

between ourselves and others or internal as a manifestation of a process of addressing the multivoiced nature of our own internal dialogue (Hermans, 2001).

That is to say, for Bakhtin, subjectivity evolves from our on-going engagement with others in dialogue and as such we are always a reflection of our relationship with others and always in a state of coming into being (Wegerif, 2008). A sense of self emerges from my revealing of myself for another with the help of another. It follows from this that learning does not just entail propositional knowledge but is a project of the self, a project of the self in dialogue with other, and that as such it is not only the process of learning that is relational but that an important part of our learning project is learning about our relations with others. In an intercultural encounter, where new forms of relationality are encountered this is likely to be a particularly rich source of learning about the other.

As outlined above, Bakhtin's dialogism can be seen to complement the transactional model of learning proposed by Dewey in several key ways. Firstly, it adds further weight to Dewey's claim that learning emerges from lived experience. Bakhtin's view of meaning as situated in a complex web of dialogic relationships extending across time and space also resonates with the narrative understanding of the development of meaning over time and space central to Dewey's work. Bakhtin and Dewey also share an understanding of meaning as never final, always becoming. Finally, Bakhtin's view of the dialogic self, resonates with, but also extends the notion of self as dialogically constructed implicit in Dewey's work but never fully developed.

While, the theoretical perspectives offered by Dewey and Bakhtin outlined above go some way to addressing some of the shortcomings of situated learning theory identified at the end of section 3.3.2, an important aspect of relationality, remains unresolved in their work. Namely, how issues of power and access impinge on learning in social settings. Below I introduce the positioning theory developed by Rom Harre and his associates, as a perspective which can be seen to resonate with but also extend their work by providing an account of how the negotiation of power might be incorporated into an understanding of the transacting and dialogic self.

3.3.5 Power, positioning and learning in a social world.

It is undoubtedly the case that power is evident in all interpersonal encounters although this may take different forms and be assigned different levels of significance. Although not central to their theorisation of learning, it is certainly implicit in the work of the different accounts of learning presented above. In the work of Vygotsky (1978), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), for example, it is evident in the configuration of learning as entailing the relationship between significant others (experts) and novices (or peripheral participants), and in Dewey's work in the emphasis on the promotion of democratic educational principles and practices as a means of empowering learners and opening up new possibilities (Glassman, 2001).

In some accounts of a relational and social model of learning, notably those who draw upon post-structuralist and critical theoretical perspectives, there are efforts to articulate a much more explicit theorization of the ways in which power interfaces with learning. These different accounts can be distinguished with respect to how far power is seen as something which is a superimposed and non-negotiable force that leads us to occupy more or less powerful positions relative to other participants or whether it is something which can be better understood as negotiable, reconstructed through the agentic capacity of participants (Burr, 1996).

It seems likely, as Bourdieu (1991) and others such as Friere (1970) and Giroux (2002) have argued, that wider societal and global discourses will generate structural inequities (such as those relating to class, language, and ethnicity and socio-cultural practices) that are likely to be deep-seated and may well be reproduced in the ways in which people come to take up positions in a given setting. However, at the same time, as Judith Butler (1999) has argued, this does not preclude the possibility for participants to contest or resist these structural impositions and to engage in a process of creative agentic reworking of these. Butler (1999 p179) refers to this process as performativity which describes how, while a certain identity position such as a gendered identity, is one which is produced and imposed on the subject by wider societal norms and codes. Since this

identity position must be constantly performed in order for it be substantiated and recognised by others, there is a degree of room for the subject to manoeuvre and exert a degree of agency (Block, 2009). Butler's conceptualisation of power as dynamically constructed with reference to the socially-mediated capacity of agents to act (Ahern, 2001) suggests that power is not only *reproduced* but *redeployed* through our interactions with others' (McGough, 2005:100). Harre (1991) and his associates have extended these ideas further by emphasising how performativity is dialogically constructed, that is they have introduced a theory of positioning which seeks to describe how power gets renegotiated through our interactions with others.

3.3.5.1 Rom Harré's Positioning theory.

The introduction of Positioning Theory into the social science dates back to the mid-1980s and is most commonly attributed to Hollway's (1984) work on gender differences in the production of subjectivity. Harré who remains a major contributor to its development until today (see for example Harre et al, 2005) took up Positioning Theory in the 1990s (see for example, Davies & Harré 1990; Harré 1991; Harré & van Langenhove 1991) The key contribution of positioning theory, one that is closely aligned to the pragmatist and Bakhtinian perspectives outlined above, is its articulation and location of positions as situated in, and part and parcel of, the dynamic dialogic construction of self (Hermans, 2009) and in foregrounding the importance of power in this process. In positioning theory, the term position is adopted in preference to role to capture the ways in which power is understood to be located in and an emergent property of interpersonal encounters with others (Block, 2009).

In seeking to develop a dynamic understanding of power within conversation, Harre (1997) drew upon the insights of the speech act theory developed by Austin which sought to account for the functional meaning of utterances. Austin saw utterances as acts, whose meaning was located in between the intention and its effect; whether it was received in the way it was intended. As Harre explained:

The meanings of a person's actions are the acts they use to perform. But these acts come into being only in so far as they are taken as such by conversational partners. I don't and indeed can't decide what my action means. Only you and I can do that. The investigation of the devices by which some people can manage to get you to give my meaning to what both of us say and do is the study of power. (Harre, 1991:182)

Originally, Harre and his associates located their account of positioning in the interactions between interlocutors in spoken conversation or discourse as the following quote illustrates: 'positioning is the discursive process whereby people are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines' (Davies & Harre, 1999:37). However, their ideas have increasingly been taken up by those who are drawn to the broader interpretation of discourse practices and conversation (see for example Miller Marsh, 2003) and the ways in which these may position individuals in particular ways or allow individuals to position themselves as in, for example, the work of Pavlenko & Blackledge, (2004).

While Harre (1997) and his co-researchers accept that it is in wider discursive practices that the social world is formed, they argue that it is in our and others actions within dialogic spaces that these come alive, are established, and are reproduced or contested. Their theoretical contribution is to elaborate on this process, both by providing an account of the ways in which positions are established and negotiated and to explain how positions link to actions and storyline. In doing this they sought to identify a number of ways of distinguishing between different kinds of positions in their account of positioning as a negotiated process. This distinguishes between first and secondary positioning, and between interactive and reflective positioning (Harre & van Lagenhove, 1999). In both cases these refer to the relationship between others attempts to position us in certain ways and our own attempts to position ourselves. Thus first positioning refers to the position we attempt to take up in a given setting and second positioning to a position we come to adopt if this is challenged or contested. In contrast interactive positioning refers to the process by which we are positioned by another and reflective positioning

is the process of positioning oneself (Harre & van Lagenhove, 1999).

For Harre, positions, along with story line and acts, are complementary components of a dialogic process of meaning making that unfolds over time, collectively visualised as generating what Baxter (2003:p2) refers to as a tri-polar discursive action as shown in figure 3.1 below.

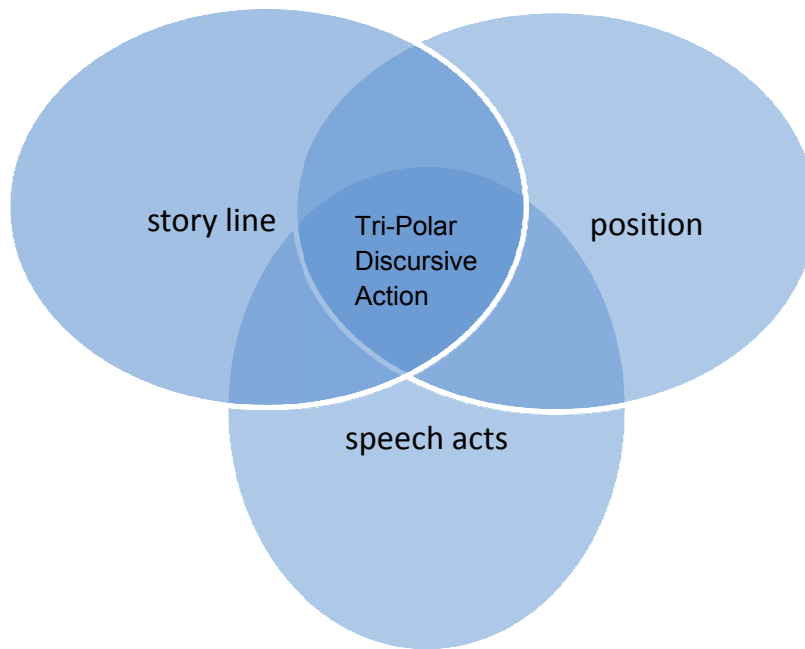


Figure 3.1 Venn diagram of Tri-Polar Discursive Action (after Baxter, 2003)

As Harre et al (2009:7) stress, the relationship holding between the components is not one of cause and effect. Rather they are better seen as co-constitutive and as held in dynamic interplay in the sense that:

- A position assigned or taken can inform the social force of the acts taken and impact on the evolving story line.
- The evolving story line can impact on the social force of the acts and the positions assigned or taken
- The social force of the act can impact on the position taken and the direction of the evolving story line. (based on Harre et al, 2009:10)

Positioning theory contributes an important additional dimension to the transaction and dialogic aspects of the relational theory of learning outlined above. It enables us to see how power is implicated in an ever

evolving learning trajectory and how positional shifts evolving from a process of interactive and reflective positioning might change the meanings of the actions that people perform in a variety of ways that generate different outcomes and different consequences. It suggests that a greater understanding of how power impacts on our evolving understanding of self is likely to be an important learning outcome of our experiences.

3.4 Towards a conceptual understanding of learning as an experiential and relational phenomenon.

Drawing on the different but complementary theoretical perspectives introduced above, the study reported in this thesis, with its focus on learning among participants in intercultural encounters, is one which is underpinned by a transaction, dialogic understanding of meaning-making and views learning as an on-going and evolving process emerging from the experience of being in the world evidenced in the 'practical' actions taken with others in particular settings. This has highlighted a number of key dimensions of learning with implications for how to locate and identify learning forms and outcomes in this study, as I will discuss below.

3.4.1 Dimensions of learning.

On the basis of the discussion of learning theory above, I suggest it is possible to identify three dimensions of learning which are seen to inform the work of Dewey, Bakhtin, and Harre, that is to say, temporal, spatial and social dimensions. I will discuss each of these in turn.

- *The Temporal dimension of learning.* With regard to temporality, there is a clear sense that in seeking to understand current learning it is necessary to understand how this is located within an emerging trajectory that links current 'actions' to past actions and is also prospective in so far as current actions will inform those in the future.

- *The spatial dimension of learning.* To describe learning as having spatial dimensions is to recognise on the one hand that while classrooms may provide an official site or place of learning, people may draw on other experiences in other sites to understand and act within this. That is to say that learning has lateral as well as temporal connectivity. Moreover, to view learning as relational, as articulated above, is to understand it as located in the spaces that open up between people and between in and out of classroom experiences.
- *The social dimension of learning.* The account of learning I have provided above is one which sees this as profoundly social. It sees learning as intimately tied up with our efforts to form relationships with and generate a sense of community with others. Moreover it is one which sees the complex interplay between the socially structured positions we assume and (re)negotiate with others as significant to the learning process and the learning outcomes.

3.4.2 Learning forms and outcomes.

Dewey and Bakhtin and Harre all provide a sense of meaning-making as on-going. With respect to pedagogic practice, one implication of this is a need to place greatest emphasis on understanding and improving learning *processes* rather than means and ends, and to see this as a legitimate and appropriate focus of our research endeavours.

Coupled with this is a need to engage with outcomes as both open ended and variable. They have suggested that learning is best understood as embodied, manifesting in shifts in knowledge and skill 'level', but also in such things as affect, orientation, and other indications of an experience of intersubjectivity including the building of relationships and social networks with others. Thus on the one hand, it becomes hard to predict what learning outcomes will be and on another that it is important to recognise that these are likely to be different for different individuals reflecting the complex interplay between a given individual, their learning history and the experience.

The different perspectives of learning introduced above have also highlighted how all experiences can afford learning. That is, that they suggest that learning can result from all experiences and not just those that are explicitly set up to generate learning. One distinction drawn in the literature to recognise this is between *formal* and *informal* learning. Precisely how these two forms of learning can be distinguished has generated considerable debate in recent years (see Colley et al, 2003 for a good critical account of these). Nevertheless, broadly speaking, these terms are employed to distinguish between the sort of intentional learning afforded by an education and training institution which is structured in terms of objectives, time and support (formal learning), and the learning (informal learning) resulting from daily life activities related to work, family and leisure that is unstructured and unintentional (Colley et al, 2003:8).

While the distinction drawn above was originally to help generate a theoretical account of workplace learning, it is increasingly seen as useful in theorising the different sorts of learning that can result from experience more generally. On the one hand, it is seen to help add weight to the argument that all kinds of experience (both in and out of class) can be seen to generate learning. However, increasingly it is argued that formal and informal learning are not merely to be understood as mutually distinctive forms of learning that are linked to different learning sites, but are best seen as facets of learning in any setting and thereby that they intersect in complex ways (Colley et al, *ibid*).

A further insight with regard to learning outcomes and forms is Dewey's distinction between conscious and subconscious learning. Dewey argues that while some experiences serve to support habitual actions and learning remain subconscious, where experiences are the focus of conscious reflection they can lead to the generation of more intelligent actions and are likely to be more significant to the developing learning trajectory. In the study reported in this thesis I am interested in this reflective as opposed to non-reflective learning (Jarvis, 2006:29-30). That is to say, in capturing participants conscious engagement with their experiences. Learning is therefore understood to manifest the ways in which participants describe their experiences, their perception of the

significance of these, and how these are seen to inform their subsequent actions over time.

Bearing these things in mind, the learning site in the study reported in this thesis is understood to encompass all of the participants' experiences during their year-long sojourn in the UK. That is, to include experiences both in and outside of class, to engage with learning in both its formal and informal aspects as well as to recognise the complex ways in which these intersect and play out with regard to a given individual learner's on-going learning journey.

On the basis of the above, it is apparent that a relational and experiential understanding of learning calls for a particular research strategy. Firstly, it points to the need to develop a strategy that can capture a sense of learning trajectories, and the ways in which learning is generated from an evolving sense of subject in the world and the on-going interplay between experience- reflection- action that takes place. This calls for longitudinal studies which seek to capture a sense of individual learning trajectory and story line and which favour the adoption of a narrative inquiry approach, which as Clandinin & Connelly (2000) among others (see for example, Crick, 2003) have discussed. is closely aligned with the transactional and dialogic view of learning presented above. This has been the research strategy that I adopted in this study as described in chapter 4 below.

A narrative inquiry approach to researching learning is one which is also closely aligned with the decision in this study to capture individuals' experiences of learning. While a more relational and experience-orientated theory of learning has been gaining ground in recent years, nevertheless, the prevailing discourses around the practice of education and learning outcomes are ones which continue to foreground more cognitive understandings of learning and an emphasis on subject knowledge, skill and competences (Barnett, 1994) and as such to foreground formal rather than informal aspects of learning. Given this, it is likely that participants in formal education will be likely to operate with a view of learning which accentuates these formal outcomes rather than other informal aspects if asked to explicitly document learning in a narrative account. Thus it seems that a strategy for generating accounts of learning in narrative accounts is,

as advocated by many in this research tradition (see for example, Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), to focus on the generation of broad accounts of learners experiences and their perceived significance from which a robust and comprehensive account of learning can be generated.

3.5 Learning and interculturality

The first part of this chapter above has detailed the conceptual understanding of learning that informs the study reported in this thesis. In this second part of the chapter I turn to a consideration of the relationship between learning and an experience of interculturality of the sort afforded by engagement in global educational contact zones (Singh & Doherty, 2004) which, as discussed in chapter 1 is the focus of this study. Both Dewey and Bakhtin, saw these, theoretically speaking at least, as providing very favourable conditions for learning. In Dewey's (1938) terms, such settings provide the optimal conditions for the sort of 'disturbed equilibrium' which can support greater reflective thinking and new forms of action (Glassman, 2001). Similarly, Bakhtin saw intercultural communication as vital for the development of self awareness and, given the dialogic nature of culture, necessary to fully comprehend one's own 'culture'. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 7). However, among those who have argued for a need to acknowledge the importance of power and positioning in our encounters, there is also a recognition of the distinctive and complex forms of positionalities that emerge in global contact zones and how these will impinge on the learning that takes place (Anthias, 2006).

In what follows I provide a review of the literature concerning the nature of interculturality and the relationship between this and learning. As I will show, this indicates that the conceptual understanding of learning developed here has to date received little focused attention in this literature. I first explore the notion of interculturality in more depth by examining different conceptions of culture that can be seen to impact on the extent to which it is possible to talk of interculturality and the ways in which this can be defined. I then go on to consider a number of different ideological perspectives with respect to the potential and outcomes of an

experience of interculturality. Following on from this I reflect on the different ways in which learning is articulated in the literature on interculturality and undertake a critical review of the models and research that has been undertaken into this.

3.5.1 A critical interrogation of the term interculturality

As already indicated in the opening chapter of this thesis, since in essence, interculturality refers to the relationship between cultures, any discussion of interculturality necessitates a discussion of the different ways in which culture can be understood. Indeed, how one understands culture is central to how one conceives of the *inter* part of interculturality, or the interrelationship holding between cultures, and has important ramifications for how we might describe an intercultural encounter and reflect on any distinctive processes and outcomes of such an encounter.

3.5.1.1 Essentialist and non essentialist understandings of culture.

Broadly speaking two different ways of conceiving of culture are apparent in the literature on interculturality. Namely, drawing upon insights from the anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) among others, essentialist and non-essentialist constructions of culture (Holliday, 2010; Holliday et al. 2010; Dervin, 2010). These highlight different perspectives with regard to the location of culture and its significance to individual subjectivity, but also reveal how definitions of culture in the literature are a manifestation of certain ideological positions.

An **essentialist** understanding of culture is one that sees culture as a stable common frame of reference for a group of people, typically those sharing a language and country. It refers to the collective accumulated shared systems of norms and values which distinguish one group of people from another. In this way it emphasises what is universal about a given group of people, or how they can be seen as a distinctive group (Holliday, 2010; Holliday et al, 2010). An essentialist understanding of culture lies at the heart of early attempts to differentiate between groups of people such as those by Hall (1976) to distinguish high context and low

context cultures, polycronic and monocronic cultures and in the classifications developed by Hofstede (1994) between individualist and collectivist cultures. These remain popular in terms of their adoption and their appeal and have served as the inspiration for a host of comparative perspectives on cultures, including, for example, attempts to describe the academic learning styles of international students versus home students (see for example Cortazzi & Jin, 1996). The result of this process is the production of a particular grammar of culture, a set of cultural 'facts' (Dervin, 2010: 03) through which they can be contrasted and compared

An essentialist understanding of culture is therefore one which understands culture to be tied to geographical and/or national location. It encourages us to see the world as a mosaic of bounded and discreet groupings (Pieterse, 2004) and to talk of culture as a monolithic entity as in, for example, Japanese culture, American culture and so on. Moreover, an essentialist position is one, that as Abdallah-Preteille argues, assumes that 'knowing the other takes place through knowing her culture as a static object' (Abdallah-Preteille, 2003:13). In other words it assumes that the behaviours and values of the other are reducible to stable cultural traits or scripts.

This essentialist position, invoking as it does an 'us-and-them' reading of culture, is one that continues to be a view that many subscribe to and, as Appadurai has argued in his most recent book (Appadurai, 2006) is one that people continue to draw upon to describe their sense of self within a globalized world. However, among the community of academic researchers who research and write about culture and interculturality there is an increasing acknowledgement of the need to problematize this essentialist reading of culture within the context of globalization and for a need to embrace other, non-essentialist understandings of cultures to be discussed below. Concerns focus on a number of things. Firstly, the dangers of a homogeneous reading of culture with respect to representation leading to the production of unhelpful stereotypes of people according to such things as nation and region (see for example Zamel, 1997; Kumaravadivelu, 2003). A second concern is the assumption that an individual is to be understood as produced by a particular set of

norms and values in a given geographical setting (see for example, Guest, 2002). Finally, concerns have also been raised about the Eurocentric constructions underpinning these essentialist constructions of culture and the ways in which these contribute, whether intentionally or otherwise to a process of cultural othering (Dervin, 2010).

Nevertheless, as several writers have recently observed, despite acknowledging these short-comings, in many accounts, it is possible to detect what Holliday (2010) calls a *neo-essentialism* in the treatment of culture, whereby writers espouse non-essentialist understandings of culture but undertake research and adopt research methodologies which lead them to conclusions which are essentialist in their articulation. Holliday provides a very helpful and thought provoking account of why researchers can end up appearing Janus-faced as Dervin (2010) puts it. He suggests that this highlights an inherent tension between a western liberalist desire to accept diversity and to be fair in its treatment of others with a persistence of the belief in the possibility of scientific neutrality in research and the failure to acknowledge or recognise the contradictions and hidden chauvinism in what they do. This raises a number of very important questions for how we undertake research into intercultural encounters as I will discuss further below in 3.5.3).

An essentialist reading of culture, as outlined above, is one which is arguably closely aligned with the modernist project of nation-building (Holliday, 2010). In contrast, a ***non-essentialist*** understanding of culture is seen to be one which adopts and reflects a poststructuralist and post-modernist turn in the social sciences, one which is seen to better address the condition of globalization referred to in chapter 1 above. The questions posed by the emergence of globalization as a phenomenon and the move towards postmodernism and post structuralism has led to a number of important re-workings of the concept of culture including, as will be discussed below, whether it is appropriate to continue to use the term culture at all.

Firstly, as mentioned in chapter 1 above, there has been a recognition of a need to acknowledge that the concept of culture interfaces with the construct of nation and region in complex ways. On the one hand this has

led to the recognition that culture can apply to groups of all shapes and sizes and not only to region or nation as a group. This means that cultures can be understood as applying to larger affiliations and allegiances than nation, and smaller ones too.

From another related perspective there is an increasing recognition of the need to view cultures as dynamic open systems and to recognise the increasingly fuzzy nature of the boundaries between groups. While this has been brought into sharp focus by the increasing globalization brought on by the technological revolution in the 21st century, for many, the interconnectivity of cultures has always been there, and the belief that it was otherwise needs to be understood as part of the construction of the modernist project of nation state building alluded to above (Rizvi,2008; Delanty, 2006). That is to say, those holding a non-essentialist perspective on culture subscribe to a view that cultures are always best understood as dynamic and in a state of flux. To acknowledge in other words that they are simultaneously: “archaic, residual and emergent” (Williams, 1977:63). It is this sense of interconnectivity as central to a conceptualization of culture which has led to those who subscribe to a non-essentialist understanding of culture to emphasise cultures as hybrids rather than discreet entities, as always in a state of dialogue and under construction.

Alongside this re-articulation of culture as dynamic, changeable and hybrid in light of globalization there has been a re-examination of the essentialist construction of the relationship between individuals and culture. That is to say, with the general dismantling of the essentialist position on culture that has been occurring in recent years, there has been recognition of a need to afford people a much more active role in managing the multiple potential calls on their identity afforded by globalization. In other words, to move away from a sense of individual subjectivity being determined by a stable set of externally driven cultural norms and values to one that affords them a much greater agency as reflexive subjects generating their own dynamic shifting ‘cultures’ out of their multiple group allegiances and affiliations (Giddens,1991; Hall, 1991; Pavlenko and Blackledge, 2004). This, as Atkinson (1999) has highlighted a need to raise questions among some who subscribe to a non-essentialist perspective as to whether there

is any currency left in the term culture at all or whether as Clifford (1986: 10) has argued: “Culture is a deeply compromised concept I cannot yet do without”

3.5.1.2 Towards a definition of interculturality.

From the discussion of culture above, it is apparent that there is considerable debate around what culture might mean and, as mentioned earlier, different perspectives on culture are likely to have different implications for how interculturality might be envisaged and defined. In light of this, it is surprising to note that my reading suggests that the term is widely adopted in the literature without explicit definition and the inherent complexity in the term culture that underpins this seldom acknowledged. Since I believe that it is important to be clear about the how interculturality is deployed in this thesis and acknowledge the understandings of culture that inform it, in this section I will offer my definition of the term. In this study my use of the term interculturality embraces a non-essentialist understanding of culture. However, I also acknowledge that to adopt this stance actually raises serious questions about the conceptual feasibility of interculturality, as I will explain below.

The constituent components of the term intercultural are ones which would suggest that interculturality describes a process that occurs *between* cultures. However, while it is not difficult to relate this to an essentialist cultural perspective, from a non-essentialist perspective it is much more challenging, precisely because the regularity and discreteness of cultures as monolithic entities borne out of people’s socially constructed experiences of living in particular localities is contested (Oatey & Franklin, 2009:39). Arguably, from a non-essentialist perspective, since it is not possible to identify and demarcate cultures, it might be argued that it is also not possible or helpful to talk of interculturality either.

Rather, a non-essentialist perspective, with its emphasis on cultures in a dynamic state of flux and hybridity, shifts the location of the ‘in-betweenness’ or *inter* component of interculturality to the meaning of culture itself and the logical outcome of this is that interculturality might be seen to refer to all human interchanges, wherever they take place. As indicated in chapter 1, my own view is that there is enough that is distinctive in the

sorts of encounters that occur in global contact zones such as those that form the focus of this study to merit retaining the term interculturality whilst mindful of the ways in which, as with the term culture, it is essentially compromised. To recap on the discussion of the distinctive nature of interculturality explained earlier (see chapter 1) the view of interculturality underpinning the study reported in this thesis is one which subscribes to the view that intercultural encounters are those that occur between people, whether virtually or face to face, not between cultures. However, they are distinguishable from other sorts of encounters as they describe encounters between people who draw upon different distinctive socio-cultural and socio-linguistic resources which position them in particular ways and which have a bearing on the ways in which they interact and generate meaning together. This is the case in the global educational contact zones afforded by the internationalization of universities that is the focus of my study.

3.5.2 Understanding interculturality: acculturation or third space?

Implicit in the different understandings of culture discussed above are different conceptualisations of how the process of meaning making and the potential and purpose of an intercultural encounter can be envisaged. Namely whether this is best understood to entail a process of acculturation entailing the acquisition of new cultural behaviours or as a space where people or 'cultures' meet and intermingle generating new or 'third' ways of being. I will consider each of these perspectives in turn before going on to consider the contributions of cosmopolitanism to an understanding of interculturality in section 3.5.2.1 below.

Interculturality as acculturation.

The first of these, drawing upon an essentialist understanding of culture sees interculturality as a divide between people who embody a cultural identity and is interested to explore how people move across this divide. In its purist form this is understood to be a process of acculturation or assimilation whereby an individual learns to relinquish old norms and values and come to take up the norms and values of those of the new cultural group they seek membership of. This representation of interculturality, widespread in the literature on learning and interculturality, is, as I will discuss below (see section 3.5.3), also variously referred to as

adaptation, adoption and accommodation and acculturation (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.66-68). While there are arguably subtle differences between these processes, they are also broadly aligned with an understanding of interculturality as a process of adjustment to a new cultural experience whether this be long or short-term. Moreover, as the models of adaptation developed by two of their most well-known protagonists (Kaplan,1966 and Schumann,1978) envisage this, this leads to a view of interculturality as primarily a process of relinquishing one set of cultural scripts or values for another and places the burden of responsibility for intercultural 'success' on one party, the newcomer. It is a view of interculturality which resonates in no small measure with the prevailing discourses of international student as deficit outlined in chapter 2.

Interculturality as third space.

The second, informed by the non-essentialist understanding of culture outlined above, is one which understands interculturality as a meeting place capable of generating new forms of knowing and being. A prominent figure with respect to this understanding of interculturality, is Homi Bhabha (1994) who along with a number of other writers such as Fougere (2008) and Soja (1996) is interested to consider this in-betweenness as a *third space* that opens up between self and other which can generate new, hybrid forms of knowing and being that transcend those generated from our own 'cultural' experiences. As Bhabha (1994) argues, this third space is one replete with possibility, one in which: "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated and rehistoricised anew". (Bhabha,1994, p.37). For Homi Bhabha, working within a post-colonial tradition, intercultural encounters are spaces which afford the possibility for people to be liberated from their histories and to negotiate and lay claim to new forms of individual identity (Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

The ideas of hybridity and third space have come to be seen as particularly pertinent in light of the global condition which is seen to be a hallmark of life in the 21st century. Other post-colonialists, notably Stuart Hall (1991), have, for example, have suggested that this hybridity is not

only a possibility, but also within the context of globalization and the movement of people around the world, a reality, as increasing numbers of people form diasporic communities, and find themselves engaged in a process of living in-between, of translation, and hybridity (Hall, 1991). Hall and Bhabha are two of a growing number of writers who argue that there are considerable lessons to be learnt about the nature of interculturality from an examination of the lived reality of life in such contact zones, a central premise of this thesis, and one on which I will elaborate further below.

The ideas of hybridity and third space are also seen to have an appeal among those who are interested in describing the sense of global personhood and citizenship which globalization is seen to require (see for example, Kim,2008; Jackson, 2008) as discussed in chapter 1 and which might be seen to emerge through engagement in global educational contact zones.

Notions of hybridity and third space have however attracted some recent criticisms raising questions about their potential to adequately describe interculturality. The first of these concerns the relationship between a concept of hybridity and third space. Hybridity suggests that we view any given reality as evolving from a process of syncretism, in a state of perpetual in-betweenness (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p.124) and it would appear that from this perspective it is challenging to talk of a third space as this would appear to be predicated on a view of interculturality which assumes this is an outcome of the meeting of two discreet worlds (or first and second spaces) and therefore ultimately adheres to a view of meeting *across* cultural difference. Indeed, there is an evident sense in which third space is adopted to refer to the outcomes of a meeting of people as culturally defined subjects in some studies which adopt this (see for example, Jackson, 2008; Feng, 2009) and I agree with Holliday (2010) that this ultimately, albeit unintentionally, perpetuates an essentialist view of culture. If however, we engage with the spirit of this term as a way to describe the possibilities for the generation of new understandings of individual post-modern agentive subjects it would, as Hermans (2001) has argued, however, seem to still be helpful.

A second related concern with the use of the term third space to talk of intercultural processes and outcomes relates to the lack of attention given to the ways in which wider issues of power and representation are part and parcel of an experience of interculturality and must therefore be accommodated in a theorising of this 'space' (see for example, Holliday, 2010; Anthias, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2008). In other words, as noted earlier in my discussion of power and agency in learning in the first part of the chapter, it is argued that there needs to be more recognition of the fact that people bring sets of dispositions borne out of the multiplicity of their experiences in different socio-cultural milieu to bear on their experience of interculturality. This means that a theory of interculturality is one that needs to acknowledge and accommodate the ways in which the subject positions borne out of participants differing ethnic, linguistic and 'cultural' affiliations will impact on the outcomes of an intercultural encounter at a the local level. This is likely to be particularly significant in settings, such as the one that forms the focus of study reported in this thesis, where some participants in an intercultural encounter have relocated and experience these encounters as what Anthias (2006:26) refers to as: "translocational spaces", giving rise to particular forms of "translocational positionalities".

In light of these problems, those interested in theorising and researching interculturality have drawn upon an alternative way of describing this. Namely, cosmopolitanism, a theoretical understanding of global communication which emphasises universal values which transcend difference, as I will discuss below.

3.5.2.1 Interculturality and cosmopolitanism agendas: from global cosmopolitanism to cosmopolitan realism.

Debates about globalization and increased contact between peoples around the globe have increasingly drawn upon cosmopolitanism for theoretical inspiration. The reason for this is that it is a movement that seeks to articulate a concept of global universals. However, within the cosmopolitanism 'school of thought' there a number of different traditions which can be seen to inform different understandings of interculturality and

its outcomes. A central distinction, to be discussed here is between global cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitan realism. Whereas the former has tended to emphasis universals in moral and political terms, the latter is interested in reflecting on social universals (Delanty, 2006)

Global cosmopolitanism and interculturality.

The view of an outcome of interculturality as global personhood or citizenship is informed in part by a renewed interest in 'global cosmopolitanism' (Bhabha 1994: xiv) which takes its inspiration from its original conception by the ancient Greek stoics who invoked this to describe the idea of common shared values and an ethical openness-to-other which transcends ethnic racial or national boundaries and differences (Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Delanty, 2006). This moral ideal, couched in terms of a shared universal ethics is in some accounts of global citizenship seen to be a useful way of describing the potential inherent in the third or hybrid space that is envisioned by non-essentialist constructions of interculturality discussed above. There is, in other words, an evident conjoining of the discourses of interculturality as generating greater mutual respect and tolerance for others and their cultures (as in the work of Young, 1996; Kim, 2008) and those underpinning the cosmopolitan ideal of a universal moral code or world political community as proposed by Immanuel Kant and as revived by Nussbaum (1996) among others (Delanty, 2006).

However, there is an apparent tension in the attempts to describe cosmopolitanism as an outcome of a third space as Delanty (2006) has pointed out. This is because, cosmopolitanism refers to a universal openness to other which is primarily an underlying even present quality of being human and is therefore something that we bring to bear on our experience as much as it is a possible outcome of this. Thus, while cosmopolitanism is in part a reflection of the interconnectivity that is emphasised by hybridity, it is about more than this. To put this another way, it could be argued that whereas hybridity contributes to interculturality an understanding of how we can understand the meeting and blending of different cultures and ideas, cosmopolitanism starts from the more radical assumption that these cultures and ideas are already together in one

world, and is interested to reflect on what has enabled humanity to communicate in a world where difference has always been a feature of lived reality. Thus, I suggest that whereas ultimately hybridity approaches an understanding of interculturality through a cultural lens, cosmopolitanism concerns itself primarily with the 'inter' part of interculturality.

To sum up, as a way to describe the intermingling of values, cultural practices and languages as well as the emergence of diasporic communities that appear to be increasing marked features of 21st century globalization, hybridity appears to retain considerable currency in the literature. However, as a way to describe the process of meaning making that occurs in and through an experience of interculturality, some important questions are being raised, particularly from those who subscribe to a more cosmopolitan outlook. Nevertheless, in recent years, as I will discuss below, while cosmopolitanism has been the focus of renewed interest, the global cosmopolitan vision outlined above itself come under sharp criticism from within those writers within the cosmopolitan movement who align themselves with what might, following Beck (2000) be called a cosmopolitan realist perspective.

Cosmopolitan realism and interculturality.

Among the many critics of the global cosmopolitanism perspective (see for example, Bhabha, 1994; Delanty, 2006; Holliday, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2008), a central theme is a concern for the ways in which a notion of shared common universals that might transcend differences between us has been largely configured around a euro-centric vision of cosmopolitanism. One which is seen to deny the reality of cosmopolitanism as a feature of lived reality which has taken many different forms in many different places throughout human history (Holliday, 2010). This has, however, not detracted from the perceived potential of cosmopolitanism to provide a vision for intercultural

communication within the context of increasing globalization, but to concerted efforts to re-theorise this. That is, to re-theorise this in ways that

allow for the essence of a cosmopolitanism imagination as 'world openness' (Delanty, 2006, p. 27) to be retained but also to allow for it to be locally realised in different ways, reflecting the realities of different local settings and the historical, economical, political and cultural realities inherent in these.

This move has led to new ways of conceptualising cosmopolitanism including vernacular cosmopolitanism (Bhabha, 1994), rooted cosmopolitanism (Appiah, 2007) critical cosmopolitanism (Delanty, 2006) and cosmopolitan realism (Beck, 2002). A central stance of these new forms of cosmopolitanism is that examining how people engage with moments of world openness in locally realised global contact zones wherever they occur can provide us with a more grounded and critically informed understanding of how we can articulate the processes and outcomes of interculturality. Moreover, they allow alternative, often marginalised forms of cosmopolitanism to be made visible (Bhabha, 1994; Holliday, 2010) This is the essence of the argument that informs the work of Stuart Hall, for example, as outlined in 3.5.2 above. It is also one that underpins the conceptualisation of interculturality that informs this study.

The debates regarding cosmopolitanism discussed above highlight a number of interesting developments with regard to how interculturality, and the processes and outcomes of meaning making this affords, might be theorised. In section 3.6 below, I will reflect on these further and the ways in which they can be linked to the conceptualisation of learning as a profoundly experiential and relational phenomenon as discussed earlier in the chapter. Ahead of this, I will first review the ways in which the very different perspectives on the nature of interculturality I have discussed are seen to inform the substantial body of research studies which have been undertaken into learning and intercultural encounters.

3.5.3 Exploring learning and intercultural encounters – an overview of the research.

The purpose of this section is to provide a critical overview of the key research themes and findings with respect to learning and intercultural encounters identified in the literature that are relevant to this study.

I will divide this review into two main sections. The first will consider those studies which have focused on describing the learning *outcomes* that an experience of interculturality can generate. I will then move on to consider those which have endeavoured to describe the *process* of learning in intercultural encounters and in particular the extent to which the relational and dialogic model of learning articulated in 3.4 above is evident in these accounts. Finally, I will conclude by reflecting on the gaps in the current research that the study reported in this thesis seeks to address.

Interculturality has been the focus of extensive research over many decades, and it has drawn interest from researchers in a wide range of disciplines and subject areas, including, among others, communication theory, linguistics, foreign language education and business studies all of whom have contributed to the current ways in which this phenomenon is understood today. My discussion of learning and intercultural encounters will be informed by the insights these have contributed. Given my focus is on international students' experiences of studying in higher education, for the sake of brevity, I will primarily limit my discussion of research studies to those which have addressed learning among participants in study abroad contexts, and chiefly to those undertaken in the UK.

3.5.3.1 Learning *from* an intercultural encounter.

Given the perceived potential of intercultural encounters to lead to new kinds of positive learning about self in relation to other and that these might be a way of seeing these as distinctive from other sorts of encounters it is not surprising that a major focus of research into learning and intercultural encounters has been focused on what I have referred to in chapter 1 as intercultural learning or learning about interculturality. Of particular interest has been an attempt to describe this in terms of the sorts of possible intercultural learning outcomes that might be evident as a result of an experience of interculturality.

A first observation is that there is a bewildering array of terminology employed by those who are interested in describing the nature of intercultural learning arising from an experience of interculturality.

Outcomes are often couched in terms of competence as in intercultural competence Deardorff (2006), intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997) and the concept of transcultural communicative competence (Ting-Toomey, 1999). But these outcomes may also be described as intercultural capability (Killick & Poveda, 1998), intercultural literacy (Heyward, 2002), intercultural awareness (Alred et al, 2003) and intercultural personhood (Kim, 2008). In addition, as interculturality as a field has engaged with and forged links with those who are interested in global rather than cross-national communication, the term global may replace the term intercultural as in global competencies (Jackson, 2010) and global identity/ global personhood (Arnett, 2002).

A longstanding focus of work done on learning outcomes has been to generate lists of traits and structural models of those who are deemed to be interculturally competent (Rathje, 2007) and several review surveys have been undertaken to try to synthesis and further expand on the insights gained from earlier studies. Thus for example, Dinges and Baldwin (1996) looked at the results of 22 studies published between 1985 and 1993 and more recently Deardorff (2006) has reported on the results of her survey of 23 'leading intercultural communication experts' to generate an understanding of intercultural competence. The results of Deardorff's (2004) project were that the following conceptual framework developed by Byram (1997) shown in table 3.1 below, was perceived to best capture what intercultural competence entails. From this it can be seen that this is understood to entail knowledge, skills attitudes and awareness. Other attempts to define this include Chen & Starosta (2005, 2008) who also stress self awareness and psychological adaptation and Ting-Toomey (1999) and Gudykunst (2003) who adds empathy and tolerance as additional facets of this.

Table 3.1 The components of Intercultural competence (adapted from Byram 1997 in Oatey & Franklin, 2009 p66)

Components		Description
Intercultural Competence	Attitudes	Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other's cultures and beliefs about one's own.
	Knowledge	Knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction.
	Skills of interpreting and reading	Ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own.
	Skills of discovering and interacting	Ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction.
	Critical cultural awareness/political education	An ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries.

.Although the development of such frameworks continues to be one important theme within the research into interculturality, in recent years this approach has been the focus of criticism too. This is chiefly with respect to issues relating to the methodological and conceptual rigour studies into intercultural competences exhibit, including the fact that they are often developed on the basis of small and undifferentiated sample as Oatey and Franklin elaborate (Oatey & Franklin, 2009 p. 58). However, a second, more recent concern to be raised is how helpful competency models of intercultural learning are to an understanding of learning from an experience of interculturality.

Although not explicitly stated in the literature on interculturality, there is an apparent growing awareness of the need to problematize outcomes of an experience of interculturality in terms of competencies which reflects a wider concerns with competency based models in education more broadly

(Dervin,2010; Rathje, 2007). That is, concerns about the reduction of complex processes such as interculturality to discreet sets of knowledge 'parcels' which can then serve as a basis for assessment and discussions of transferability as Barnett (1994) has eloquently argued with respect to higher educational practices in general. I would argue that there is a need too to be mindful of the inevitable generalizability implicit in the term competence when contrasted with the specificity of performance and the danger in setting these apart. Not only because, as Kim (1991) has argued that seeking to develop a construct of intercultural competence must entail the capacity to manage the situational specificity of the intercultural encounter but because 'competence' is surely something which is constantly reworked in the light of a given encounter and experience. As Herzog (2003, cited in Rathjie, 2007 p 256) argues there appears to be a lack of reflection and distinction on the competence-performance facets of communication and how these inter-relate.

Another major drawback with these models of intercultural competence is that as Dervin (2010) has argued, they only mention the *user* of the competence and ignore the influence of the interlocutor and the context of the interaction. That is to say, they neglect to acknowledge intercultural learning as something which is located in a particular setting and is the outcome of our engagement with others and as such that this is necessarily always dialogic rather than monologic.

It is interesting to observe a number of recent efforts among writers to consider alternatives to the development of outcome-driven understanding of intercultural learning. In part to address some of these concerns raised above but also to provide complementary perspectives which seek to capture the process of learning from an experience of interculturality as I will discuss below.

3.5.3.2 Learning *in* intercultural encounters

Among the burgeoning literature which is interested to examine learning in intercultural encounters, the majority of this has sought to perpetuate the foregrounding of learning as learning about interculturality, as in the studies reported above. However there is some work which is seeking to

approach this in ways that allow different perspectives on the relationship of learning and interculturality to emerge. I will first consider those studies which seek to describe developmental models of intercultural learning and then go on to look at those studies which have sought to explore the learner perspective, that is the experience of learning in intercultural encounters. It is interesting to note that although not exclusively the case, the bulk of this work has focused on international students undertaking shorter or longer sojourns in universities, and much of this has focused on the experiences of interculturality afforded international students through their study abroad experiences in English speaking countries.

These studies, as will be shown are also underpinned by different conceptualisations of what learning is, although this is not often explicitly acknowledged or highlighted. In this respect, one important division is between those studies (the majority) which concentrate on the learning process as an individual project of cognitive or psychological transformation and those (still limited in number) which seek to engage with aspects of the social and relational models of learning I introduced in the first part of this chapter.

Among the first group of studies, those that are interested to describe developmental models of the process of learning about interculturality, it is possible to detect both assimilationist constructions of the process of interculturality and those that view this from the perspective of the construction of hybrid or 'third space' identities. What they typically share in common however, is a description of the desired end result and an examination of the linear progress of individuals towards this end point. In some models, such as the acculturation model promoted by Berry (2004) the learning process is 'measured' according to how people manage (cognitively and affectively) the interrelationship between the 'old' and the 'new' culture with the desired outcome being integration and assimilation.

In contrast, other researchers have chosen intercultural competence or intercultural personhood as the end point against which they build their models. One of the most well-known is the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) proposed by Bennett & Bennett (2004). The DMIS comprises six stages of development towards intercultural

sensitivity, and postulates that individuals move from a denial of difference through to an integration of difference, described as the internalization of bi or multi frames of reference, maintaining a definition of identity that is “marginal to any particular culture and sees self as in process” (Bennett & Bennett, 2004: 252). It is evident from this that this model envisages successful intercultural learning as a point of engagement with hybridity or maintaining oneself in a state of thirdness. A final study worthy of mention here is the one put forward by Kim (2001) which can be seen to focus more on the process of learning itself as one of a cycle of stress-adaption and growth out of which a sense of intercultural personhood is seen to evolve. It is interesting to note that in all three of these studies, the underlying view of learning is to see this as a cognitive and psychological process.

To sum up, the focus of one strand of research studies interested in the process of learning in an experience of interculturality is, in keeping with the tradition of those that focus on the delineation of intercultural learning outcomes, to develop heuristic models of this process which I would suggest share many of the same drawbacks. Firstly, because they are typically developed with reference to large scale quantitative surveys and re-applied and subsequently refined by testing these out on different populations (Shi, 2006). Secondly, because they operate with assumptions as to what the end goal (and result) of an intercultural encounter is. As such, I argue the not uncommon application of these frameworks in the design of research studies has a washback effect on the accounts of learning that are generated and may tell us very little about what is really going on in intercultural encounters and what sorts of learning these might be seen to afford.

It is interesting to note, however, that an awareness of a need for a more grounded and inductive understanding of the experience of intercultural encounters has gained momentum in recent years coupled with a growth of interest in the learner perspective, especially with respect to higher education. This has led to the development of different research designs and a greater attention to the generation of qualitative data. There is for example, a growing interest in mixed method designs and greater

attention to longitudinal studies to capture learning trajectories over the life-course of the sojourn. While the majority of these studies, as with those above, highlight learning as an individual process of psychological and cognitive adaptation, there is an emerging interest in the need to foreground more relational and dialogic aspects of learning as proposed in the first part of this chapter. Below I will consider each of these perspectives in turn.

3.5.4. Researching learning from an experience of interculturality.

Two broad perspectives with regard to research undertaken into the process of learning from an encounter with interculturality can be discerned in the literature. The first of these is one which highlights learning as a broadly discreet individual process and the second which stresses a more social relational understanding of this. I will consider each of these in turn below.

3.5.4.1 The experience of learning as individual adaptation and growth.

In this section I will consider three studies which exemplify this research perspective on learning and interculturality. The first is one undertaken by Jackson (2008, 2010) which looks at the transformative power of a 5 week sojourn in the UK for 14 students from Hong Kong. The focus of this study was to ascertain the impact of their sojourn on their intercultural sensitivity. This was achieved through a mixed method study. Jackson employed a survey that utilised the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) outlined above which was administered to all participants at the start and end of their sojourn. She also collected qualitative data in the form of observations and open-ended surveys for all participants during the pre, while and post stages of the sojourn. Finally, she undertook in-depth narrative interviews with 5 of these participants at 3 points throughout this process. The results of the study were that those who developed higher levels of intercultural sensitivity were those who went beyond superficial observation of differences and who displayed more empathy for others.

While this study generates some interesting insights and is one of the few to include an account of the return home as part of a process of tracking participants' 'transformation' resulting from an overseas sojourn, it is also limited in my view by its decision to draw upon and position participants experiences with reference to the DMIS given the drawbacks identified with such heuristic models as outlined above in 3.5.3.2. In addition, while it recognises the importance of experiences to participants' developing intercultural sensitivity, it does not try to theorise how experience relates to learning. Rather, although not explicitly stated, it would appear to adopt an individualistic , psychological and cognitive view of the learning process.

A second study worthy of mention is one undertaken by Gu et al (2010) who report on the results of a study into international students' transitional experiences both in terms of their maturation and human development and their intercultural adaptation. This targeted all 1,288 first year international undergraduates representing the total enrolment in the 2006-07 academic year across the four universities that formed the research site for their study. From these 10 were selected to participate in in-depth case studies to explore their experience over a 15 month period. The study was mixed method in design employing two surveys at the start and end point of the study with the entire population (with return rates of 19% and 10% respectively) and a number of narrative interviews with the 10 who took part in the case studies. The findings of this study were seen to challenge the overly simplistic linear view of intercultural adaptation presented in the sorts of studies outlined above and to point to "a complex set of shifting associations between language mastery, social interaction, personal development and academic outcomes" (Gu et al, 2010,p.20). An additional finding was that the amount of support and conditions of contact within the environment in which they were engaged were also important. Finally, they argued that the findings showed that despite differences, in general these students shared many common patterns of challenge, change and development.

This study illustrates a move to contest overly-simplistic psychological models of learning with regard to the process of learning from an experience of interculturality. It also shows a commitment to capturing a

holistic understanding of participants' learning across in and out of class learning sites and to appreciate the ways in which this is transformed over time. Finally, unlike the study mentioned above it deists from the attempts to presume what the outcomes of an intercultural study might be. Although as with the study undertaken by Jackson, this is not explicitly stated, it is broadly aligned with the conceptualization of learning underpinning this study. Nevertheless, despite a focus on learning trajectories, the significance of relational and dialogic facets of their experience are downplayed and the depth of detail to better understand their evolving story line is absent.

A final study, one undertaken by Gill (2007), adopted a case study approach employing both ethnography and narrative interviews to examine the process of intercultural adaptation and growth for 10 post graduate students as a result of their study and residence abroad over a one year time frame. Gill adopted Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000, cited in Gill, 2007) as a way in which to interrogate their experience and sought to develop an in-depth and grounded phenomenological account of their experiences. Gill concludes from her study that the learning they undergo from an experience of interculturality comprises three inter-related components. That is that an experience of interculturality results in adaptation which facilitates the development of intercultural competence and affords the potential for identity transformation.

Gill's study is positioned within a need to better understand how international students adapt to UK university life with a view to opening up debates on how these students can be viewed as less of a problem and more as an opportunity. Although a key finding is to detail the learning afforded by an experience of interculturality, key theorisation is undertaken with respect to the process of psychological adjustment participants go through rather than learning itself.

In all three studies therefore with respect to the relationship between experience and learning, experience is largely see to provide a **context** for a process of learning and the relationship between context and learning is downplayed and under-theorised. I suggest that these studies are typical

of the majority of those that endeavour to look at learning processes in discussions of interculturality. That is to say, that these are problematic as, as (2006, p. 1404) has observed in these studies: “the impacts of sociocultural elements are remarked upon but the issue of adaptation mainly addressed at the intra-psychological level”

I will now move to discuss an emergent alternative approach to looking at intercultural experiences and learning which is where I locate the research study to be reported in this thesis.

3.5.4.2. The experience of learning as socially constituted: a dialogic and relational understanding of learning and interculturality.

As discussed earlier, there is evidence of an emerging interest in the need to develop theoretical understandings of the relationship between learning and an experience of interculturality which place more emphasis on the socially constructed nature of learning. That is ones that can better highlight the significance of other people and setting to learning in intercultural encounters.

Within this literature writers highlight a number of different theoretical orientations with regard to learning as a social process. Shi (2006), for example suggests that drawing upon socialisation theoretical perspectives can prove useful in enhancing an understanding of interculturality as a process of adjustment or assimilation. Still others such as Jiang (2008) and Holliday et al (2010) argue that there is a need to address the de-politicising tendency in the vast majority of accounts of interculturality. That is to develop more robust accounts which take seriously the wider social economic and political discourses within which the intercultural encounter is situated and the ways these impinge on identity construction and raise issues with regard to othering and representation in intercultural encounters.

The numbers of studies that have adopted a social lens with regard to understanding international students experiences are however still limited in number. Here I will provide details of three that are pertinent to this

study. Two, undertaken by Montgomery (2010) and Morita (2004) respectively, adopt a broadly situated learning perspective to develop a more nuanced account of international students experiences (and their learning) and one, undertaken by Rich & Troudi (2006) sought to consider the ways in which wider discourses can be seen to impinge on the positioning experiences of international students. I will consider each of these in turn below.

The first of these, a study undertaken by Montgomery (2010), focused on the social experiences of 7 international students and the relationship between their social networks and their academic success. The starting point for this study was the perception that international students find it difficult to develop relationships with home students and consequently are isolated and disadvantaged. Montgomery (*ibid*) employed a qualitative methodology which used semi-structured interviews, observation and a shadowing of participants as they went about their daily lives. Findings suggest that international students do not need to form strong social and academic bonds with home students in order to be successful and revealed rather that they form a strong international student community which supports their learning and enables them to replace the social capital they had lost from their transition to a new culture. Drawing upon a Communities of Practice perspective and Holliday's (1999) notion of small cultures, Montgomery suggested that over time these students could be seen to develop a community or small culture, with established norms and mechanisms for inducting newcomers. In addition to providing them with important support for their academic learning these networks were also seen to provide the conditions for learning about how to be participants in a global community that is to develop global citizenship. It was interesting to note Montgomery's conclusion that in this respect her participants were seen to manifest a vernacular cosmopolitanism, borne out of what they learnt through their interactions of how they could see themselves as members of a global community.

The second of these, Morita's (2004) study, examined the ways in which 6 female graduate students from Japan negotiated their participation and membership of an academic community of practice in a Canadian university with a particular focus on open-ended class discussions. The

study was longitudinal in design and data was collected from self reports, interviews and observations. As with Montgomery above, the study employed a community of practice perspective as well as a critical discourse research perspective. Results revealed the difficulties participants had in negotiating linguistic competence, identities and power relationships to be recognised as legitimate peripheral members of the community and the agentic ways in which they addressed this. Results also revealed the locally situated nature of their identity construction and the extent and ways in which they were able to renegotiate this over time. Morita's study highlights the complex inter-relationship between a cycle of experience-reflection-action in their efforts to negotiate their entry into a community and the ways in which this reflected the complex interplay between interactive and reflective positioning processes. While the outcomes of these processes enabled some to transform their positionalities, others were seen to remain marginal rather than peripheral members of the community.

The final study to be reported here, one undertaken by Rich & Troudi (2006), sought out the views of five Saudi students undertaking post-graduate studies at a university in the UK. Specifically it was interested to explore the ways in which wider discourses of Islamophobia, identified as a form of racial othering in the UK were seen to be significant to their experiences in a post-graduate programme. The study adopted a qualitative design entailing an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Results highlighted how wider discourses were seen to play out in their experiences of their programme as manifest in instances of real or perceived cultural racism in their accounts. This study highlights the importance of acknowledging the wider setting within which an intercultural encounter takes place and how the positions participants take up or which are imposed may generate forms of learning which reinforce stereotypes or set up negative perceptions which are in sharp contrast to the potential positive outcomes of an experience of interculturality that have received the lion's share of attention in the research literature.

The three accounts detailed above reveal how participants can be seen to

be engaged in a process of learning about their political, religious and historical positions relative to others (Rich and Troudi, 2006), how to gain access to a community of practice (Morita, 2004) and learning how to build relationships and global networks (Montgomery, 2010). They serve to illustrate how a more socially situated understanding of their experience reveals a richer and more complex picture of what sorts of learning might be afforded from an experience of interculturality. In marked contrast to the other studies into interculturality presented in this chapter, these studies can be seen to problematise the tendency in much of the literature on the process of learning in intercultural encounters to position this within discourses of global personhood or the intercultural/ cosmopolitan ideal. The three studies hint at the complex reality. In other words, these studies hint at the complex reality of engaging in an experience of interculturality. They suggest that learning to be more tolerant, more empathetic, more self aware and more open-minded can be seen as hallmarks of the intercultural competence, awareness and personhood described earlier. This is only one possible outcome of an experience of interculturality, and as such provides a limited and very one-dimensional picture of learning in global contact zones.

Taken together these studies hint at the need to acknowledge the situated, socially-constituted and intersubjective nature of an experience of interculturality and to provide some indication of the range of diverse learning outcomes an experience of interculturality might afford at an individual level. Montgomery's study is also helpful in revealing how an experience of interculturality can be understood as manifesting a vernacular cosmopolitanism that is, the ways in which a universal capacity for openness to the other is made visible at a local level. In addition, in so far as learning about interculturality is an outcome of an experience of interculturality, it shows how this needs to be understood and articulated with reference to the complex reality within which it is constituted. Informed by these perspectives, the study reported in this thesis seeks to extend the insights offered by these studies with respect to a view of learning from an experience of interculturality as a locally situated and relationally constituted process.

3.6 Conceptualising learning in intercultural encounters and implications for research.

In this chapter I have presented my conceptual understanding of two core concepts to be interrogated in this thesis; learning and interculturality. I have presented the case for a social model of learning, one which, drawing upon the work of Dewey, Bakhtin and Harre, stresses the socially and experientially constituted nature of learning. I have highlighted the ways in which I understand this to be a dialogic process with reference to its relational qualities and its temporal and lateral connectivity.

With respect to intercultural encounters I have suggested that there is a need to acknowledge that intercultural encounters engage people as socio-culturally and historically situated subjects and as such that these are inevitably sites with problems and conflicts. Thus power differentials need to be accommodated into any attempt to theorise interculturality (Loenhoff, 2003: 193 cited by Rathje 2007). Moreover that it follows from this, that as mentioned in chapter 1, that the differential affects of power may mean that intercultural encounters will not necessarily generate a sense of intercultural personhood or world openness or will at least impact on the ways in which this evolves. I suggest that a cosmopolitan realist stance provides a better orientation towards understanding learning and interculturality as this allows for the fact that in so far as an intercultural encounter affords learning about interculturality, this reflects the lived reality of a given setting, the purposes of the encounter and the evolving perspectives of the participants engaged in this.

This conceptualisation of interculturality and its processes and outcomes is one that resonates with the view of learning as a profoundly experiential and transactional phenomenon as outlined in the first part of this chapter and points to a need to engage with interculturality as first and foremost a kind of performative relationality (Dervin, 2010; Abdallah-Pretceille, 2003) That is one which takes seriously the *inter* part of interculturality and sees this as the starting point for an investigation of learning and interculturality.

It follows from this that there is a need to develop a research design which allows the relationship between learning and interculturality to be revealed

in its full complexity and that this be one which focuses on capturing the emergent and evolving nature of learning . The move to developing more situated understandings of learning and interculturality discussed above have revealed the ways in which researchers have looked to generate narrative accounts as an important way to gauge the perspectives of participants and to capture their evolving learning trajectories over the life course of their encounter. Narrative research also resonates with and is seen to be grounded in the experiential and dialogic ontology of Dewey and Bakhtin (Squire, 2008) and as will be discussed further in the following chapter, this was the methodology of choice for the study I undertook.

Chapter 4. Design of the Study

4.1. Introductory overview.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodological and procedural steps undertaken to explore the interplay between experience and learning among participants in the particular intercultural learning group that was the focus of the research study reported in this thesis. In what follows I will first detail the research questions. I will then describe the theoretical framework underpinning the study and the decision to adopt narrative inquiry as a research methodology. Next I will consider the methods employed within this narrative inquiry strategy, provide details of the research context and the participants, and the data collection, analysis and presentation procedures. Following on from this, I will consider issues raised by my position as researcher, including the specific problems of conducting research across linguistic and cultural divides, and the steps I took to ensure that broader issues of ethicality and validity were addressed. I end the chapter by detailing the limitations of the study design.

4.2. The Research Questions.

In line with the broad aims of the study as outlined in chapter 1, the research questions this study seeks to address are as follows:

1. What are participants' accounts of their experience of interculturality resulting from their year-long sojourn at a university in the UK?
2. What do they learn from these experiences?
3. What do they learn about interculturality from these experiences?

4.3. Theoretical perspective informing the study.

Developing a theoretical framework entails detailing the philosophical/ideological underpinnings of the study. Typically these are described as the views on the nature of reality, (the ontological stance) and views on knowledge, its location and generation, (the epistemology)

which are seen to inform the methodology adopted in a given study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Crotty, 1998; Richards, 2003).

Ontology and epistemology are often described as discreet entities in need of separate articulation in the research literature, however in reality, as Yanow & Schwartz-Shea (2006: xviii) argue, ontology and epistemology are better seen as mutually implicating and as also implicating certain methodological research strategies. For these reasons, the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of a study are often discussed, along with methodology, with reference to a particular research paradigm which Guba (1990:17) defines as 'a basic set of beliefs that guide action'. Following Crotty (1998) among others however, I will adopt the term theoretical perspective in preference to research paradigm which is sometimes deployed to highlight the idea of a sharp contrast and incommensurability among different ways of conceptualizing and conducting research. As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) point out such a perspective is increasingly contested by researchers as boundaries and borders between research traditions become blurred (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005:191).

Although a subject of on-going debate and contention, broadly speaking, three discrete theoretical perspectives are typically distinguished and drawn upon by researchers to position their work. These are scientific, interpretive and critical orientations to research. While some researchers may position their research projects as firmly in one or other of these theoretical traditions, many will find themselves drifting into the borderland between them. My research project, in keeping with a growing trend in 21st century research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) can be seen to do just this. That is to say, as explained below, while its interest in capturing participants lived experiences of learning in an intercultural group means it is firmly centred in an interpretivist ontology and epistemology, it also sees experience as informed by wider discourses of power and thereby as informed by the historical realism implicit in the ontology and epistemological of critical theory.

4.3.1 Interpretivism.

Interpretivism, (also referred to as constructivism or naturalism) has its origins in the ontological and epistemological presuppositions of continental philosophies of phenomenology and hermeneutics and their American counterparts of symbolic interactionism, pragmatism and ethnomethodology (Crotty,1998, p.67). These philosophies collectively contributed an understanding of knowledge as socially constructed on the basis of individuals' interpretations of their experience of being in the world.

From an interpretivist perspective, reality is conceived as the product of human experience constructed out of interaction between human beings and their world. (Crotty, 1998; Guba, 1990; Pring, 2000) and it follows from this that knowledge and truth are created rather than discovered (Richards, 2003). Moreover, since reality is pluralistic, reflecting the multiple perspectives of different social actors, with their different biographies, and the different contexts within which they operate, there are many different truths, or multiple ways of knowing. Interpretivists emphasise the centrality of experience in describing their ontological and epistemological stance, and in seeing them as mutually entwined, challenge the Cartesian dualism between knowing and being underpinning the scientific enquiry research (Crotty, 1998:66). Thus, not only do they see knowledge generation as socially constructed on the basis of experience, but experience (and thereby reality) itself as continuously (re)constructed by individuals through observation and the pursuit of knowledge (Cohen et al, 2000).

Broadly speaking, the goal of interpretive research is to develop a deeper *understanding* of phenomena, actions and perspectives and through 'emic' accounts to reveal the multiple perspectives which can complicate and unsettle but also yield new insights. This understanding or what Weber referred to as 'Verstehen' (see Crotty, 1998:68) entails a process of making clear people's interpretations of their own and others experiences – referring not only to a focus on the understandings that participants have formed but also to the process of undertaking interpretative research itself.

Such an approach is both hermeneutical and dialectical (Crotty, 1998) That is to say, when conducting this type of research the researcher

enters a hermeneutic cycle that entails a process of double interpretation or an interpretation of participants' interpretations. Thus, the aspirations of both the researcher and the participant must be to arrive at a consensus that enables the researcher to construct theory that is the result of their dialectical interchanges (Crotty, 1998: 90)

Given that the research project described in this thesis is one which has a primary focus on and interest in people and the knowledge and understanding that they generate through their lived experience in the world, it is one which is closely aligned with this interpretivist perspective. However, as mentioned above it also seeks to account for and develop an understanding of the ways in which social, political and historical realities within which the participants of the study construct their understandings and take up certain subject positions are part of their lived reality and may impinge on the nature and direction of their learning project.

There are a number of methodological strategies associated with research which adopts an interpretive orientation. Broadly speaking, these prioritise the collection of in-depth accounts of individuals' constructions and view stories and experiences of everyday life as valuable to knowledge building (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). While, as Chase (2005) observes, qualitative researchers increasingly routinely refer to any kind of prosaic data as narrative, narrative inquiry, (also known as narrative research, see Trahar, 2008) has in recent years formed itself into an increasingly distinct methodological tradition and emerged as a strong contender for consideration for research studies which seek out individuals' perspectives on their experience of particular phenomena in their daily lives. Since this was a central aim of this study, this became my methodology of choice.

4.4 Narrative inquiry as methodology for the study.

4.4.1 Narrative inquiry, an overview.

Narrative inquiry is an approach to data collection and analysis which is not only interested in story or narrative as a phenomenon but also as a method (Reisman, 2008, Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). However, narrative inquiry is a broad church encompassing a number of diverse views with regard to what counts as narrative and with regard to how to analyse and present narrative accounts. Reisman (2008) , for example identifies four broad approaches to narrative analysis, thematic, structural, dialogic performance and visual all of which operate with different assumptions about the significance of the relationship between the narrator and the audience, immediate context and wider socio-cultural historical and political setting, and the significance of content over structure and narrative construction over narrative purpose. These issues in the design of a narrative inquiry will be touched on again with respect my own strategy of inquiry to be discussed below.

Narrative inquiry has drawn interest from across a range of academic disciplines. The fields of linguistics, psychology and sociology have been particularly influential in the development of different traditions within narrative inquiry. Despite the fact that researchers may draw upon any one or a combination of the analytical approaches mentioned above, a shared point of constancy among educational researchers, as Clandinin & Connelly (2000) point out is an adherence to what is broadly referred to as experience-centred narratives (Squire, 2008) drawing upon a sociological tradition. That is to say, they operate with a view of subjectivity as essentially storied, located in and a response to lived experience (Patton, 2002) within landscapes that are themselves storied (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:145). Moreover, with a view that it is through narrative that we primarily make sense of our experiences and relate to others (Bruner,1986; Polkinghorne,1995) and for this reason, a focus on narrative accounts is an important way in which to access and gain insights into the meanings that people ascribe to their experiences.

To sum up, the focus of experience-centred narrative inquiry in much social science and educational research, in the words of Clandinin & Rosiek (2007:42) can be described as:

“Beginning with a respect for ordinary lived experience, the focus of narrative inquiry is not only a valorising of individuals

experiences but also an exploration of the social, cultural and institutional narratives within which individuals' experiences were constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted – but in a way that begins and ends that inquiry in the storied lives of the people involved.”

4.4.2. The decision to use narrative inquiry in this study.

Although narrative inquiry is not without its critics and problems (some of which I will allude to later in this chapter) there are a number of perceived benefits of narrative inquiry which attracted me to adopt this research methodology in my study. Reflecting its ontological and epistemological grounding in interpretivism, chief among these are its capacity to provide accounts which help illuminate the ways in which complex concepts and reified forms of practice are understood at the local human level. Following on from this, along with Clandinin & Connolly (2000) and Andrews et al (2008), I see a narrative inquiry methodological strategy as one which is closely aligned with the Deweyan inspired account of experience which is central to the conceptual framework provided at the end of chapter 3. In other words, I perceive a clear relationship between the three key features of narrative outlined by Clandinin & Rosiek (2007: 38-40) amongst others which are temporality, sociality and place, and the spatial, relational, and temporal dimensions of learning mentioned in chapter 3 above with reference to Dewey, Bakhtin and Harre.

The capacity of narrative inquiry to generate new and deeper understandings of phenomenon, has led to narrative inquiry being recognised as a valuable research strategy to explore a wide range of educational phenomena. This includes multicultural settings (Phillion, 2002) and the recent but, as Trahar (2009) has observed, still nascent interest in narrative inquiry to explore the experience of internationalization in higher education. In this study narrative inquiry is seen as a research methodology which affords a way to make visible insider or emic perspectives on accounts of experiences and learning in intercultural student groups which can serve as a springboard to critically inform and deepen an understanding of assumptions and issues around internationalization and intercultural learning in higher education.

4.4.3. The approach taken to narrative inquiry in this study.

A narrative research strategy assumes that space and time are significant to the stories that people tell. This highlights the dynamic nature of narratives on the one hand, but also the difficulty of identifying where a story starts and ends or of trying to clearly delimit a sense of context. Nevertheless, parameters have to be set and it is therefore important that narrative researchers provide a clear account of the ways in which they have demarcated the lateral and temporal context of the research project.

With regard to the first of these, *temporality*, in this study narrative accounts were primarily focused on the experience of living and studying in the UK, although inevitably and naturally, some participants accounts also drew upon their pre-sojourn experiences and occasionally made recourse to their anticipated return home at the end of the year. An important focus was on capturing each individual story as it unfolded over the entire length of a programme of study, and to chart the interpretive pathway between event, action and meaning as a means to identify emerging themes and patterns within and across narratives that could contribute to the enhanced understanding of their learning from an experience of interculturality as outlined above. Thus, this study was longitudinal in design in line with my emphasis and commitment to understand the interconnections and transformative capacity of social life (Ruspini, 2008)

As to the treatment of *place* within this study, given that I subscribe to the view that learning is distributed across the full range of experiences that participants encountered in their lives during the year they spent in the UK, I was interested in and encouraged participants to include reference to any events they felt to be personally meaningful to their story of life as an international student including visits home during the year and holidays in other European countries. These different events and settings were seen to be held in dynamic interplay in participants' accounts and their significance to participants meant they were treated as significant forms of data.

In addition to this, as I have recounted in my conceptual framework in chapter 3, I was interested to capture the *social* positioning of participants

and the ways in which meaning was derived from their immediate day to day interactions. However, I believe it is important to also acknowledge the importance of the meta narratives, institutional and beyond, which provide a social, cultural, political and historical backdrop which may position participants in particular ways, and are likely to be drawn upon by participants and impinge on both the nature and content of the narrative accounts. Thus, in this research study I saw a need to consider narrative space as needing to incorporate an ideological dimension to space as well as a physical one. It is in this respect that my study can be seen as drawing upon a critical narrative inquiry tradition. That is, an acknowledgement of a need to consider the impact of broader historical and socio-political contexts on the stories people tell: 'how they draw upon, resist or transform these discourses as they narrate their selves' (Chase, 2005:667). Finally, my narrative inquiry strategy acknowledged the way narrative creates as well as occupies space (Cavarero, 2000). That is a process by which storied selves are transformed, and de-territorialized by the entering into relationship with others, whether as part and parcel of the study abroad experience or, potentially, through interactions with the researcher herself.

In adopting a narrative inquiry strategy in this research project, an important step was locating my work within what is, as Chase (2005) among others acknowledges, a rich and diverse approach to doing research. In keeping with my interest in narrative as a means to understand participants' experiences of their study abroad sojourn I aligned myself with the experience-centred narrative approach as outlined above. However, I soon realised that within this approach there are a number of competing traditions with regard to how a researcher orientates him or herself to the collection, analysis, and presentation of data.

Polkinghorne (1988) divides narrative investigations into two categories, according to their purpose. That is, research to describe a narrative already held by an individual or group versus research that explains, through narrative why something happens or deploys narrative as an explanatory tool. Since my interest in the research project reported in this thesis was to explore the sorts of learning that evolve overtime from participants' encounter with an extended experience in a global

educational contact zone, narrative was deployed as a strategy to 'story' the relationship between their experiences and their learning. As such, I understood my narrative investigation to fall into the second of Polkinghorne's categories.

Another important consideration among those adopting narrative inquiry is the perceived position of the researcher vis a vis the participants and how this impacts on the presentation of the findings. While I was interested to generate participants' own narrative accounts of their experiences, as explained above, I was primarily interested in 'restorying' these to create a coherent account of what sorts of things were learnt from these experiences, how and why, and the ways in which these were transformed over time. As such, I elected to adopt what Chase (2005, p. 665) refers to as an authoritative voice, one which visibly separates the researcher's voice from that of the participants and which "speaks differently from but not disrespectfully' from the voices of the participants in the study".

The adoption of an authoritative voice is not uncommon in narrative inquiry as Squires (2008) points out. The reasons I adopted this stance, reflect those of Squires (2008), Chase (2005) and others. Namely, that this stance is particularly suited to novice narrative inquiry researchers such as myself and can afford greater credibility to the research findings to those to whom it is targeted, a process referred to by Reisman (2008) and Lieblich et al (1998) among others as consensual validation. To elaborate, as explained in chapter 1 above, the intention of the research was to contribute to the development of a more nuanced understanding of learning from an experience of interculturality and the development of a more informed pedagogic response to internationalization in higher education. I was therefore interested in ensuring that the presentation of the findings of the study be presented in a way that would increase their validity for the intended audience; those with an interest in theorising intercultural learning and those engaged in policy and practice for internationalization in higher education.

This stance informed the presentation of the findings of the primary and secondary analysis to be discussed in chapters 5 and 6 below. Namely, it led to the presentation of extracts from participants' accounts separately

from my interpretation rather than, as favoured by some narrative researchers to draw my interpretations into the development of third person reconstructed narratives.

Having elucidated the approach taken to narrative inquiry, in what follows I turn to a more detailed discussion of the research setting and decisions about sampling, data collection and analysis procedures which can be seen to reflect the narrative inquiry strategy I adopted, as explained above.

4. 5. Research setting and participants in the narrative inquiry.

4.5.1 The research setting

The research project took place at the university in the South of England discussed in Chapter 2 above (see 2.3.1). Specifically it focused on international students' experiences and learning during their enrolment on a one year post graduate Masters in TESOL programme. At the time of the study this programme was targeted at practicing qualified teachers of English as a foreign or additional language with a minimum of 2 years experience. A detailed statement about this programme's stated aims and objectives at the time of the study, the subject knowledge covered and the assessment and support procedures adopted can be found in appendix 9. In brief, this statement highlights the attention paid to self-directed and autonomous learning, critical thinking and the broadly practically orientated nature of modules. It also provides a sense of the sorts of extra-curricula activities offered to students during the year. As with the broader background information offered in chapter 2, these details provide some additional insights into the nature of their academic setting which might be seen to inform their narrative accounts. As one of a number of strategies undertaken to protect the anonymity of the participants I have elected not to provide details of the academic year this documentation refers to.

4.5.2 The participants and the sampling rationale.

The total number of participants who took part in this study was 14. These were all the full-time students enrolled on the programme for the duration of the academic year. As explained above, a central tenet of narrative inquiry is to understand the uniqueness of the individual perspective and to highlight a range of possible understanding and experiences of a given phenomenon (such as experience of interculturality) and thus often a smaller number of in depth narrative accounts than I have elected to present are deemed adequate to achieve this purpose. However, as Squire (2008:44) observes, the decisions a researcher takes with regard to the size of a sample in a narrative inquiry depends on the aim and objectives of the research study as well as the audience the story being told is targeted at. My decision to work with all of the full time students in this cohort reflects my interest in revealing a multiplicity of perspectives with regard to the complex relationship between study abroad and learning for international students. This also enabled me to consider the significance of relationships between participants to their on-going experience and learning over the life span of the programme. I was also mindful of the ways in which a larger number of participants could afford the study a higher degree of credibility (or consensual validation as explained in 4.4.3 above).

Broadly speaking, my sampling strategy can be considered as convenient and purposive, in so far as I have focused on a group of international students who are reasonably representative of the wider population of international studies found in UK universities and to whom I had easy access. However, on the other, it can also be described as theoretical sampling in so far as it was also deemed appropriate to the potential to generate new understandings of important constructs (Patton 2002:238)

Table 4.1 below provides an overview of the demographics of the student cohort enrolled on the Masters in TESOL programme during the academic year that is the focus of the study. To protect participants' anonymity, pseudonyms are employed. Where an English pseudonym is employed for an international student, this is done to reflect their own preference to adopt an English name during the course.

From table 4.1 it can be seen that there were 17 full-time students who enrolled on the programme, representing just over 75% of the total number of students. It can also be seen from their countries of origin that all but one of these students was classified as an international student. As will also be apparent, 3 of these students dropped out during the first term of the year reducing the total number of fulltime students to 14. These students (highlighted in bold) were the subjects of the study undertaken. Details of these participants professional background (their years of experience and their work contexts) can be found in appendix 8.

Table 4.1 also provides details of the 6 home students enrolled on the programme. These were all part time students enrolled for a maximum of 5 years who would typically elect to take only one or two modules per year and thus, would be present in some classes but not others. These students were all working as teachers in local private language schools or in the university language centre. Of the part-time students enrolled at that time, 3 were newly registered, 2 had registered the previous year and one was in her third year of study. Since the three students who dropped out are mentioned by a number of participants in their narrative accounts, the following table, table 4.2, provides some brief detail on these students and their reasons for leaving the programme.

Table 4.1. Students enrolled on the MEd TESOL programme during the academic year that was the focus of the study.

Name (pseudonym)	Nationality	Enrolment status
Sami	Saudi Arabian	Full time
Baljinder	Malaysian	Full-time
Song	Taiwan	Full time
Sang-ho	South Korea	Full time
Xiao Hua	China	Full-time
Fah	Thailand	Full-time
Tina	Taiwan	Full time
Ida	Taiwan	Full time
Linda	China	Full-time
Terence	Taiwan	Full time
Huang-Fu	China	Full-time
Ayumi	Japan	Full-time
Eric	Taiwan	Full time
Gong	China	Full-time
Janice	British	Part time
Anne	British	Part time
Hazel	British	Part time
Rachel	British	Part time
Diane	British	Part time
Susan	British	Part time
Deep	British	Full-time for one term
Lyn	South Korean	Full time for one term
Atul	Indian	Full time for one week

Table 4.2. Details of full-time students who left the programme in the first term.

<p>Atul, from India, was profoundly home-sick and felt himself to be overwhelmed by the demands of living on his own in the UK. In particular he felt isolated and missed the security of being with other Indians. He left within one week of his arrival. Initially to London to stay with relatives and then to India.</p>
<p>Deep a British Seikh student who changed his registration from Masters in TESOL to a Doctorate in TESOL within the first two months of the course. He shared a number of classes with participants in term 1 and term 2.</p>
<p>Lyn, a Korean student who faced family difficulties in Korea that required her to de-register at the end of term 1. and to convert the two modules she had completed into a post graduate certificate.</p>

4.6 Data collection and analysis procedures.

With respect to the collection and analysis of narrative data, many writers (such as for example Reisman, 2008; Clandinin & Connolly, 2000) refer to a number of key stages which need to be given account of. These are, the generation of field texts, the conversion of these into research texts, and the analysis of these texts. Table 4.3 below summarises the stages of data collection and analysis that will be discussed in turn below.

Table 4.3. Overview of the data collection and analysis procedure.

<p><u>1. The generation of field texts.:</u></p> <p>Generation of data from Individual interviews, group interviews, collection of documents, participants' portfolios, opportunistic conversations.</p>
<p><u>2. The conversion of field texts into research texts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The generation of interim research texts • The production of individual narrative accounts
<p><u>3. The analysis of research texts.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Primary analysis to address research questions 1 & 2:</i> Coding of individual narratives → cross-narrative thematic coding by experience and significance to identify forms of learning • <i>Secondary analysis to address research question 3:</i> Re-analysis of individual accounts to examine 'learning about interculturality'

4.6.1 Generating field texts: collecting and accessing data.

There are a number of ways in which narrative data or what Clandinin & Connelly (2000:92) refer to as “field texts”, can be generated. Field texts might be written or spoken, consciously developed for the explicit purposes of the research project, or be those developed for other purposes, whether consciously or unconsciously. Thus on the one hand, field texts may be obtained by narrative interview, one of the most prevalent methods for generating field texts in studies adopting a narrative inquiry strategy (Reisman, 2008). However, asking participants to produce written texts, such as a diary or blog has become increasingly popular in recent years as has providing participants with cameras, VCRs and digital recorders to record their own verbal/visual accounts and commentaries with regard to a particular phenomenon. However, field texts may also represent existing documentation, or letter, journal entries and conversations designed for a purpose other than the research inquiry itself.

While some research studies will rely on only one sort of field text, in many cases, as is the case with this study, a number of different ‘texts’ will be drawn upon to generate ‘interwoven field texts’ (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000:96), in the interests of obtaining the most robust and full account of participants’ accounts as possible. Thus, in this research study, while the main source of data for the field texts was individual narrative interviews I also conducted group interviews towards the end of the year, and gathered portfolio diary extracts and a reflective paper volunteered by some of those participants who took a teacher development module. I also kept a researchers log including a record of ‘opportunistic conversations’ (Holliday: 2004: 278) and email exchanges with participants. These are discussed in turn below. Table 4.4 below shows the amounts of each sort of data collected.

Table 4.4. An overview of the different sorts of field texts generated during the study.

Type of Field text	Quantity
Individual interviews	14 x 3 interviews of up to one hour with each participant at intervals over the year.
Group interviews	3 of one hour in length each containing 3 or 4 participants
Portfolios and reflective papers	7 participants of the 9 who kept these volunteered to share these with me.
Additional field texts	Opportunistic conversations and email exchanges recorded in my researcher's log.

4.6.1.1 Narrative interviews.

Interviews are widely used in qualitative research because they are viewed as one of the most powerful ways of understanding others enabling the researcher to access people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality (Punch, 2005:168) Interviews, described by Burgess (1984:102. cited in Richards, 2003) as 'a conversation with a purpose', are often divided into three main types; structured, semi-structured and open or unstructured. These divisions refer to the degree to which the conversational direction is controlled or pre-planned by the interviewer. Precisely how much control is exerted is likely to reflect the purpose of the 'conversation'. For the majority of those researchers within an interpretative tradition including those undertaking experience-centred narrative research, a semi-structured or more open-ended format is likely to be adopted on the grounds that it affords participants considerable room for manoeuvre within the defined parameters of the interview focus (Squire, 2008; Chase, 2005).

Chase (2005), argues that a narrative interviewer needs to engage with the interviewee as narrators of their own story rather than respondents to interviewer's questions. That is, to make an effort to transform the interviewee-interviewer relationship into one of narrator and listener. As Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) argues, the interviewer needs to understand him or herself, metaphorically speaking, as a traveller, journeying through the landscape of the interviewee. The objective of this is to gather their

narrative accounts to be retold to another audience. The goal of the interviewer is therefore to create a facilitating context to encourage those who are interviewed to tell their stories as completely as possible. With this in mind, broad guidelines on how to conduct narrative interviews, reflecting those of qualitative interviewing techniques in general, include: promoting an atmosphere of trust; developing a style conducive to building rapport; and ensuring the comfort and ease of the interviewee so he or she feels able to talk freely about the subject at hand. (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Cresswell, 2002; Reisman, 2008).

For the vast majority of narrative researchers, an informal conversational style is advocated (Reisman, 2008; Squires, 2008, Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) that entails interviewers adopting a range of strategies widely associated with qualitative interviewing more generally (see for example Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). These strategies include seeking clarification, providing encouragement to help facilitate the generation of story and building rapport and trust. However, interviews are, in essence, an interactional achievement and, as Clandinin & Connelly (2000: 110) point out interviewers also need to be mindful of the ways in which their questions, actions and responses shape the relationship between them and the interviewee and impact on the ways in which participants respond to and give accounts of their experiences and adjust their strategies accordingly. As Kong et al (2002: 250) argue: “the doing of interviews is interactive, emotional and personal”. As such, the precise ways in which narrative interviewers work to generate stories will be informed by interview guidelines of the sorts provided in many research textbooks but also their awareness of the interviewee and how best to support the generation of their story.

4.6.1.2 Narrative interviewing in my project.

In the research study reported in this thesis, individual narrative interviews were a primary source of narrative field texts. Since the narrative accounts I was seeking to generate were related to participants' experiences of their year- long sojourn as students at a university in the UK, individual narrative interviews were undertaken with each participant at three intervals during the year (October, January and May). These interviews

were audio-taped and lasted on average between 30-45 minutes in duration and sought to adhere to the principles of informal conversational interviewing outline above. The first interview took place 3 weeks after their programme of study had commenced. It was a base-line interview designed to identify their orientation towards the programme, their early impressions of this and experiences perceived to be significant to this. A subsequent interview was undertaken 2 weeks into the second term, and a third interview half way through their third term of study.

For all three interviews an interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) was developed which allowed for considerable flexibility in conducting the interviews, but identified the major themes to be addressed and possible things to pick up under each theme. Informed by the research questions and the conceptual understanding of learning developed in chapter 3 (see 3.4.2), all three interviews focused on the narrative accounts of the participant's experiences and their significance at different stages of their sojourn as manifest in their perceptions of the impact on their learning and their strategic responses to these experiences. In line with a view of learning as embodied and relational and having informal and formal components across both in and out of class settings, participants were invited to discuss any experience or encounter they felt to be important. To address one aspect of the relational nature of learning, particular attention was paid to identifying people who were seen as important to their experiences with a view to understand their changing relational networks overtime and how this informed their learning. To capture the temporal connectivity between experiences and their significance, themes were picked up and revisited from one interview to the next.

The interview guides are shown in appendices 1 and 2. From these it can be seen that the guide for the first interview, a baseline interview, focused on establishing their previous experiences of intercultural learning situations, their reasons for electing to study abroad and to attend this programme, their expectations of the programme and their early experiences within this. Prior to undertaking the second interview, I listened to the interview and produced a summary of what I deemed to be the key points raised. These were then passed to participants several days in advance of undertaking the second interview. The first part of the

second interview entailed checking on this summary. This process was repeated again between the second and third individual interviews. The subsequent interview guides therefore entailed checking the contents of the previous interview to see whether their views on the significance of events and encounters had been transformed and why, and to identify accounts of new experiences and their significance. In this respect preliminary data analysis of individual narrative interviews took place alongside data collection and was an integral part of the data collection process. In the final interview, participants were also asked to reflect on the overall significance of their sojourn to their learning and development.

I operated with a view of narrative interviewing as an interactional achievement, entailing the building of an emotional connection between myself and each participant. To build a sense of rapport and trust, I was mindful of a need to adhere to an open questioning technique which can encourage participants to converse freely but also of the challenges this posed for participants whose command of English was, in many cases, quite limited. This was especially true in the early stages of the programme. Many participants initially struggled to find the language to share their opinions, were unfamiliar with interviewing as a research technique and took time to understand that they were free to share views with me as researcher, but also as their programme director.

In section 4.7 below, I consider in more detail some important issues around my positioning as researcher in this project such as conducting research with students drawn from different socio-cultural backgrounds and how this inevitably impinged on the process of conducting this narrative inquiry. With regard to the specific challenges posed by conducting the interviews in English, I trialled my interview guide on 3 other international students who were undertaking post-graduate studies at the university and from these, I quickly realised that there was a need to provide more prompts, checks for clarification, probes and encouragement than might be seen as typical. In early interviews, for example, I found that I sometimes talked for as much as 50% of the interview as I needed to prompt and check for clarification at regular intervals and participants often took much shorter turns than might typically be the case in narrative interviews. However, as participants' confidence and their language

proficiency and fluency grew, in many cases this significantly reduced in subsequent interviews (see appendix 12 for indicative transcripts of the three interviews I undertook with Tina).

Initially, I was concerned about the interviewing issues raised above but in time came to recognise that while perhaps not ideal, this was a necessary part of my own personal strategy of narrative interviewing and ultimately justifiable within the context of a general methodological liberalization that is increasingly pervading the field of qualitative research (Holliday, 2004; Hesser-Biber & Leavy, 2008). In other words, I recognized that interviewing is a two way participatory process and that the language subjectivities of the participants inevitably influence data generation and the strategies adopted to address this.

4.6.1.3 Group interviews

Another source of narrative texts were group interviews which were undertaken in mid-July 6 weeks after the final individual narrative interview. Three group interviews were undertaken with a total of 10 of the participants, the remaining four being on holiday or otherwise engaged. Each group comprised 3 -4 of the participants who self-selected who they wanted to undertake these group interviews with, chiefly on the basis of friendship groups. These were audio-taped with each being of about one hour in duration. Although individual interviews are the most common way to obtain oral narrative data, Reisman (2008) argues that group interviews may also be used, their function being primarily to foster a sense of belonging between group members. My decisions to undertake group interviews, however, was less to support the development of the group, than to exploit the growing sense of belonging that had already developed between participants to generate further insights into certain recurring themes across individual interviews. In other words, drawing upon the perceived benefits of group interviews highlighted by those who work with children such as Eder & Fingerson (2002) and with vulnerable people (Liamputtong, 2007), I introduced group interviews as a means for students to build upon the talk of each others' experiences and to stimulate them to discuss a wider range of opinions than was always the case in their one-to-one interviews. As Kvale & Brinkman (2009:150) note,

group interviews will often generate more spontaneous and emotional views than individual interviews do. I found this to be a particular strength of the group interviews I undertook, in addition to facilitating the generation of new insights into the significance of experiences for individuals.

Each group was provided with a set of statements under five thematic headings representing some of the common themes that had emerged from my reading of the interim transcripts I had made following each individual interview. These concerned the significance of classroom experiences, previous experiences, out of class experiences and the multicultural nature of the group to their learning. A final theme concerned their perception of change in their perspectives on pedagogic practice, support and their participation. A copy of the group interview guide can be found in appendix 2. In conducting these group interviews, participants sat around a central table and I acted as a facilitator sitting at some distance from the participants. I played no part in the interview but was available if participants required clarification on the content of the interview guide and occasionally I interjected to move the groups on from one theme to the next.

4.6.1.4. Other sources of field texts: documents and informal conversations.

Since documents and other artefacts, reveal a great deal about how the people who construct them view their world and experiences (Bogdan & Biklen (2003), I regarded these as important additional sources of narrative texts within this study.

Participants were invited to share any documents with me during the year that they felt were relevant to their on-going experience of their sojourn. A major additional source of data were participants' portfolios and critical reflective papers. Nine of the participants had enrolled on a module on reflective teacher development which required them to build a portfolio of material concerning their development, including keeping a reflective diary and on the basis of which they wrote a short reflective paper. Seven of the participants allowed me to have access to this for research purposes. A

few participants also elected to e-mail me on occasion, typically with regard to some experience within the programme which they had found challenging or upsetting. Thus, one wrote to complain about the library facilities and another to express worry about failing an assignment. I kept a record of these, and where participants were happy to allow me to use these, they became a further source of narrative data. Finally, most students signed up for personal tutorials with me at various stages throughout the academic year and I adopted an open door policy, making myself freely accessible to students throughout the duration of the programme, I kept a record of these 'opportunistic conversations' (Holliday, 2004) that I had with participants as they occurred and this proved to be another valuable source of narrative data.

4.6.2. From field texts to research texts.

The various approaches to data generation I undertook described above, left me with a large body of narrative data. Since the data for a given participant was spread across a number of individual and group interviews, as well as, in some cases, also located in written documents and records of other informal conversations and emails, once interview transcriptions had been completed, I realised there was a need to create a coherence across the various field texts by generating a single narrative text for each participant. That is, following Clandinin & Connelly (2000:119) to transform the field texts into a research text. It was the resulting narrative accounts that became the focus for the thematic analysis I undertook as described under 4.6.3 below.

As Clandinin & Connelly (2000) acknowledge, the transforming of field texts into research texts is a challenging point of transition for the researcher and I found myself puzzling for sometime as to how to best do this. I was mindful of the fact that in creating research texts I was engaged in a process of 'storying their stories' (McCormack, 2000: 285) and that what I would produce would be a process of reconstruction of the story that participants had generated in interviews and manifested in their written accounts (Reismann, 2008). However, precisely because of this, I deliberated for some time as to what to include and to leave out and how I should undertake this reinterpretation. Following the advice offered by

Clandinin & Connelly (2000), I went back to the first 2 research questions that these narrative accounts were seeking to address, and embarked on a lengthy process of reading and re-reading the field texts. This eventually led me to generate an interim research text for each participant arranged in a largely temporal sequence of events and encounters and their significance (see appendix 13 for a sample of the interim text developed for Tina).

Once interim research texts had been generated, I then reflected for some time as to how these might be transformed into persuasive narrative texts. These would be ones which would be plausible in terms of style and in providing sufficient evidence in the form of the participants' voice (Reisman, 2008). In doing this I examined other narrative accounts from research papers and also found the work by McAdams (1997) and McAdams et al (2006) on the different ways in which identities are manifest in story helpful in gaining a more holistic overview of the general thrust of each narrative. Particularly helpful in generating a holistic overview of participants narratives, was McAdams concept of narrative tone (such as hopeless pessimism), and his advice to look for imagery (such as participants' use of metaphor) and theme (or goal directed sequences pursued by individuals). I bore these in mind as I looked for narrative threads, tensions and themes running through the various field texts for each participant.

A final consideration in the production of the narrative accounts was how I was going to position myself as researcher in relation to these. Chase (2005) raises the important point of how the researcher's voice enters the narrative accounts that are generated. She suggests that the researcher can adopt an authoritative voice, a supportive voice or an interactive voice in the narrative accounts. Following Chase (2005) as explained above (see 4.4.3 above), I saw myself as adopting an authoritative voice, in so far as I elected to foreground my interpretation by electing to develop a text which drew upon extracts from their own accounts to illustrate the understanding I formed through my analysis. Nevertheless, I was careful to attend to the full range of diversity in the data different stories and to include ample supporting quotes from participants to ensure a good

degree of transparency in my interpretative moves. This is in contrast to the adoption of a supportive or interactive voice in the creation of narrative texts which focus on pushing the narrators own story more into the limelight or foregrounds the way the story produced is an interactional achievement between the researcher and the participant (Chase, 2005). As explained in 4.4.3, my decision to adopt an authoritative voice reflected the objectives of the study as outlined in 4.4.2 above. Namely to provide narrative accounts that make visible and audible the threads and concerns both within and across accounts that could generate informed new understandings of the interplay between experience and learning in intercultural student groups.

Appendix 14 shows the titles I gave each of the narrative research texts I generated. These sought to capture my holistic impression of the main thrust of each narrative, drawing on the concepts of narrative tone, imagery and theme employed by McAdams et al (2006), alluded to above. In the vast majority of cases they also adopted expressions that participants had employed at some stage in their narrative interviews.

4.6.3. Analysis of research texts.

The analysis of the research texts comprised two stages. With the former (primary analysis), informing subsequent analysis (secondary analysis).

4.6.3.1. Primary analysis.

The purpose of the primary analysis was to provide a coherent account of participants' experiences and the significance they attached to these. This entailed two stages. Firstly, the thematic analysis of individual research texts, and secondly a cross-research text thematic analysis to generate a collective narrative of the relationship between experiences and their significance across all of the 14 participants' accounts.

Developing the cross-research text narrative.

Once the individual research texts had been developed, as described in 4.6.2 above, I then set about the process of analysing these. Following the narrative analysis approach proposed by Squires (2008), each of the 14 narrative research texts were analysed to identify the experiences (events

and encounters) deemed significant in individual participant's accounts, factors impacting on these, and their perceived significance. Following on from this I adopted a classic hermeneutic cycle (Crotty, 1998: 98-9) which entailed moving back and forth between the individual narrative accounts themselves and the emerging themes across the accounts.

Informed by the grounded theory approach to data analysis developed by Strauss & Corbin (1990), this led me to first generate a series of open codes with respect to the different sorts of experiences, how they were seen as significant, and factors impacting on the experiences informed by my reading of individual research texts. Through a process of constant comparison (Richards, 2003:287) that entailed checking and comparing codes generated against the research texts and looking for new relationships, I finally reduced the open codes to a number of central themes within each of the three main categories of experiences, pre-course, in-class and out-of-class experiences that their accounts revealed. Thus for example, under the category '*Pre-programme Experiences and their Significance*', central themes that were identified were: *sociocultural background; previous educational experience; previous study overseas; undertaking a pre-sessional course; input from significant others (friends, family, former students, colleagues)*. Details of the open codes originally produced, subsequent axial codes, and those themes finally decided upon to organise discussion under the three experiential categories, can be found in appendices 10 and 11.

By organizing the themes around these experience categories it was intended that the presentation of the cross-narrative analysis remained faithful to their own accounts in so far as it retained the elements of temporality and lateral connectivity with respect to their accounts. Moreover, this was seen to best relay the unfolding collective narrative I was seeking to develop. The results of the cross-research text thematic analysis are presented in chapter 5 below.

Analysis of participants' evolving relational networks.

As explained in 4.6.1.2 above, the individual interviews sought to generate data on participants' in class relational networks and the ways these

developed over time. To analyse these, I examined the mentions made of who participants liked to work with or felt close to in their second interview held in January (at the start of the second term) and their third interview held in the third term in May. This information was then fed into a Windows computer software programme entitled UCINET Social Network Analysis (Version 6) accessible at <http://www.analytictech.com/ucinet/> . This enabled visual representations of participant's networks to be generated. These are discussed in chapter 5 below (5.x) and can be found in appendices 6 and 7.

Identifying learning in the cross-research text narrative.

As indicated in chapter 1, my interest in this thesis was in documenting the sorts of learning that an extended experience of interculturality afforded these participants. In chapter 3 (see 3.4.2) I developed a conceptual understanding of learning which suggested that due to the embodied nature of learning, this could be understood to take many forms, and to extend beyond the confines of the classroom. However, I also explained the ubiquity of a formal understanding of learning in the discourses of learning informing educational practices and the narrow articulation of learning outcomes by those engaged in formal education (including learners). This means that certain understandings of learning, namely a view of this as an increase in subject knowledge, skill and competency tend to get foregrounded in articulations of learning in formal settings. In contrast, other (informal) forms of learning afforded by experiences, such as the development of affective responses, relationship building skills and taking up new positions, are typically downplayed and as such, may not be explicitly labelled as learning by learners.

As explained in the discussion of my data collection above (4.6.1.2) it was for these reasons that I emphasised experience and significance of this to participants in my interviews with participants rather than asking them to explicitly describe their learning. With regard to identifying 'evidence' of learning in the data, therefore, I not only look at instances where participants explicitly invoked the term learning, but focused my analysis more broadly on an interpretation of their comments on the significance of a given experience. To do this I read through the different references to

significance in the cross-research text thematic analysis. Through this process I initially identified 21 forms of learning as evident in participants' accounts in my initial open coding as shown in appendix 10 which through a process of axial coding were finally reduced to five main forms. These were labeled as:

- learning about self;
- learning about self as learner;
- learning subject knowledge and skills;
- learning how to be successful in this setting;
- learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other.

Details of these, together with exemplification are provided at the end of chapter 5.

4.6.3.2 Secondary analysis of the data.

Once the cross-research text thematic analysis of participants' experiences and their significance had been completed, I then undertook a secondary analysis to address the third research question; what participants learnt about interculturality from their sojourn.

The results of the primary analysis suggested that 'learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other' comprised a number of components which were similar to those associated with intercultural learning as described in chapter 3 (3.5.3) but also additional elements which were not. Namely, learning about linguistic and cultural positioning. These are shown in table 4.6 below.

To address this third research question I undertook a more detailed interrogation of this form of learning. To do this, I went back to the individual narrative accounts and sought to establish to what extent and in what ways these different components were evident in the accounts. The result of this process, which can be seen in appendix 15, revealed considerable differences regarding the extent to which the different components were evident in individual participants' accounts. It also

revealed how while all but one account evidenced the first of the components in table 4.6, other components, most notably ‘seeing beyond the cultural other’ were identified in fewer accounts. They also revealed a complex interplay between ‘openness to other’ and ‘an awareness of cultural and linguistic positioning’ as manifest in the strategic responses they took in managing the relational dilemmas these posed, as shown in appendix 15. This led some to adopt a learning trajectory that led to greater ‘openness to other’ over time than others.

Table 4.5: Components identified with respect to ‘Learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other’.

Becoming more open to the other.	No. of participants
Acknowledging and valuing different perspectives	13
Identifying similarities across differences	8
Questioning assumptions and stereotypes	7
Seeing beyond the cultural or linguistic other	4
Awareness of linguistic and cultural positioning	No of participants
Awareness of linguistic positioning	5
Awareness of cultural positioning	4
Awareness of both linguistic and cultural positioning	2

To illustrate this complexity and the difference between those which exemplified a move to greater openness to the other over time (as evidenced by the presence of more of the components of becoming more open to the other in table 4.6 above) and those who developed less openness to the other, I generated new individual narrative accounts for four participants. These accounts are presented in chapter 6 below.

4.7. My position as researcher.

As a researcher in the interpretative tradition, in full acknowledgement that the findings to be presented in the following chapter are an interpretation of others interpretations of life events and their significance, I recognise that my own on-going narrative inevitably impinges on the sense I make of the stories related to me by the participants. Details about my background and interest in this study have already been provided in chapter 1 above and my own epistemological and ontological standpoint outlined in 4.3 above. Here my focus is to acknowledge and reflect on what is often referred to as my position as researcher in this study, that is the way in which power impinges on my relationship to the participants and the possible impact on the study, whether positively or negatively.

It is common to draw a distinction between two positions that researchers can occupy in relation to participants in a research study. Namely to be either outsiders or insiders (Leckie, 2008) but as I will suggest I find this problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is because in reality we are always both insiders and outsiders to different degrees. As Sharan et al (2001:405) point out, there is a good deal of slippage between these terms. I would for example suggest that I was both an insider and an outsider in this project depending on which angle we look at the research setting and participants from. Thus give that I was not familiar with many of my participants linguistic and socioculturally derived norms and values, I might have been considered an outsider. However, as a member of the same learning community as these participants, I might be considered an insider. Yet, because I was the director of the programme rather than an international student, I might, to labour the point, have also been considered an outsider and the fact that I lived in China for 5 years and speak Chinese reasonably well, might mean that for participants from China I might have been a kind of outsider-insider.

A second problem I have with this dichotomy is that it is often assumed that insiders because they are drawn from the same community as these participants themselves can, through ease of access and familiarity, build a better rapport between themselves and participants and thereby provide richer and fuller accounts of phenomenon. However, this may not always be the case. In a similar way, while outsiders may struggle to generate this

sort of rapport initially at least, they are, however, able to develop a critical distance from the situation at hand to generate new insights that may not be so visible to insiders and to obtain information that might not be revealed to an insider that it might be assumed is already known. In reality, there are benefits and problems with both kinds of status and in reality it is not possible to accurately draw parallels with power and insider and outsider status and therefore difficult to predict the impact of status on the nature and quality of data generated and on the sorts of relationships that can be formed.

In this study, in line with my conceptual understanding of positioning as dynamic shifting and negotiated as introduced in chapter 3 above and the views of a number of writers engaged in debating issues around cultural positioning, I assumed the critical concern was not whether I occupied an insider or outsider position. Rather, that it was how I created an atmosphere of trust and respect and how this was uniquely worked out within each interview and in my evolving relationship with each participant over the year (Sharon et al ,2001; Shope, 2006; Manathunga, 2009). While it is conceivable that certain insider versus outsider positions may have been significant in the early stages of the project, as our relationship developed over the year, I believe these initial positions became less significant and evolved. Thus of more significance in terms of the data that was generated was not whether I was initially an insider with respect to the research setting and my relationship to these participants, but was the ways I sought to ensure that my on-going relationship with participants over the year was mindful, responsive and ethical. I will turn to a discussion of ethical issues in this research project below.

4.8. Addressing issues of ethicality and trustworthiness in the study.

Within an interpretative research tradition, and narrative inquiry as part of this, there is the clear acknowledgement that undertaking research is never neutral (see for example Reissman, 2008; Ezzy, 2002; Richards, 2003). Rather, it is recognized that this is a subjective process of interpretation and that as such it is not possible to apply the traditional criteria or validity and reliability associated with more scientific research

methodologies to assess the relative merits of a study. Nevertheless, while such terms as validity, or “the soundness of the study in terms of the degree to which it actually measures what it purports to” (Miller, 2008: ?) are not helpful in describing a way to assess the process and outcomes of interpretative study, it is widely acknowledged that issues of rigor still need to be addressed (see for example Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Gubrium & Holstein, 1997).

Within an interpretative research tradition it is increasingly common to adopt terms such as trustworthiness, credibility and authenticity in presentation of research designs and findings (Miller, 2008). Moreover, given the rejection of a neutral and value free stance with respect to research in the interpretative tradition, detailing attention to ethical issues is also seen as very important. For example, as Hesse-Beber & Leavy (2006) note, the trustworthiness and credibility of the research findings are determined in no small measure by the moral integrity of the researcher. In what follows, I will consider the ways in which I endeavoured to ensure that the study was ethical in its treatment of participants and in its re-telling of their stories to a wider audience and how this helped ensure its trustworthiness and credibility.

An important first step before embarking on the research project was to obtain ethical approval from the school’s ethics committee in the university where I work. In this I outlined my commitment to adhere to established conventions with respect to ensuring that participants consent to take part on this project was sought, that their right to anonymity and confidentiality were met, and that they were made fully aware of their right to withdraw at any stage. A copy of the ethical approval certificate obtained is shown in appendix 16.

With respect the precise steps I took in working with participants, at the start of the project, I first met with the group of students who I hoped would become the participants in this study and explained the proposed project to them, This was followed up with a written letter (shown in appendix 3), which was sent to them along with a consent form (shown in appendix 5), in which they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity and that the data generated would not be shared with any third party or employed for

any purpose other than the research study itself. At the second stage of the data collection, this process was repeated to ensure that anyone who wanted to withdraw could do so (see appendix 4 for a copy of the second letter sent to participants at this stage).

In the event, all of the 14 participants who took part of the study remained committed to the project throughout the data collection process, with the exception of the group interview stage from which, as explained in 4.5.2, 4 participants withdrew due to other work or personal commitments. In part I see this commitment as testament to their belief that despite the complex issues around my positioning vis-a-vis these participants, they perceived their treatment to be ethical and their rights to be respected.

Pursuing a narrative inquiry strategy as I did in this study also posed a number of ethical dilemmas with regard to the analysis and presentation of data. A central issue concerned the ownership of the stories in light of my decision to take an authoritative voice in my presentation of these, as explained above. Thus, a key concern was how I ensured the participants' stories were represented in ways that did not detract from their authenticity but also did not share information that made them easily identifiable to others. With regard to the first point, I ensured that my 'story of their story' included liberal reference to quotes from their own accounts. With regard to the second point, however, this was one I found more challenging to address.

A central concern was whether merely adopting pseudonyms was sufficient to ensure due attention to ethical issues with respect to the presentation of the findings, particularly given that their accounts touched on a number of sensitive issues. I discussed this with the participants during a final programme meeting and participants in attendance (the majority) were unanimous in the view that they wanted their voices to be heard and that they felt they had had adequate opportunity to edit out those aspects of their accounts that they did not feel were suitable for a wider audience. Their views are likely to reflect, as explained earlier (see (see 4.2 and 4.6 above) that data collection and analysis was an iterative process with one informing the other throughout the duration of the study and with participants invited to comment on summaries of previous

interviews at the start of each new round of data collection. As also explained earlier, (see 4.6.1.2 above) participants who provided me with access to their portfolios also indicated that they had done so voluntarily and felt I was 'free' to use this material. All things considered, I therefore decided to provide profiles which included information about their nationality and experience levels (as shown in appendix 8), but I decided to remove all reference to the year during which their sojourn took place in my discussion and presentation of the data.

A final point with regard to my commitment to ethicality in this project has been my attention to frank discussion of my positioning, stance and background (as detailed in 4.4.2 above and in chapter 1). As Clandinin and Connolly (2000) acknowledge this is important so the reader is clear as to who has authored the story that is presented and how their subjectivity inevitably impinges on the interpretation..

I believe the ethical stance outlined above is an important way in which I have established the trustworthiness of my approach to data collection and analysis and the credibility of my interpretation. I believe that this is further supported by efforts to be transparent and honest in my accounts of the various stages of data generation, analysis and interpretation discussed in depth in sections 4.6 and 4.7 above.

4. 9. Limitations of the study.

Any research design will carry limitations as well as potential advantages and there were inevitably a number of limitations with the design of the study as outlined above. Some of these I was aware of from the outset and others emerged from undertaking the study.

In deciding to adopt a narrative inquiry research strategy, I was aware that this was one lens among several that I could have employed to explore my research focus. I was aware too that narrative inquiry itself is, as with all research methodologies, is not without its limitations some of which have been alluded to above. That is to say, I did not embark on this project with the view that narrative inquiry would provide a clear route to truth or that it is necessarily more authentic as a research strategy than others

associated with qualitative research. I was also aware of an emerging counter-narrative movement spearheaded by Strawson (2004) who argues against the view of narrative as a primary means by which we construct our understanding of the world. This suggests rather that we live episodic existences, that is, in the moment, without constant reference to our past and sense of prospect. Nevertheless, I believe that narrative inquiry provided the best 'fit' with my own ontological and epistemological positioning as outlined in section 4.3 and with the understanding of learning as an on-going process of experience-action-reflection I have presented in chapter 3.

Narrative inquiry as Trahar (2008) acknowledges, is a broad church and, as I have outlined earlier in this chapter, there are a number of different traditions of narrative inquiry I could have adopted. My decision to adopt what Squire (2008:41) calls an experience-centred narrative and to adopt a thematic cross-case analysis in my primary analysis was informed in part by the research questions I was seeking to answer and as a way of increasing the credibility of the research for its intended audience (see 4.4.3 above). However, I am aware of the ways in which my analysis might have been strengthened by undertaking a dialogic/ performance analysis of the narrative accounts and how to have done so, would have generated a number of helpful insights regarding the construction of participants' identities and provided an additional lens through which to view their experiences. I am aware too of how the use of reconstructed third person narratives, as proposed by Trahar (2008) among others, might have addressed some of the ethical dilemmas regarding presentation outlined above. Nevertheless, while the approach taken to narrative research outlined above has drawn criticism from some who practice narrative research who argue that this can privilege the interpreters voice at the participants' expense, it is one that is widely adopted and is seen as one valid way to address issues around presentation of narrative accounts

A final limitation with the study design is the decision made early on not to interview the part time UK students in this programme. As will be shown in

chapters 5 and 6 below, UK students were mentioned in many accounts, and encounters with UK students were instrumental in generating different forms of learning for participants. In light of the increasingly prominent place given to promoting intercultural learning for all students in university internationalization strategies, and the sorts of issues flagged in studies which have looked into home students' response to increasing numbers of international students reported in chapter 2, I acknowledge this as an oversight and one I would seek to address in any future study I undertake.

Chapter 5. Experience and learning in participants' narrative accounts.

5.1 Introduction.

In this chapter, the first of two that presents the results of my analysis of the narrative accounts, I focus on the presentation of the results of the primary analysis of the data I undertook. That is, the cross-narrative thematic analysis of the 14 participants accounts of events and encounters during their sojourn and their perceived significance. These results address research questions 1 and 2 posed by this study (see chapter 4, 4.2 above). This is followed in chapter 6 with a secondary analysis of the 14 individual narrative accounts to examine a particular form of learning that is identified from this primary analysis in order to address my third research question, what participants learn about interculturality from their sojourn. Discussion of the findings presented in these two chapters will follow in chapter 7.

In this chapter, for the reasons provided in discussion of the data analysis procedure in chapter 4 above (see 4.6.3.1), results of the cross-narrative thematic analysis are presented under three main headings, reflecting the three broad categories of significant experience revealed from participants' accounts. The three main headings are: experiences prior to starting the sojourn; in-class experiences during the sojourn and significant out of class experiences during the sojourn. Within each of these a number of further sub-categories were identified. Under each theme and sub-theme the different significance attached to this by participants will be discussed and where appropriate general observations about the way this changed over the year will be indicated. Throughout, results will be supported with illustrative extracts from individual participants' narrative interviews, group interviews, and portfolio reflective papers and, where appropriate, with extracts from my own research log. Reference will also be made to the visual representation of participants evolving relational networks. Participants will be referred to by the pseudonyms provided in table 4.1 in chapter 4.

At the end of the chapter, details are provided of the different sorts of learning identified from this primary analysis following the procedure discussed in 4.6.3.2 in chapter 4 above.

5.2 Pre-programme experiences and their significance.

Many participants provided accounts of experiences prior to starting their Masters programme of study which were seen to orientate them towards and inform their learning in particular ways. Themes identified in their accounts were as follows:

- Sociocultural background
- Previous educational experience.
- Previous study overseas
- Undertaking a pre-sessional course
- Input from significant others (friends, family, former students, colleagues)

5.2.1. Socio-cultural background.

As recounted in chapter 4 and as can be seen from the table in appendix 8, participants were drawn from a variety of different socio-cultural backgrounds. It was interesting to note, however, that few made explicit reference to general cultural norms and values in their accounts or saw this as significant to their subsequent experience during their sojourn. Among the few who did, one participant, Song, brought this up in relation to his reasons for his perceived lack of in-class verbal participation. As he said in his third interview: "Students from oriental backgrounds are more conservative and I think this is why I am not always keen to talk in class". Similarly, Terence offered the following observation about Taiwan society in his account of why he chose not to sit with Taiwanese students in class:

I really don't like the society in Taiwan. The lack of distance means that people always like to gossip and so if I sit with them I can't broaden my mind.

(Extract from interview 3 with Terence)

Two participants made specific reference to their experiences of multiculturalism in their home cultures in their accounts. In both cases, they suggested that this brought them advantages in dealing with the multicultural composition of the group and life in the UK more broadly. For Baljinder, coming from Malaysia, she felt that the multicultural aspect of the course was something she was already familiar with and that she was therefore well used to living 'between cultures' and so this helped her to be orientated towards this. Eric also saw himself as familiar with what he called 'multiculturalism' as, as he pointed out in his first interview with me, he felt that because he was from a minority group within Taiwan he had acquired some important cross-cultural skills which he could apply to his experience of the course:

As a minority, if you can overcome some obstacles then you can adjust to new experiences very fast. After I go to the capital Taipei, after 6 months, I learnt to be like a Taipei person very quickly as I don't like people think I'm a minority. Here I am trying to copy your behaviour and try to forget where I am from.

(Extract from interview 1 with Eric)

5.2.2 Educational background.

In contrast to socio-cultural background, many participants made reference to their educational background, particularly in their baseline interviews and reflective portfolios. For some participants, this was cast in a negative light relative to the educational practices and expectations of the Masters programme in the UK. Thus for example, Linda, who was very critical of her former educational experiences in mainland China, argued that teachers in China didn't encourage contributions, meaning students were passive. Xiao Hua, also from mainland China, gave an example of this from her experience as a university student in China:

One of my Chinese teachers told us not to speak or ask questions in class otherwise she would forget what she was going to say. We were all afraid to make a sound in her class. You could even here the sound of a falling needle.

(Extract from Xiao Hua's portfolio)

For a few participants, however, certain educational practices encountered during their programme of study in the UK were contrasted negatively with those they had experienced in their home countries. Assessment practices in the programme here were singled out by Sami, for example, who questioned the suitability of essay writing as an assessment strategy for students like him who were used to an exam culture, which he deemed '*fairer*'. For Fah the issue was more to do with the clarity of the structures and a frustration that teachers here did not do what his teachers had done in Thailand. As he explained:

Fah: The way the teachers teach me here is different from Thailand. In Thailand teachers put what they are going to do on the board. They say, "Ok, students today we are going to do blah blah blah", and put it

Me: So you mean teachers don't do this here?

Fah: No, not really,

(Extract from interview 1 with Fah)

For a number of other participants however, notably, but not exclusively, those who had studied as post-graduates in their home countries prior to coming to the UK, educational practices were not seen as markedly different or significant. Sang-ho, who had studied a post-graduate course in Korea before coming to the UK for example, explained this in the following way:

We imported our education system from Japan and Japan imported this from England so the systems are not very different, we have to learn independently in Korea too.

(Extract from interview 1 with Sang-ho)

Similarly, several others, who had not studied as a post-graduate student prior to coming to the UK shared the view of Tina who remarked in her first interview: "the life of a student is the life of a student, it doesn't matter where you are". Several participants explained that they understood post-graduate study to be independent study as the following illustrative

extracts from their narrative accounts show:

I'm a post-graduate student. Of course I have to study by myself!

(Extract from interview 1 with Terence)

Graduate students have to study by themselves and so I felt this is normal when we did this here.

(Extract from interview 1 with Ayumi)

5.2.3 Previous study overseas.

Just under half of the participants had had prior experience of studying overseas before their current sojourn. For Linda and Xiao Hua this experience comprised a one year programme at a UK college and university respectively. For Xiao Hua, this had been a requirement of the final year of a B.Ed. she was taking in China, itself the result of a collaboration between a Chinese and British university. For Linda, this had been a one year teacher training and language improvement course based in a UK college of further education in the east of the country. Baljinder has also attended a UK university for a number of months as part of the requirement for her bachelor's degree. For Eric and Sang-ho, these experiences were also related to short courses they had taken in the UK in language and teacher training respectively some years previously. Finally, Terence, had spent several months in the USA several years previously and had just completed another masters' programme at the university where this study was conducted.

For these participants in general the significance of these experiences were due to the fact that they had broadened their mind and/or went some way towards familiarising them with new ways of working that helped prepare or orientate them to study on this programme. Linda, for example, in her first interview related how she saw this experience as '*extremely important*' as a way of orientating her to life and study in the UK which she described as '*totally different*' to what she had been accustomed to prior to then. She also mentioned how other students she encountered (from

Japan) provided alternative role models of how to study to those she had previously encountered. As she said:

I met Japanese students there and I could feel their advantage and this helped me change my study habits in ways that made me more successful.

(Extract from interview 1 with Linda)

For Xiao Hua, this was significant in a different way, as it made her aware of how isolated she was and how she felt she needed the support of fellow compatriots. As she said in her first interview: “the best thing about this was that we Asian students stuck together, I couldn’t have coped otherwise”. It is interesting to note how Xiao Hua continued to seek out students from her own sociocultural background in the first half of her year, and Linda to pointedly seek out those who were not, in a bid to enhance her learning skills and strategies. In other words, that their two very different previous experiences of studying overseas, continued to be drawn on and played out in their engagement with this new experience of overseas study.

Terence, who was the participant who had had the most extensive experience of previous study overseas as explained above, described the very different experiences of studying on a short course in the USA and for an MBA in the UK in the following way:

Terence: I had already been to the US and I found tutors and students quite helpful there. But in the Business School students were so awful and complained about our English. Students would say: “How can you come here and do an MBA, your English is so poor!”. We did lots of group work and they would say things like: “Your reading is rubbish!”

Me: How did you feel about that?

Terence: I didn’t argue with them I just tried to finish the course well. Eventually I decided it’s not my problem. I’m a foreign student. I did my best. At the end of the term all the English students went to the directors’ office to complain about the quality of the foreign students. Terrible!

(Extract from interview 1 with Terence)

The experiences in the previous masters programme Terence had undertaken were referred to on several occasions in subsequent interviews, chiefly as a means of contrasting his experiences here with those mentioned above. For example in the baseline interview he went on to say:

It's a totally different experience here. I was expecting it to be the same as the business school but I find teachers much more comfortable here.

(Extract from interview 1 with Terence)

It is interesting to note that among those who hadn't studied abroad previously there were different views of how helpful this would have been, as evidenced in discussions in the group interviews at the end of the year. The majority felt there was limited or no advantage as the following extract from a group interview illustrates:

Song: I don't think they get much advantage. It doesn't make that much difference.

Huang-Fu: I agree, I think they had some advantage in this course, such as knowing the marking system but only a brief one, not a long-lasting one.

(Extract from group interview)

Others felt they had been well-prepared by previous students who had studied here or in other western universities. Thus for example, Sami explained: "I didn't study abroad but I knew from my friends that the way of thinking is quite different.". Another participant, Tina, reflected that in her view: "it would only be helpful if someone had good enough English to take advantage of it." Finally, one participant, Ayumi, wondered if it was an advantage to come without having had any previous experience as this might mean: "you can look at things with a fresh eye and don't come with negative things and expectations".

5.2.4 The Pre-Sessional course.

All but 2 of the 14 participants had attended a pre-sessional course prior to starting the programme. Of these all but one had attended the programme run by the university's English Language Centre. The pre-sessional programme was mentioned by the majority of students as, as with previous study abroad, fulfilling an important role in orientating them to the norms and study practices they encountered during the programme. As to the two who hadn't attended this, one, Baljinder, who had already completed part of a previous degree above at a UK university, did not feel this had disadvantaged her. However, for another, Fah this was source of regret that he alluded to in several interviews. For example, as he remarked in the group interview:

I didn't do pre-sessional but I find that it is one thing you shouldn't miss. You get friends, you get accustomed to their language and you can shorten the time of the cultural shock.

(Extract from group interview)

For those participants who had not studied in the UK previously and/or had not previously been exposed to linguistically and culturally diverse student groups, their experience of the pre-sessional course programme were seen as highly significant in orientating them to their first term of study and beyond. As will be seen through an examination of a number of individual cases in chapter 6, participants choose to discuss these at length in their narrative accounts and reflective portfolio papers.

Two main themes were identified in accounts. Firstly, for those students who had never lived or studied abroad or had students from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds in their classes at undergraduate level in their own countries, the pre-sessional programme was seen to provide insights with regard to differences and similarities across different national groups. For most, they highlighted different learning styles in students from different countries which led them to contrast what students from their countries of origin typically did versus others. For example as Huang

Fu related:

I found some differences between Chinese students they don't have knowledge of how to contribute in their classes compared to others. Generally they are not active.

(Extract from interview 1 with Huang-Fu)

For one student, Ida from Taiwan, since all of the students in her class during the pre-session course did similar things and were all from other East and South East Asian countries, she concluded that all Asian students shared the same 'study style'. As she said:

When we attend class we are shy to speak out. So I found it's the same situation for other students from Asia. We have a similar study style.

(Extract from interview 1 with Ida)

The second theme, mentioned by the majority of participants who studied in the pre-session course related to the teachers. For some participants what was seen as most significant were the teaching approaches adopted which were new to them To cite Ida again, as she explained:

The writing teacher just gave us articles and let us discuss it. It was good because in my country the teacher just tells you what is important and you need to remember it but here we have to think about content and how to understand its importance and how to use it.

(Extract from interview 1 with Ida)

However, more frequent in participants' accounts was reference to the relationship between teachers and students. Some students were surprised to discover that western teachers were strict, as strict as teachers in their own country or more so. For Eric, as he explained, this was a pleasant surprise which led him to question assumptions and stereotypes:

In Taiwan we were told that western teachers are very flexible but actually they are not necessarily like that. They can also be strict like Taiwanese teachers. We were surprised to find that teachers in the

ELC were very organised and have a structured method - so it's a stereotype. It depends on the characteristics of the teacher, so we can't generalise.

(Extract from interview 1 with Eric)

In contrast, for Sang-ho this was less welcome and not what he had expected. As he said in his first interview: "I was surprised because the teachers are very rigid – relaxed on the surface but underneath they are very controlled."

Several students mentioned specific teachers who they cited as particularly helpful, friendly or supportive. For Huang-Fu, the friendliness of one teacher marked him out from the majority who he felt were unfriendly. As he said: "X teaches in a similar way to the way I know. He pays attention to students and their feelings. Most don't."

In contrast, for other students, it was the difficulties they experienced in relationships with specific teachers that they highlighted in their accounts. For example, Terence recalled an event with a teacher who he felt had been rude to him. As he said:

She had good knowledge but this is not enough. She said, your way of pronunciation is wrong, and she made me repeat in front of other students several times but never told me what was wrong. This made me feel uncomfortable. She's too emotional.

(Extract from interview 1 with Terence)

5.2.5 Input from friends, former students, family, and work colleagues.

Several participants mentioned the importance of friends, associates and family members in impacting on their decision to come to the UK to study, whether this took the form of encouragement or advice as to where to do their studies. Thus for example, Terence and Sami both recounted how former students had encouraged them to do the course and Sang-ho and Ayumi talked about advice they had received from a friend who had studied in the UK previously and a former teacher as important as the following quotes illustrate:

People told me to find a university with few Koreans. I think it is correct but I do feel lonely.

(Extract from interview 1 with Sang-Ho)

My teacher said to me if you want to learn practical things, go to a university in the UK.

(Extract from interview 2 with Ayumi)

The links to friends, colleagues, and family continued to be of great importance for many participants as they continued their journey through the year as will be discussed in section 5.3.4 below.

To sum up, previous experiences and encounters prior to starting the programme were mentioned by all participants. Broadly speaking, these were seen as affording them a set of expectations that orientated them towards their study during the programme. In many accounts these were also invoked as a point of reflective contrast between the new norms and behaviours they were encountering and those they had previously been familiar with, whether cultural, linguistic or in terms of teaching and learning practices. In particular, the analysis reveals that previous study overseas and enrolment on the pre-sessional programme meant that many had already engaged in an experience of interculturality prior to embarking on their Master study and drew upon this, at least initially, in making sense of experiences they encountered in the early part of the Masters programme.

5.3. In class experiences.

A number of themes with respect to in-class experiences which were seen to impact on learning in different ways were identified in the different narrative accounts. These were as follows:

- Programme content and structure.
- Assessment
- Pedagogic practice
- Relationships to others in class

- The multicultural nature of the classroom group

5.3.1 Programme structure and module content.

Almost all of the participants remarked on the programme content and structure and saw this as significant to their learning in different ways.

5.3.1.1 Programme structure.

With regard to the overall structure of the programme, only a small number of participants highlighted this in their accounts. For some this was to comment on particular features of the programme structure that they found helpful. Thus for example, Irene talked about how the mini conference undertaken with students from another nearby university had been '*really helpful*' and improved her discussion skills. For another participant, Gong, it was the school visit programme she singled out for attention. As she said:

The activity I most enjoyed this term was the school visit programme, especially the observation sheet and learning how to do observation. Also I couldn't believe how the children weren't shy and not afraid of making a mistake. I'm wondering why. I think maybe because they are western children.

(Extract from interview 2 with Gong)

In contrast two participants shared negative impressions of the programme structure, in both cases expressing a frustration with the inflexibility of the programme and the way they perceived this to infantilise them. For Eric, for example, contrasting this programme with a Masters programme his girlfriend was taking elsewhere, he remarked:

Here it's a bit like being in an elementary school. We have good relationships here with you all but you did force us to make choices at the start of the year. They are much freer in x university.

(Extract from interview 2 with Eric)

For Eric it appeared this feeling was temporary, however as towards the end of his stay, he referred to this again, saying:

We've moved from kindergarten to colleagues. We've grown up now and know how to do what we want. I now think we were well-supported rather than over supported. My girl friend I discussed this and the surprising thing for me is that she now wishes she'd had more support as we did here!

(Extract from interview 3 with Eric)

For Sang-ho the issue was more to do with the general approach to teaching during the programme. As he said:

The surprising thing here is that some lecturers treat us like elementary students. For example in x class we are just presented with ready-made foods. I thought we would have had the chance to create our own food.

(Extract from interview 2 with Sang-ho)

For Sang-ho this feeling was constant throughout the year. In his last interview he remarked on this again saying:

Yes, I still don't like the step by step way, though I know many students who do. It's like teacher training not teacher development. Less demonstration and more discussion, this is what would make it more like a masters.

(Extract from interview 3 with Sang-ho)

5.3.1.2 Module content

Many participants mentioned module content as informing their learning in different ways. Given that all participants were experienced teachers and that the content of the programme was closely aligned to their professional development, not surprisingly many participants described their learning in very practical terms. For many, modules were seen to provide the theoretical background to enable them to reflect on and critically evaluate previous teaching as the following examples show:

Above all I was very impressed with the theory of task-based learning. When I was team teaching in Japan the native speaker teacher did not give detailed explanations to students before activities. However, I realised this was task-based learning when I learned about task-based learning. I just did not know the theory of task-based learning before. When I experienced it here I could see its benefits.

(Extract from Ayumi's portfolio)

One of the most important issues I came across is motivation. It surprises me that motivation is one of the keys to successful language and that the teacher can contribute to this. I used to think that it didn't have anything to do with achievement too. So if the learner is not doing well in class that means she is unintelligent.

(Extract from Sami's portfolio)

For others, certain modules were seen to help participants develop new skills such as critical thinking and how to evaluate their practice as the following quotes indicate:

In the beginning I think I will just learn some teaching ways to take home to my country. But it's quite different. We don't just learn the teaching way but how to stand on higher ground and inspect all aspects of education.

(Extract from interview 2 with Linda)

The modules on methodology and psychology were especially useful and helpful to me. They made me reflect on my teaching and my role as a teacher. Now I look back I can see I treated my students as machines. This course has helped me notice my weaknesses and given me ideas for what to do about them.

(Extract from interview 2 with Gong)

Some of the very good professional knowledge I received here is I learnt how to evaluate my course book. I didn't do it before and now I can do this when I return to Taiwan.

(Extract from interview 3 with Ida)

For Fah, content provided on a module on Language Awareness had raised his awareness of how language might be used differently by

different people. As he said:

Regarding functionalism I found it quite interesting because I realised that the use of the language is important and that people might intend one thing and other people might hear it in another way.

(Extract from interview 2 with Fah)

Finally, for one student, Eric, a particular module, on the importance of developing a context-sensitive methodology, was seen to have a significant impact on him, as it helped empower him to see himself as a decision-maker as a teacher. As he said:

It made me feel relaxed. I realised that I am not excluded from the process of decision-making. Since the best method can be shaped by integrating different approaches, experiences and constant adjustment, this helped me see there was flexibility and choice and made me feel good about my role as a teacher.

(Extract from interview 3 with Eric)

5.3.2. Assessment.

The assessment mechanisms and the experience of success and failure with assessment were remarked upon by many participants as significant in their accounts. A view expressed by several was the pressure they felt in relation to an approach to assessment that relied almost exclusively on written assignments as shown in the programme overview in appendix 9. As Terence, for example commented: "It's a risky and demanding thing to have 100% of your score on assessment". However, for many participants, despite this, there was a sense that assignment writing was a major source of learning. Thus for example, Linda observed in her third interview: "There are too many assignments but this is a pressure that pushed my learning".

For some, this was seen to afford an opportunity to improve language skills. Thus, Sami, who also complained about assignment writing conceded: "The sheer amount has helped me develop a sort of automaticity in my writing". Other sorts of learning highlighted were, the development of self-discipline and autonomy (Sang-ho), Self confidence

(Song) and critical thinking (Xiao Hua) as the following extracts from their narrative accounts illustrate:

Assignments were one of the main things that made me change. They made me aware of how I can learn by myself and developed my critical thinking

(Extract from interview 3 with Xiao Hua)

Success gave me self-confidence and I even thought about going on to further study at one point. I found my opinions were better than some of the others from the marks I got so I found I had more confidence to listen to my own voice

(Extract from interview 3 with Song)

It led me to adopt new study strategies. It's a burden but it's also very good for self-discipline.

(Extract from interview 3 with Sang-ho)

Although some accounts of how assignment writing supported their learning were based on success with assignment writing, such as in the case of Song above, participants accounts of failure were also, not surprisingly, seen as significant to their learning. Several participants provided moving accounts of how they struggled to overcome failure and, move on to success (through subsequent resubmission). In many cases this presented students with a crisis of subjectivity leading them to a point of profound reflection on their language competence as well as their professional identity. Thus for example, Gong, explained:

It's a big shock for me. I've never had this experience of failure before and I can't sleep. People say never mind, but I do mind. It makes me think I'm poor at English and I must be a bad teacher. If one of my students gets a bad score I try to console them, like you do me but I can see that it really doesn't work now!

(Extract from interview 3 with Gong)

It was also the case however, that these experiences served as a spur for further learning. As Eric expressed, for example in his third interview:

I appreciate now that difficulties on the way to study are normal it's just that I hadn't had these before so I hadn't handled myself to take the pressure. I found a way through these feelings though and it's made me stronger than before.

(Extract from interview 3 with Eric)

Linda also explained how her failure made her more determined to succeed as the following extract from her third interview shows:

Me: Well you know you can resubmit your assignment, don't you?

Linda: Yes, I know, and I will. Some students asked me what will I do if I fail my assignment. I told them, "Even if I have to push this wall down I will finish this course" and I will.

(Extract from interview 3 with Linda)

5.3.3 Pedagogic practice

All participants made reference and attached significance to the experience of different pedagogic practices in their narrative accounts. Their comments were seen to reflect two main (and interrelated) themes which I have entitled *active participation* and *support for learning*. However, there was considerable variation across accounts as to the value of these and their personal significance to them.

5.3.3.1 Active participation

A requirement for active participation was identified by a number of participants to describe the pedagogic style of many of their classes. This was brought up in the context of discussions of the expectation for students' verbal participation and the practice of experiential and task-based learning, as well as group work and teacher questioning. It was interesting to note that many had formed a clear impression of the importance attached to participation in the programme by tutors, and clearly saw the ability and willingness to engage in verbal participation as a marker of their membership of this learning group. As the following extracts from the data illustrate:

I try to think of something I can say. If I speak I feel like a participant rather than just an auditor. Otherwise, I'll feel isolated and I am afraid you lecturers will forget us.

(Extract from interview 2 with Song)

If you can contribute more you will be more successful. At first I didn't understand this but now I do.

(Extract from interview 3 with Linda)

This had a range of different impacts on participants. The majority, like Linda professed that they felt positive about the active learning strategies employed, but some also explained that this was challenging, and this led them to prefer certain strategies over others. A further group of participants questioned and even contested the suitability of these practices to enhance their learning.

With regard to those who cast these in a positive light, some commented on how these created a stimulating, albeit demanding, learning environment. As Xiao Hua and Terence, for example recounted:

I wrote to my friend and told her "You never feel the dead air in the classroom here that you see in China".

(Xiao Hua, extract from interview 2).

This way of working requires a lot of energy and commitment but it really helps me learn.

(Terence, extract from interview 2).

Some participants made reference to particular practices they found most helpful. For a number it was the experiential learning approach adopted by many tutors that they found attractive. As Ayumi said, for example:

I feel I can't achieve directly. To me the meaning of practical things is to feel some experience. For some people it may be inconvenient but for me it's not – I learn through trial and error.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

Group work, something that many participants had not had a great deal of exposure to prior to coming to the UK, was cited as having a positive impact on learning for many. Something that was mentioned in many accounts was the way in which group work had helped participants recognise that they could learn from their colleagues. As Song indicated for example:

I feel it has helped me see how we can learn from each other. Learning from the teacher is more formal but learning from each other is informal and is something I found very helpful.

(Extract from interview 1 with Song)

In similar vein, Gong explained in her second interview how this helped her: “*see others as a learning source for me*”. Other benefits of group work mentioned were how it helped develop independence and provided a chance for everyone to participate as the following extracts from the data illustrate:

I was often too shy to speak in front of the whole class, but I could speak in groups, so it made me feel like I was a participant. You can learn more by talking and sharing ideas.

(Linda, extract from group interview)

Strong and weak students can help each other so everyone can speak

(Extract from interview 2 with Gong)

Group work helped me because it provided a safe space. A space to try out my ideas safely.

(Extract from interview 3 with Xiao Hua)

Finally, teachers’ questioning strategy was cited by several as beneficial, although, as will be discussed below, there were perceived to be better and less good questioning strategies adopted by teachers. Linda, for example explained this as follows:

Teachers ask a lot of questions and you have think about it. It makes you think. It's a kind of active learning and it makes me learn more deeply.

(Linda, extract from interview 2)

Similarly, Ayumi and Huang-Fu talked about how in coming to appreciate the importance of a 'questioning style of learning' this had led them to engage in asking more questions themselves and to challenge others ideas. As Ayumi stated:

I really like the way the questions asked make me think. It's made me try to ask more questions too. I get cross if I miss a chance, like today in the methodology class.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

I think the style of questioning here has been demanding for me, but I've really tried to change my participation. Like the other day, I was confused by the model the tutor presented on the board and so I asked a question about this. She said: "Good question, good point!"

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 2)

For others, the emphasis on active participation was something they did not always find useful. Thus for example, Fah, recounting his experiences of task-based learning, made the following observation:

What confused me was that what the teacher said was the outcome of the task might not be what I took away so my view and their view ended up different. If I can't see what the teacher is driving at, am I right or am I wrong?.

(Extract from interview 2 with Fah)

Several also mentioned how while they found active participation stimulating and supportive, it was also 'exhausting' and 'stressful' and for these reasons, some mentioned a loss in enthusiasm for this way of working as the year progressed as the following quotes illustrate:

I find my mind is kept very busy, even if I don't speak there is a kind of interaction in my mind. It's good but it's tiring too so I lost my enthusiasm as time went by.

(Song, extract from interview 3)

I participated less as time went on. I lost my motivation.

(Sami, extract from group interview)

There was also a mention by some of the factors that participants felt affected how far they embraced the active learning strategies promoted. One that was mentioned by several was language ability in relation to whole class participation as the following extracts from narrative accounts illustrate:

I can't think quickly enough and others get there before me.

(Gong, extract from interview 2)

My language is poor and this made me anxious. At the beginning I was so anxious it almost broke my thinking, to be honest.

(Linda, extract from group interview)

Whether the topic was interesting or something they knew about was also seen as a factor. For example, as Fah explained: "If I have no idea about the topic, I'd better keep quiet. If teachers want us to talk they should give us pre-reading". Class size was also seen as important by some participants and as affecting their willingness to contribute in class discussions. To quote Fah again: "Large classes mean that some students may not feel comfortable as they wait for a chance to speak that never comes". (Extracts from interview 2 with Fah)

Finally, it was also interesting to note that a number of participants clearly had some reservations about the role of verbal participation in learning and questioned whether this was necessarily evidence of learning as the following extracts from the data illustrate:

Does a lot of talk mean a high contribution? Are there other ways of doing contribution?

(Song, extract from group interview)

Not all kind of talk is relevant to the topic anyway and when I hear that kind of talk I feel it's stupid.

(Tina, extract from group interview)

Yes some students think of the frequency. Maybe they think if I talk a lot the teacher will say: "Mmm! Good student he talks a lot!"

(Fah, extract from group interview)

To be honest, after hearing others ideas, I try to think if they are useful to me and whether I want to respond. But mostly I don't.

(Sang-ho, extract from interview 3)

Participants also revealed reservations about specific classroom practices too. Thus, although broadly in favour of group work, some participants shared their concerns. Tanya for example stated:

I can see why teachers do group work as they think it can help students who are at different levels, but then my group might be really struggling to understand the meaning of a question and sometimes the guess might be wrong, but the teacher is taking care of another group.

(Tina, extract from group interview)

Several also mentioned how the benefits of group work as a pedagogical strategy depended on the nature of the relationship between participants in a given group. Thus for example, as Ayumi pointed out in her third interview: "If you get on well with people in your group then you are free to say things and you work well".

While as recounted above many participants saw teacher questioning as a good thing, they also held strong views about the different sorts of questioning strategies they observed teachers to use and which they felt impacted on their participation.

There are better and less good ways to ask questions. I like those questions that illuminate your thinking not just checking your knowledge.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 1)

Some lecturers solicit opinions and this is a good way. If you invite people they will have lots of opinions.

(Song, extract from interview 2)

I remember in x class, one of my first classes, x asked each of us in turn for our opinions. It was terrifying. I couldn't think of anything to say. I prefer teachers don't try to force me to speak with their questions.

(Tina, extract from interview 2)

5.3.3.2. Support for learning.

From the above, it is clear that the second major theme identified in participants' accounts of their experiences, support for learning, is closely related to the first, active participation. Thus in those accounts where participants identified issues or problems with the active learning pedagogic strategy promoted by teachers, it was, in part, a feeling that these provided inadequate support for their learning; either too much, or more typically too little. However, this also referred to other support strategies adopted by tutors such as tutorials, pre-reading lists and formative assignments. Below I will consider the major themes with respect to support for learning that were identified through my analysis of the narrative accounts.

The first of these was degree and nature of guidance provided and in particular their response to the self-directed and independent learning approach promoted. With regard to guidance, for some participants this

was not felt to be adequate, particularly during the taught phase of the programme. For Fah for example, there was a general feeling echoed by a number of others, that he was left to work things out for himself. As he said:

The system here is ok so long as you can accept it's based on self-responsibility, it's like: "here's a list of books now go and reach your potential!" I learned a lot from books and the computer but I'm also learning how difficult it is for me to feed myself.

(Fah, extract from interview 2)

This view was also shared by Baljinder who explained:

I guess that here I've learnt its more independent learning. I thought I would get lots of support and then I realised that the support wouldn't come and I had to do things by myself – and I wasn't that successful.

(Baljinder, extract from group interview)

In contrast, a few participants expressed very positive views about the nature of the guidance given as the following extracts from interviews with Sang-ho and Terence illustrate:

I like that it's not restrictive. I'm quite free and that makes me confident and opens me up to learning. I can branch out and do my own thing.

(Sang-ho, extract from interview 2)

I like lecturers to give us some issues to think about and let us know where the new research is.

(Terence, extract from interview2)

A second pedagogic strategy perceived to be unhelpful and singled out for attention in discussions of support in accounts was the lack of clear concrete answers to questions or solutions to teaching issues. A number of participants found this frustrating as the following extracts illustrate:

They [tutors] give us a clue and then help us through discussion to solve the problem but sometimes I'd like more input. I'm the sort of person who likes a direct answer.

(Eric, extract from interview 2)

Though we came to realise that there are many different factors that affect our teaching, 'It depends' disappointed and irritated me. We pay a lot of money to hear these words'.

(Sami, extract from group interview)

It was interesting to note that the different responses to the sorts of support for learning offered in part reflected assumptions about how much support they felt they should expect from tutors. For some, there was a view that since they were unfamiliar with the academic protocols of the new learning environment it was only right that they got a lot of support. However, for others there was an assumption that post-graduate students were supposed to be independent and therefore they did not feel a need to seek out support or did not have the right to seek out support as the following extracts illustrate:

Yes, of course, I need support. This is a new way of doing things for me. Without support I might fail.

(Ida, extract from interview 1)

I didn't expect much support from tutors as doing a Masters is very independent so I thought the support I got was more than I expected.

(Sang-ho, extract from group interview)

I think I should manage at first even if it was difficult as I am a post graduate student but now I might want to check something with my tutor.

(Tina, extract from interview 2)

I got scared and I thought if I want to get a reference from x university for a PhD I'll need not to ask for support or I may annoy them.

(Baljinder, extract from group interview)

For some participants, part of their learning journey was working out how to make use of the opportunities that were offered to them and to get accustomed to the support they were offered, whether this meant learning to take up the opportunities offered or learning to accommodate themselves to the (limited) support that they encountered:

It's human nature to rely on others but we had to adjust to what levels of support were available to us here.

(Huang-Fu, extract from group interview)

I worked out that if you wanted help you had to go and find it – it doesn't just come to you.

(Fah, extract from group interview)

When we got here we found that everything was so different we needed support and we tried to get it.

(Sami, extract from group interview)

For those who perceived this process as one of learning to adjust to less support than they were accustomed to, the majority claimed to develop a gradual acceptance of the support frameworks offered and to see what had initially been the challenging expectation that they had to work independently, as something which had helped them learn as the following extracts illustrate:

I realise that you can't be a helpless learner as in my country and I respect this now. It has been tough but it's helped me develop as a person.

(Baljinder, extract from group interview)

Me: What do you mean when you say it's different here from China?

Xiao Hua: In China students mainly just have to follow the teacher and depend on the teacher for support. I can give you an example. If a child falls off a bicycle in China we rush to help him but here we might leave them to pick themselves up by themselves.

Me: Oh, that's an interesting way to put it!

Xiao Hua: Yes. It's strange at first but now I really appreciate it.

Me: In what ways?

Xiao Hua: It's really helped me to see how I can stand on my own feet and learn by myself in the future

(Xiao Hua, extract from interview 2)

.It was also interesting to note that many saw their support needs fluctuating and changing over time as the following quotes illustrate:

Fah: At the very beginning the sort of support you need is not about academic areas but about feelings.

Tina: Yes! Emotional feelings!

(Fah and Tina, extract from group interview)

I still need some support. I'm not independent at a stable level. I need less now but different kinds of support.

(Baljinder, extract from group interview)

Maybe in the beginning the support is more about the method to be successful in the course and later its more about the content.

(Song, extract from group interview)

I've learned how to play the game now I don't need much support these days.

(Sami, extract from group interview)

As discussed above, pedagogic practices were seen to be significant to most participants, particularly in the first two terms of the programme, albeit in a variety of different ways. Group interviews towards the end of the year showed that while for some pedagogic practice continued to be very important, for others these were seen to be less so as the following quotes indicate:

Huang-Fu: Lecturers inevitably continue to have a great effect on my learning experience. This hasn't changed for me.

Xiao Hua: I agree. There were some styles of teaching that really helped me much more than others.

(Extract from group interview)

In the end the different teaching styles didn't affect me. I saw the class as just a small part of my learning.

(Sang-ho, extract from group interview)

5.3.4 Relationships to others in class.

Relationships to others in class were an important focus of all the narrative accounts and were seen to be significant in a number of different ways. As well as providing a sense of their general impressions of teachers, students and the class dynamic, many recounted particular encounters that they felt had a special significance to them.

Broadly speaking the relational aspects of individual learning journeys as well as the changing group dynamic over the year appeared to manifest a complex and evolving interplay between a host of factors which included among others a developing a sense of trust or openness, a renegotiation of power, and willingness to take risks in the face of challenges. I will consider these things first with respect to participants accounts of their relationships with their tutors and then with other students.

5.3.4.1 Relationship with tutors.

There was a clear sense that teachers played a very important part in their experience of in-class learning. Not just in terms of their pedagogic practices and support with programme content and structure, but also in setting the emotional climate for the classroom.

The fact that participants were practicing teachers themselves appeared to be at least part of the reason why this was accentuated in almost all accounts and why many elected to recount individual encounters with teachers in their interviews.

Many participants made reference to the positive qualities of teachers in general and the ways this had helped them reflect on ways to improve their own teaching. These included for example their professionalism and their enthusiasm as the following quotes illustrate:

X is always so organised. I do admire her because she always controls the teaching pace and atmosphere appropriately. This is something I can strive to do.

(Eric, extract from his portfolio)

I respect what you teachers do. You work very hard and you are up to date in your knowledge. Since I'm a teacher it's really good to see things like this as it makes me think about my own work from a different perspective.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 1.)

Teachers believe in what they do. Their teaching style comes from them. They are enthusiastic about things.

(Fah, extract from interview 3.)

However, the qualities that were most referred to as significant in participants' accounts related to the building of rapport and what was felt to be an appropriate classroom atmosphere. These included the personality and approachability of the teacher as Huang-Fu and Baljinder

explained:

X is so warm to us. Just simple things like saying hello make us feel welcome.

(Huang-Fu, extract from portfolio)

You teachers are so diplomatic – even if students have a bad idea teachers will look for something positive to say. It's a very encouraging thing.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 1).

Another theme that emerged was an appreciation for being treated in what Fah referred to as 'a democratic way' as the following extracts highlight:

I admire the way you all maintain a fair atmosphere.

(Eric, extract from interview 2)

In my country there is a hierarchy but here you interact with us human to human.

(Sami, extract from interview 2)

There was a clear sense that the vast majority saw the sort of relationship that they formed with teachers as having a significant impact on learning. For Gong, for example, this was seen as critical as she explained:

A good teacher is one who can treat all students equally and love them, if a student loves a teacher then she loves her lesson. It's simple.

(Gong, extract from interview 3)

Others concurred as the following extracts from interviews with Tina and Terence illustrate:

If you like the lecturer you will get more from him. If you talk to someone who is hard to get along with, it makes it harder to learn.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

Learning is linked to emotions. Even if the lecturer prepares well if he is cold it creates a poor feeling.

(Terence, extract from interview 3)

Several participants discussed tutors who they had found it difficult to get along with. These tutors were described variously as 'cold' 'unfriendly' 'aggressive', 'demanding', 'too serious', 'scary' or, in the case of two tutors who were not part of the TESOL team who taught the group with other Masters students, as Tina put it: "not interested in us as people" (extract from interview 3).

Many accounts suggested that the perceived informality and close distance between teachers and students in many classes and in the programme as a whole helped build a good rapport which had a positive knock-on effect on their learning, as well as generating opportunities to learn about relationship-building itself. Thus for example, several talked of the link between a developing relationship of trust with tutors which they felt had benefited their learning. For example, Tina explained:

At first I might want to ask tutors about how to answer academic questions but then I got confident to ask about other things – like personal problems and this made me feel more secure and confident in class.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

Similarly, Eric recounted at length how teachers' practices and actions led him to transform his expectations of 'western teachers'. As he explained:

I was mistrustful at first but now I respect what teachers do. I wrote in diary that CLT in Taiwan is like bullshit and I shared this with my girlfriend and we agreed. I assumed that you would be advocating CLT and I was resistant to this as in Taiwan I didn't think it was very effective. I thought you would try to sell us CLT. But I found we were given information we could use rather than having a way imposed upon us and this led me to trust teachers.

(Eric, extract from interview 3)

One participant, Baljinder, talked of the importance of a relationship she had built up with a tutor who did not have English as a first language and how supportive she had found him to be. As she explained:

I like having a lecturer who is like me, not a native speaker. I told him that I felt like a failure and he didn't like it when I said that. He told me not to be so tough on myself and this really motivated me to carry on.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 3)

However, even where encounters with tutors were less successful, it was interesting to note how these were seen to provide a source of critical reflection by many participants. This was the case for Terence, for example who developed a dislike of a tutor early in the first term. I recorded the following in my research log with respect to Terence's decision to drop a module after only two weeks in the first term:

Terence came to see me today to say he wanted to drop out of x module. At first he said it was because he didn't find the content interesting but then suddenly admitted that it was because he felt unable to work with this tutor. His main objection seems to be because x was insisting that he buy a particular text book and when asked if it was essential was told that it was. I can't work out exactly why he is so upset about this but since this is an optional module and he is determined to drop it, I've agreed.

(Extract from researcher's log)

In the second interview I had with this student in term 2, when this event was discussed again, it seemed that the student had spent some time reflecting on this as shown below:

I make up my mind very quickly about people. I can tell whether I like a person immediately. But I can change. I didn't feel very confident at that time and I didn't like the book. I had a session with him this term and I found him quite good.

(Terence, extract from interview 3)

For another student, Fah, it was the frustration he experienced with a lack of clarity in a particular session that led him to take what he perceived to be the risky step of emailing the tutor to ask for clarification as the

following extract from the second interview I undertook with him shows:

Teachers don't always do things in order. I've got a problem with that. I expect to get things in order and then I don't. I had a problem with x. I talked to Eric and said: "Shall I email him?" Eric said not to do that. He might get angry with you. But anyway, I sent the email and asked him what he would do in the next session so I could prepare. He replied and suggested some books and next time he was more in order. Amazing!

(Fah, extract from interview 2)

Accounts also revealed other ways in which participants were proactive in managing their relationship with tutors. A theme that was brought up by many participants was their efforts to be mindful of a need to save the face of the teacher. This might take many forms, such as responding to questions when the rest of the class is silent as Sami explained:

Sometimes I do it because the teacher expects someone to do it and no one else does it. So I do it so as not to embarrass the teacher.

(Sami, extract from interview 2)

For others, it was keeping silent even when they were unhappy with something that was happening in class as the following extract from a group interview indicated:

Sang-Ho: When I feel bored I don't try to show my feelings. I try to show I'm interested by nodding and smiling

Tina: Yes! Try to keep her happy.

Sang-ho: Yes, I didn't want to hurt her feelings.

Tina: Yes, try to protect the face of the teacher, right?

(Sang-ho and Tina, extract from group interview)

It was also interesting to note how silence was also invoked by several as a way of passively resisting a teacher that they did not get on well with. Again, with regard to the two tutors who were not from the TESOL team, several talked about a process of non-cooperation, something that was also relayed to me by these tutors:

The group didn't cooperate. We felt they were time-wasting and to be honest I felt they were scary - a bit aggressive.

(Ayumi, extract from interview, 3)

We felt they didn't like us so no one wanted to work for them.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

5.3.4.2 Relationships to other students.

As explained in chapter 4 (see 4.6.3.1), in each of the individual narrative interviews, participants were asked who they liked to work with and felt close to in the group. The two diagrams in appendices 6 and 7 present a visual representation of the evolving relational network during the year. Appendix 6 presents the results of this process after the second interview (in January, at the start of the second term) and appendix 7 represents the ways in which participants networks in class had evolved by the time of the third interview in May.

From these, perhaps not surprisingly, it is evident that the overall relational network for the group became denser with time with most participants claiming a greater number of affiliations. It is also possible to see how whereas in January some participants mainly claimed affiliation with students from the same national group, by May, there were many more cross-national affiliations. Similarly, while in January few of the students mentioned UK students as people they liked to work with, by May more indicated that they were now 'networked up' with these students.

While, inevitably these diagrams can only provide a broad snapshot of the process of relationship building that participants went through, they are a useful way of contextualising the different themes with respect to relationship building that were seen to emerge from my analysis of participants' narrative accounts and will be referenced as appropriate in the presentation of the themes identified from an analysis of the narrative accounts. These included relationship to UK students and the impact of national groupings on relationship building amongst a number of other contributing factors as will be discussed.

Relationship to UK students.

As explained in chapter 4 and as shown in table 4.1, there were a number of part time UK students enrolled on the programme who the participants in this study encountered in different modules throughout the academic year. Typically only one or two UK students would be enrolled on a given module with the exception of one module in term 1 in which 4 UK students took. In addition, in term 2 there were several optional modules in which no UK students were enrolled. The vast majority of the participants made reference to these students in their accounts, whether collectively or individually, and clearly saw their presence as significant to their learning in a number of different ways.

In the main, participants referred to UK students as native speakers, a term that has often been adopted to distinguish between those who are first language speakers of English in the TESOL field, although widely acknowledged as problematic for various reasons (see for example Rampton, 1990; Davis, 2003 for a discussion of this). This reflected a number of ways in which they were seen as a distinctive group, especially in the early stages of the programme. In early interviews in particular, there was a clear sense that participants found it challenging to work with these students because they found it difficult to understand what they said as the following extracts from narrative interviews indicate:

Huang-Fu: I sit with native speaker students sometimes but I don't always feel that they want to talk to me.

Me: How does that make you feel?

Huang-Fu: Not very happy. I think maybe they think I am stupid.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 2)

I never knew that students could talk so much. I find it a bit intimidating.

(Song, extract from interview 2)

These students were also seen as outspoken by some participants as the

following quotes illustrate:

I'm surprised by their opinions. I wonder how they can say that to the teacher. I feel students here can say anything!

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 1)

They are confident and not afraid to speak out and this makes me feel very critical towards us Taiwanese students.

(Eric, extract from interview 2).

There was also a clear sense in which participants afforded their UK classmates an elevated status, at least initially. For example, Baljinder and Huang-Fu made the following observations:

To be honest I mostly only concentrate on what the native speaker teachers say and I'll make a big effort to listen to them.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 2)

We listen more to native speaker students. We want to know more about them and their ideas. We accept what the teachers give us but they challenge the teacher and we want to know why.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 1)

There was also a feeling for some that tutors too conferred a higher status on UK students as for example the following comment from Terence illustrates:

Lecturers normally look at the home students first for answers. They assume they know more than the others or have better language proficiency.

(Terence, extract from interview 1)

For many participants, these feelings of inadequacy led them to elect, where possible, to work with other international students. For example, as Tina explained: "I sit with Fah and Ayumi or Song or Ida because I don't have to worry about my grammar or anything". Similarly, Baljinder commented: "In groups without native speakers there is less fear and less

constraint”, and Song, that this was because: “They are too talkative and I can’t have a chance to speak”.

In contrast, however, some made a conscious effort to work with these students. While as Linda observed, for example, working with UK students was ‘challenging’ she saw this as ‘a good thing’ and as Eric remarked with regard to his contribution in class: “Some say the British students beat us to it, but I see this as a challenge in a good way and I try to get faster myself”.

As is evident from the visual representation of the relational network undertaken in May, it is evident that more participants indicated that they liked to work with or felt close to UK students, although none saw these students out of class as is evident from their accounts of their out of class experiences reported in section 5.4.1 below. However, as is equally evident from the second of the relational network diagrams, three out of four of the UK students remained outside of the network. Certain UK students were singled out as being ones they liked to work with. Susan, for example was mentioned by several as having a good knowledge of East Asia as Tina explained. She has been in Japan for many years and knows how to communicate with people like me. Similarly, Rachel was seen as very supportive by several participants as Ayumi explained: “Rachel supports us a lot, she’s very patient and I really appreciate her as she’s very supportive”.

More broadly, Sami and Terence offered the following observations about the UK students:

While it’s true that some do not allow us time to collect our thoughts before we speak, some are very good and very supportive.

(Sami, extract from interview 2)

Compared to the business school all of the native speaker teachers here are very tolerant – they are used to working with international students and that makes a difference.

(Terence, extract from interview 1)

From a different perspective, several students explained that as their language proficiency had improved they had felt able to branch out more. As the following extract from the third interview with Xiao Hua illustrates: “Though I did find them fast, sometimes what they say is very enjoyable so I tried to sit with them more in term 2 once my language was a bit better”..

It was interesting to note how by the time of the group interviews in July, many participants had moved to reposition themselves with respect to UK students and no longer felt intimidated by them as the two extracts below show:

Tina: At the beginning I was very afraid of having native speakers in the classroom because I was not very confident about my speaking ability. But now I've changed my mind. I tell myself I may not be perfect, but it doesn't matter. At least I can express my ideas and communicate with them.

Fah: I feel the same way. I was afraid of how I express myself and also I might not fully understand what they are talking about at the beginning.

Tina: Why did we have to pretend that we can understand what they are talking about? I always did that at the beginning.

Sang-ho: Yes, I agree with you. I felt like that at the beginning but after a time I came to realise that they are just people.

Tina: Yes, just people with their own personality. Even in Taiwan I can't understand people's accents sometimes. So I think about it like this and came to see them as normal.

(Extract from group interview)

Baljinder: Do you like to work with native speaker teachers?

Terence: Yes, I don't mind

Baljinder: I came to England for that. We are language teachers we have to try to reach their standards.

Terence: You came to England for that! More than for the Masters?

(pause).

Actually, when I first came to the UK it was merely to learn to use the language they do but now I see it as a conversation tool only and I don't need to use their model. Native speakers have English as their language but so what? I should just communicate and not worry about that.

Sami: It's not your language anyway.

(Extract from group interview)

These would seem to suggest that they were transforming their perception on language as a marker of distinction between themselves and these students. While for some, as illustrated by the first of the two extracts above, this appeared to lead them to find common ground between themselves and students from the UK, for others this led them to contest the mantle of inferiority they had assumed earlier in the year.

However, it was also the case that not all participants transformed their perceptions of UK students over time. This was the case for Song, for example for whom an early encounter appeared to have a considerable impact. He related this in the following way in his second interview:

One time in class I said something not very well. I said 'children don't think very much'. I meant that they just follow the teachers' instructions. But x (a UK student) disagreed with me and in public and I didn't feel very comfortable. That's had an impact on me. If this is my best opinion, they should respect it. For me, even if I don't agree with someone, I won't deny them their opinion.

(Song, extract from interview 2)

In his later interviews he appeared not to have shifted his views as the extract from his third interview suggests:

This term there have been fewer native speaker teachers in my modules and this was better. The classes were not so tense. The atmosphere was more relaxed and maybe people's opinions were not so strong or aggressive.

(Song, extract from interview 3)

5.3.4.3 Nationality groups in class and their impact on relationship building.

Nationality grouping was an important theme that was seen to emerge from analysis of the data. As table 4.1 in chapter 4 shows, out of the 14 participants in the study 5 were from Taiwan and 4 were from China, with the remaining 5 being from Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. Although a comparison of the two relational network diagrams in appendices 6 and 7 shows that national affiliations did not preclude participants from networking with participants who did not share their nationality over the duration of the programme, nonetheless, this had an important impact on the developing group dynamics and the presence of large numbers of Chinese speaking students was remarked on many participants. For some this was seen as a positive thing but this was also viewed as negative by a number of participants for a variety of reasons.

The relational network undertaken at the start of term 2 (see appendix 7), shows that in the early months of the sojourn, for many participants, working with others who shared their nationality, was a preferred option. As Gong related in her first interview, for example: "I don't know how other students are finding things. I only talk to Huang-Fu and Xiao Hua. It's easier to sit with them and I feel more comfortable". Similarly, Ida remarked: "We [Taiwanese] are facing a strange situation here and we can help each other to feel more comfortable and safe if we stick together".

However, it was also possible to detect a sense in which for some these nationality networks were felt to constrain participants over time too. Thus for example Sang explained how he might want to sit with other students but that it would be "embarrassing to change groups" as it might offend some people. Similarly, Huang-Fu explained how when he changed his place, he found that others, notably Gong and Xiao Hua "followed" him. The complex dynamics of these nationality networks was brought into sharp relief by the decision of two participants, Linda, from China and Terence, from Taiwan, to make a conscious decision to branch out and sit with participants from other nationalities from the outset and how doing so

made them unpopular with their compatriots.

In Linda's case this was, she claimed motivated by a desire to get the most out of her year in the UK. As she explained:

I am very familiar with people who come from China and I would like to learn things from other people. Different people have their own unique advantages and I would like to learn something from them.

(Linda, extract from interview 2)

While as her tutor this did not appear to pose problems for her in class, it became apparent that her decision was viewed negatively by her fellow nationals. Thus for example, Gong explained in her third interview:

At Chinese New Year we all got together to celebrate but she didn't come. We invited her but she doesn't want to come. She is always busy. She never told us anything about her family. It's very strange!

(Gong, extract from interview 3)

Similarly Huang-Fu commented:

I have no relationship with her. I never speak to her. She rejects my assistance. I can't understand her attitude.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 3)

In a similar way to Linda, Terence also wanted to explore what he called: "a new way of being" and this also made him unpopular with other students from Taiwan. He explained his perspective in the following way:

I spent some time in the American system and I thought, "why can't I be like them? Eat my lunch on my own, go to the beach on my own and so on". I don't like the way the Chinese students have to do everything together. I just want to me and not a cultural being. I really don't like the society in Taiwan. People always like to gossip and so if I sit with them I can't broaden my views.

(Terence, extract from interview 3)

One participant, Fah who spent a lot of time with other Taiwanese students summed up the view of several Taiwanese participants with

respect to Terence like this:

They think Terence is a symbol of individualism. A one man show. He isn't popular. He extremely be himself. I have my way – take it or leave it.

(Fah, extract from interview 3)

Those participants who were not from these nationality groupings also appeared to be affected by the nationality make up of the group. Several explained how they had, at least in the early stages felt a bit isolated and would have liked to have had someone from their own country to support them. As Ayumi explained: “It made me felt a bit lonely”. Several other participants made reference to what Sang- ho called ‘the Chinese block’. Thus for example, Sami, who commented:

Sami: I've seen the situation with most of students from South East Asia sitting together. It's hard to understand how they think, how they work and why t they do like this.

Me: Does it affect you, then?

Sami: It makes me feel a bit excluded

(Sami, extract from interview 2)

5.3.4.4. The impact of other relational networks on initial and shifting affiliations in class .

A number of other things that were mentioned as factors affecting participants in-class affiliations and networks initially were not surprisingly, perhaps, which accommodation block they were housed in, with several mentioning this as significant as the extract from Tina's portfolio exemplifies:

After the class today Song, Eric, Ayumi, Ida, Fah and I walked together to John's House [a student accommodation block]. As Fah said: “We are the John's House group of TESOL”. I like this group because the atmosphere is very nice and friendly we are always laughing and joking.

(Extract from Tina's portfolio).

Another important source of affiliations in the early stages of their sojourn was those people who they knew from their time on the pre-sessional group. As Song, for example explained, his decisions as to who to sit with in class were: “partly based on who I know from Johns’ Court, but also those I was in class with in the pre-sessional programme, I feel close to them”.

Other factors highlighted in their accounts of their early networks were who they felt were more or less friendly, or more commonly, more or less helpful or more or less expert and experienced as the following extracts from the data illustrate:

Eric is so nice. He told me not to worry about my grade and just concentrate on getting the degree.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 2)

Sami is the most helpful student in this class. If I don’t know something I can always ring him.

(Linda, extract from interview 1)

I find Huang-Fu and Sang-ho is the ones I like to talk to they are really experienced and knowledgeable.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

I like to work with Huang-Fu as I know I am weak and I can learn from him

(Gong, extract from interview 3)

With respect to their shifting affiliations over time, as with the move to work with UK students discussed above, many participants commented on their efforts to branch out in the second term as their confidence grew as the following extracts from interviews with Xiao Hua and Fah illustrate:

I'm happy to work with anyone now. When my confidence improved I decided to move around more. I like working with everyone now. I can find something new and interesting from everyone.

(Xiao Hua, extract from interview 3)

In the second part of the course I started to move around. I wanted to explore a new world I realised there were lots of people I could learn from.

(Fah, extract from interview 3)

Participants expanding in-class networks, inevitably led to their engagement in relationship building across linguistic and cultural diversity and all participants saw this as a significant part of their experience as I will discuss below.

5.3.5 Perceived benefits of the multicultural nature of the group.

Participants were unanimous as to the broad positive benefits they perceived to accrue from studying in a multicultural class group and many cited this as an important source of learning for them. Sang-Ho echoed the views that many appeared to hold by the end of the year when he stated in his third interview: "It may sound simple to say this but difference is interesting and I like it!" Key points of general learning cited were an appreciation of similarity across difference and an appreciation of multiple perspectives. In addition, participants also mentioned a number of discreet benefits their experience of interculturality in the programme had brought them. These will be discussed in turn below.

One perceived benefit, and point of learning mentioned by several was the recognition that there was similarity in perspectives across difference as the following quotes extracts from the data illustrate:

I realised that people everywhere face similar problems to me, but have different ways of dealing with these. It's really valuable to my learning.

(Gong, extract from third interview)

People have similar ideas even though they are from different cultures. We can feel the similarities between us. Before I came here I often wondered what teachers from other places thought and now I have had a chance to discover this. People have the same concerns, the same issues. The only thing that is different is the language.

(Sang-ho, extract from interview 3)

For two participants, an appreciation of this appeared to enable them to see beyond culture. That is to transcend a sense of themselves and others as cultural beings:

Meeting different nationalities opened my eyes wider. We are the same. We are people who just have different cultures. It's made me think in different ways.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 3)

It's not just about culture, it's the feeling you have for people. We are all people in the end.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

Others expressed this in terms of being able to see multiple perspectives as the following extracts from interviews with Fah and Sami illustrate:

I can see multiple perspectives and different ways to solve the same problem. I can get a lot of ideas from every student, even though their backgrounds are different.

(Xiao Hua, extract from interview 2)

We all look at things from different angles. Now I think we can stand in each other's shoes.

(Sami, extract from interview 3)

At first you might think their ideas are not acceptable but now I think that maybe they just have another perspective.

(Fah, extract from interview 3)

Another benefit of studying in a multicultural student group mentioned by several was how this had made the more aware of their tendency to

stereotype people and the need not to pre-judge people. Baljinder explained this in the following way:

A learning thing for me has been not to pre-judge people. Initially when I came here I thought the only good students were UK students. But now I realise that all of them are good in different ways. I think I've learnt to be more tolerant to other cultures. I started to realise that the Asian students are a mixed group, some mature and very intelligent. Some like bookworms even.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 2)

and:

The other day I was talking to Deep. When I first came I was always looking up to him because he was a native speaker but I told him: "Well, anyway, I don't feel you are so great anymore just because you are a native speaker. I was thinking we are all the same now!

(Baljinder, extract from interview 3)

Similarly, Terence offered the following observations in his third interview:

Terence: I learned not to give my judgement too fast.

Me: Did you? Can you give an example of when this happened?

Terence: For example, we have a lot of servants from Thailand working in my country. I realise that I thought of them as uneducated. But working with Fah has shown me that this isn't the case at all. I am stubborn in my thinking and I make up my mind quickly. But I've learnt that I can change my points.

(Terence, extract from interview 3)

Several others felt they had become more accommodating of others as a result of their experiences too, as the following extracts from interviews with Sami and Eric illustrate:

I noticed something really interesting since I last talked to you, I discovered I adjust my language and my conversation style according to whom I am talking.

(Eric, extract from interview 2)

You can't expect that everyone can articulate their ideas easily. It's important to be patient and polite.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 3)

Finally, one participant, Gong, described how she felt she had learnt how to challenge stereotypes and cultural 'insults' through argument and discussion. She related an incident with one UK student who had spent some time in China and had told her that he didn't like the food in the following way:

Gong: It's quite common for people to hold different views but I can discuss or challenge things. One time x said: "Chinese food is rubbish". He only went to restaurant one time! I told him to go to other places and he might change his mind.

Me: What did he say, when you said that?

Gong: He agreed to give it a try. I've learnt that I can challenge people if I get cross. Anger won't solve the problem but discussion can.

(Gong, extract from interview 2)

For some, however, when faced with a feeling of incommensurability across difference a preferred strategy was to keep silent or to even withdraw as the following examples, taken from interviews with Fah and Sami, illustrate:

Fah: You realise the way you think may not be compatible with the way the rest of the world thinks. Like for example with my assignment for x. She said my argument was not convincing, I disagree with her actually.

Me: Did you talk to her about this?

Fah: No.

Me: Why not.

Fah: I don't know. Maybe no time.

(Fah, extract from interview 3)

In my own cultural group I can do things which I am not sure if they will be acceptable to others. I remember during a discussion with x I thought I could feel very comfortable with him but one time I found he was very serious about something when I was joking. It's not a problem, but it makes me realise that I need to be careful. The main thing I learnt is that there are cultural differences. I can do things in my own cultural group that I am not sure that others would accept so I prefer to stay in these, really.

(Song, extract from interview 3)

Finally, there was also a feeling from some participants that while they were aware of the potential for learning that the intercultural setting afforded them, they were unable to really engage with this for a number of reasons. Firstly, due to a lack of time, or preoccupation with other more pressing aspects of their experience, including, for example, assignment writing. As Xiao Hua said for example: "This is a chance to meet people from other cultures but I have so much work to do I have little time to chat to them freely". Similarly, Ida observed: "There are so many assignments to do I can't relax to talks to others." Another important factor mentioned by a number of participants was the impact of language on their ability to engage with others. Song's comment below echoing the view of several participants:

It's harder to make a connection with people if your language is poorer. I'm afraid that I might indirectly say something that is impolite. It tends to mean we have shallow and not very deep relationships.

(Song, extract from interview 3)

Reflecting on participants in-class experiences reported above, it can be seen that while pedagogic practices were mentioned by many, relationships were also seen as of great importance in their accounts, particularly those forged across linguistic and cultural diversity. However, the findings reveal that while the classroom provided a shared forum of experience for participants, there was enormous variability in the ways participants perceived these to be significant and in the strategic responses they adopted to manage these over time. I now turn to the third major experiential theme identified, their out of class experiences and the

significance the attached to these. As will be shown, these were an important part of their overall experience of their sojourn, providing distinctive learning opportunities in their own right but also intersecting with these in-class experiences in complex ways informing their overall learning trajectory over the year.

5.4 Out of class experiences.

Many participants made reference to out of class events and encounters in their accounts of their experiences during their sojourn and these were seen as significant in different sorts of ways. Some mentioned events and encounters they self-initiated whether to seek support for learning requirements of the programme, or to try to expand their social networks. However, others reported on the unintended and incidental learning that occurred from events and encounters that took place as they went about their daily life.

Analysis of participants' narrative accounts highlighted a number of experiences as informing their learning. These, discussed in detail below, were: contact with class members out of class, contact with other students, contact with others who were not students, and contact with people at home during their sojourn.

5.4.1 Out of class contact with class members.

The majority of students reported contact with other class members in their accounts of their experience. As explained above, many were living in university halls of residence and initially formed strong bonds with other members of the class who shared their accommodation. While these networks remained very important over time they also evolved into a more general support and friendship network. Contact might refer to sitting and having coffee after class with other members of the class, emailing each other to locate a library book they wanted or calling each other for support with their work. Thus for example Ayumi explained: "I really like to sit and chat to others in the coffee bar, these days. I really feel I can chat to

everyone these days". Similarly, Linda moved from relying largely on Sami for support to ringing Eric or Fah too if she had a problem

It is interesting to note, however that while, as mentioned in chapter 4, students were placed in study groups and given group tasks to work on at the start of the first term as way of encouraging just this sort of supportive networking, these were rarely sustained over and beyond the first term. A reason offered for this by Song was because "since we weren't given tasks by you, we lost direction and stopped meeting". Similarly, as observed above (see 5.3.4.2) that while some formed relationships with UK students in class no one mentioned these students as people who they had contact with out of class.

5.4.2. Out of class contact with other students at the university.

Many participants made reference to other students who were not participating in their programme of study in their accounts with respect to their out of class experiences. This included doctoral students and former students on the Masters in TESOL programme who were still in the city, working or completing their dissertations, or other students who were in their accommodation blocks. In addition, some made reference to friends from home who were undertaking post-graduate study in other UK universities. These different contacts were almost always cited as providing different forms of support for participants. With one notable exception, all of the students mentioned were fellow international students.

As mentioned above, the development of a supportive network was seen as very important for most of the participants and doctoral students or former students were seen as helping to 'smooth the way' in many cases. As Gong explained for example with regard to a former student from the previous year who was still working in the city:

I told Mei [a former student] that every day I feel I am changing and I don't know who I am anymore. She told me she felt the same way when she first got here and that helped me to feel more calm.

(Gong, extract from interview 1)

Similarly, Fah talked about his frustration with the internet connection in his room not working and how a PhD student from Thailand had reassured him that this was 'normal' and 'to be patient'.

It was interesting to note from accounts how some participants clearly branched out and expanded their out of class networks in the same way they appeared to do in class. This might entail reaching out to other international students of the same nationality taking other courses in the university, as was the case with Ida who, by the end of term 2, claimed to spend most of her time socialising with Taiwanese students studying business and finance. However, it was also evident in their getting to know students of other nationalities in their accommodation blocks. Thus for example, Linda mentioned two of her flatmates in her third interview in May one from Hong Kong and one from Swaziland who she described as impressive because they were 'very self-disciplined' and had helped her to improve her study skills. Similarly, Tina referred to a Greek student in her third interview who she had asked for help with her work and who had helped her to 'think differently'.

Again, as with the expanded networks in class, improving language proficiency was seen to give participants the confidence to expand their networks to include those who did not share their first language and similarly, time and pressure of work were also cited as reasons for why they did not do this. With respect to language, for example Xiao Hua observed:

Now I feel better about my language, I feel more confident to speak to other students. It's still difficult but it is also interesting to get their views

(Xiao Hua, extract from interview 3)

Regarding time pressures, Sami, for example observed:

I sometimes think my flatmates must think I am a camel as they never see me in the kitchen because I'm always hidden in my room studying!

(Sami, extract from interview 2)

Finally, a few participants mentioned friends who were studying at other universities in the UK at the time of the study, often taking the same programme. These were brought up by way of comparison and were seen to help them contextualise their experience of the course they were undertaking here. As indicated in 5.3.1.1 above, Eric for example referred to his girlfriend's experience of a similar course elsewhere. While initially, his experience was seen as unfavourable compared to hers over time he changed his view. Similarly, Fah who mentioned the lack of clear structure as something he found difficult in his second interview, made the following observation in his third interview:

While I know you want us to learn to work by ourselves, I still feel the problem of lack of organization at times. Compared to my friend at x university, I know we are lucky here though. He is really thrown in the deep end there and struggling a lot'

(Fah extract from interview 3).

The only participants who mentioned contact with UK students was Ayumi. Ayumi recounted how this student, someone she had met through her membership of a student society, had taken her swimming and how her encouragement had helped her develop a more positive attitude.

5.4 3. Contact with UK nationals out of class.

In addition to contact with other students, a number of participants made reference to contact with UK nationals, in their day to day life outside of the university, often because these were deemed to be problematic in some way. Several participants mentioned difficulties they had in service encounters, as part of their initially settling in experience and others mentioned their experiences of taking part time jobs, which several did in the second half of the year. The other form of contact mentioned by two participants was their membership of church groups which was largely seen in a positive light.

With regard to service encounters, four participants discussed these in their initial interviews and how they struggled to get things resolved in the

ways they wanted, resulting in frustration and anger, and which in some cases left a long-lasting impression. Thus for example Fah explained:

Fah: When I first arrived in the UK it was very exciting but then I was shocked to discover I had to wait one week to get my money out.

Me: Really, what did you do?

Fah: I had to borrow some from another Thai student. I complained about this but the guy in the bank he didn't offer me an explanation. He just kept silent and said: "Sorry". But for me I was angry. Sorry and anger don't come together. Don't be compassionate on my feelings just give me my money!

Me: Did you say that?

Fah: No, not aloud, just in my head.

(Fah, extract from interview 1)

In his final interview, he referred back to this incident and others he had experienced in his part time job saying: "The study here has been good but these sorts of things that happen to me in my daily life, make me struggle with British people generally".

Song described a similarly frustrating experience and how this had impacted on the way he looked at people from the UK. As he said:

Song: When I first arrived I felt people were very friendly and helpful but now I don't think so. For example when I have to deal with some errands I feel people are impatient with me. In my country if someone asked me for assistance I would be very patient.

Me: Can you give an example of when you felt someone wasn't helpful?

Song: Yes. For example the telephone in my room is not working for nearly one month. They haven't come to fix it and their attitude is not very friendly. They tell me five more working days every time I call. They say they are busy every time.

(Song extract from interview 1)

It is interesting to note however by the time of his second interview, once he had settled in, how he claimed his perspective had changed somewhat. He volunteered the following observation:

By the way, regarding English people and whether I feel they are friendly or not, now I feel much better especially since I got back from my trip to Europe. Now I like British people very much! In Europe people are not very friendly to tourists, especially in Holland. I was relieved to get back to the UK.

(Song, extract from interview 2)

Four participants, Huang-Fu, Fah Gong and Sami took up part time jobs during the year. Sami worked as an English teacher in the local Saudi school at the weekends and the others all took up part time positions in the service industry. Sami saw his work as an opportunity to: “try out the ideas from the course directly” and found this to be “really beneficial professionally”. For the others, the income their work generated was seen to help support the high costs of their year abroad. For these participants, their experience was seen to be largely negative, something they felt they had to do but not something they enjoyed. Both Fah and Huang-Fu referred to incidents which they felt were instances of what they felt was unfair treatment, such as in Fah’s case, being made to feel ‘uncomfortable’ about the way he talked and in Huang-Fu’s case being passed over for ‘promotion’ in favour of a Canadian student after having been promised this. All three participants were embarrassed to talk about their experiences at length and when they did, sought to see these as not connected to their life as a student as the following extract from an interview with Fah illustrates:

Me: You are working in KFC now, aren’t you?

Fah: Yes, but don’t ask me how it is – I don’t like working there and it’s not related to my real life as a student.

(Extract from interview 3 with Fah)

Although reluctant to discuss their experiences, both Fah and Huang-Fu’s accounts suggested that they experienced discrimination in their work.

This perception of racial or cultural discrimination was also something that was evident in the account provided by Song above. Another participant brought this up in his final interview too when asked about his general impression of the year:

Me: Has this been a successful year for you?

Eric: Yes. I have experienced a lot of things. I gained a lot of cultural insights but I can still see racism.

Me: Really? Can you give an example?

Eric: Like when I am shopping with my girlfriend in M and S. Some people look at you badly. This can make you lose your confidence very seriously if you are not careful. But anyway, I can learn from this, It reminds me that I need to be more friendly to other races when I go home and not to do that kind of thing myself.

(Extract from interview 3 with Eric)

In contrast to the negative impressions formed by some of their day to day experiences outside the course, two others, Song and Ayumi also recounted much more positive encounters, which resulted from their efforts to seek out opportunities to get to know people in wider society. In both cases they sought out contact with religious groups. Song recounted his experiences with the church group he joined in the following ways and how he saw this as helping him become more open-minded:

Sometimes people are not very friendly but if you talk to people they will talk to you. I went to church several times and the first few times no one talked to me so I realised that I had to talk to them. I realised that maybe they don't want to interfere. Maybe they respect people's privacy and are not just ignoring people. Maybe they are respecting individual space like we do in Taiwan.

(Song, extract from interview 2)

I now go to more than one church. One time my friend invited me to a British family while they are having tea. I think I'm more open-minded than before.

(Song, extract from interview 3)

In Ayumi's case, as she explained:

I belong to the Methodist and Anglican Church society in the university. I enjoyed helping and serving lunch after the Sunday service. At first I was just washing dishes and then slowly I started talking to people. I feel I have become friendly with them and gained a sense of belonging to their society. I can express my opinions there actively now.

(Extract from Ayumi's portfolio)

Finally, one participant, Baljinder, who had brought her two children with her for the year described largely positive outcomes from her encounters, although these were borne out of considerable personal challenges. Baljinder had perhaps the most extensive contact with people in wider society during the year via her contact with her children's school and other parents. Due to the fact that one of her children was injured early in the first term, she also had to negotiate the hospital and her local health clinic and struggle to arrange childcare so she could continue her studies while her child was out of school. This brought her close to quite a few British parents who became an extensive support network and some she went on to describe as friends. She described her experiences in the following way:

Sometimes I was under a lot of pressure and I would question whether I had made the right decision to come here. But I made a lot of really good friends which helped. One friend had great admiration for me as a single mother, for example. I'd never thought about myself like that before. It helped my self-esteem.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 3)

5.4.5. Contact with people at home.

A number of participants also talked about their on-going relationships with people at home in their accounts and these appeared to be significant to their experience in a number of ways. On the one hand, they provided a source of encouragement and support. Thus, for example. Tina explained how her friends' emails encouraged her when she was "feeling down". On the other hand, however, contact with people at home also appeared to

serve as a kind of monitor of their experience, causing them to be mindful of the lives they had left behind and were to rejoin at the end of the year. Sami explained for example with reference to his developing “critical thinking”:

I am happy with the achievement I have made in my way of thinking but it gives me a lot of headaches. People back home think I have complicated my life with this way of thinking. My dad thinks I've changed in not good ways.

(Sami, extract from interview 2)

For Gong, she felt under pressure to find answers to the questions her colleagues were emailing her with regard to the new course book they were being asked to implement. As she said: “I always chat to my former students and my colleagues in China on the email or MSN and tell them what I learnt and think. They are very interested in what I am doing”. In the second part of the year this preoccupied her though as her colleagues pressurised her to find solutions to the problems they were facing and tutors remarked on how she was constantly quizzing them to find out what she could tell her colleagues.

Baljinder was another participant who was very conscious and also anxious about her professional duties when she returned home. As she said:

When you get back you are supposed to have changed and I will be expected to take on new responsibilities. I worry about how I can handle the responsibilities and whether I am going to get what I need from here to make that possible. It doesn't help that people email me and ask me how I am going on here.

(Baljinder, extract from interview 3)

Linda saw the pressure more in terms of her language ability, a view that echoed the concerns of several. As she said:

Everyone is asking me: Has your language improved? Are you fluent? When I get home, they'll say, oh you come from England. How come you are making that mistake.

(Linda, extract from group interview)

From the above it is clear that participants highlighted a number of out of class experiences in their accounts which they felt generated significant points of learning. In particular it seemed to provide opportunities to learn about self in relation to other and also to help them develop certain skills and qualities, such as autonomy and self confidence. For some there was also a sense that it raised their awareness of how learning was not just something that occurred in the classroom but also outside of this, and that it had both formal and non-formal qualities. For example as Song observed: "True learning can be anywhere. That is what I have discovered" and Tina remarked:

Learning is everywhere, not only inside the classroom but also outside of it. Since I came here I learned a lot but not only from the modules and class but also from discussions with people outside. It was beyond my initial expectations.

(Tina, extract from portfolio)

In addition, many appeared to be aware of the ways in which their in and out of class experiences connected to create an overall experience of learning and acknowledged a relationship between them. Baljinder, for example, talked about the impact of her out of class experiences on her in class learning in the following way:

What was happening outside the class definitely impacted on what was going on inside the class for me. Sometimes I was under a lot of pressure outside the class with the kids and that affected my ability and motivation in class. But at the same time learning how to deal with these problems I faced made me stronger and this made me feel more confident in class and to see things as less intimidating.

(Baljinder, extract from group interview)

Finally, several participants mentioned their inability to reproduce the levels of verbal interaction they could sustain outside the classroom inside the classroom. Thus for example, Song remarked:

Song: I find it strange that I can talk quite freely out of class but I still find it so hard to initiate in class.

Me: Why do you think that is?

Song: I think it's because I'm a student there and I don't see it as part of my role. I expect the teacher to do the initiation.

(Song, extract from interview 3)

Having recounted the results of my cross-narrative thematic analysis of participants' experiences during their sojourn and their views on the significance of these, in the following section I turn to a consideration of the different forms of learning discerned from an analysis of this.

5.5 Forms of learning identified in the narrative accounts.

The cross-research thematic analysis above has provided insights with regard to the significance attached to a number of events and encounters during participants' year long experience of interculturality. While broadly speaking across the 14 narrative accounts there is a degree of similarity in the sorts of experiences highlighted, there is, however, no one-to-one correlation between an event or encounter and its perceived significance, and how far and in what ways this is seen to inform their learning. This is because these events are inevitably bound up with their on-going storylines. As such, the significance these events are seen to have can only really be understood within the context of their individual learning trajectories.

Nevertheless, reading through the account developed above led me to identify a number of themes regarding the learning that this experience of interculturality was seen to generate for participants. Following the analysis procedure described in chapter 4 above (see 4.6.3), 21 recurring themes with regard to the learning outcomes resulting from participants' experiences of their sojourn were identified (see appendix 10 for details of these) which were subsequently grouped under five forms of learning that their experiences were seen to afford. Namely, learning about self, learning about self as learner, learning subject knowledge and skills, learning how to be successful in this setting, and learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other. These are discussed in turn below.

1. Learning about self.

Learning about self is used to refer to the ways in which the vast majority of participants made reference to how their experiences during their sojourn were seen as helping them develop as people. This was evidenced in comments about their development of personal qualities as a result of their sojourn as well as in comments about their developing ability to meet the challenges of operating away from family and other support structures they had access to in their home environments. Thus for example, Song mentioned how his experiences had developed his self-confidence (see 5.3.2. above) and Baljinder how she felt that facing the challenges brought on by her sojourn had led to an increase in her self esteem (see 5.4.3 above). In a similar vein, several remarked on how their experiences had made them stronger as they faced and successfully overcame challenges during the sojourn (see for example Eric and Linda in 5.3.2 above and Baljinder in section 5.4.5 above). Finally, several also reported on how their interactions with others they encountered both in and outside of the classroom led them to be more reflexive (see for Linda and Ayumi in section 5.3.1.2 above) and for some to claims that they had developed greater patience (see Baljinder in section 5.3.5) and learnt to reserve judgement as a result of their experience (see Terence and Sami in section 5.3.5).

Another important aspect of learning about self, mentioned by several participants concerned the way in which they felt their experiences had enabled them to develop skills which they associated with greater self-determination and how this had empowered them as individuals. This included references to learning to take responsibility for self, to be more independent and to see self as decision-maker (as evidenced in comments made by Eric in section 5.3.1.2 above and by Fah in section 5.4.3.1).

2. Learning about self as learner

Participants made reference to a number of things they learnt about themselves as learners from their experiences some of which are an

extension of those mentioned above. These included, developing critical thinking (see Linda and Gong's accounts in 5.3.1.2 above), better self-discipline and time management (Sang-ho in 5.3.2 above), and learning how to critically appraise themselves as learners (see for example, Xiao Hua in 5.3.2 above) . Several invoked terms such as autonomous learning and taking charge of their learning to encapsulate the ways in which these things were seen as learning outcomes (see for example, Xiao Hua and Baljinder in 5.3.3.2. above). In addition, participants made reference to how their experience had led to a greater awareness of how collaboration and participation helped them learn (as in comments made by Linda and Ayumi in 5.3.3.1 above).

3. Learning subject knowledge and academic skills

Participants also clearly saw learning about subject knowledge and learning academic skills as important learning outcomes from their experiences during the year. In 5.3 above, where I report on participants in class experiences, many references are made to various forms of module content, skills and structural elements of the programme that helped with professional and linguistic knowledge elements that were part and parcel of the intended provision for this Masters programme with its focus on Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. Thus for example, Sami refers to what he learnt about the theory of motivation and its implications for classroom practice from one of the modules, Ayumi talks about what she learnt about task-based learning from another module and Fah refers to a module on language awareness.

Similarly, reference was made to some important transferrable skills they had developed through the year which would inform their work as teachers on their return home. These included, amongst others, learning how to do observation (see Gong in 5.3.1.1 above) and learning how to evaluate their course books (see Ida in 5.3.1.2 above).

Finally, others referred to the development of their language skills as a result of their sojourn as an important form of learning (see, for example, Fah in 5.3.1.2 above).

4. Learning how to be successful in this setting

Several participants made reference to how their journey through the year was one of working out how to succeed in the programme; a process of working out what was required in this community and working out how to achieve this, or as Sami put it 'learning how to play the game' (see section 5.3.3.2 above).

There was an evident sense that participants were aware of the practices which were valued by the community and for many, learning how to align themselves with these was an important strategy adopted to try and ensure success. To illustrate, participants made reference to the importance attached to verbal participation, collaborative learning, and taking charge of their own learning by their tutors. (see for example comments by Linda in 5.3.3.1 and Huang-Fu regarding verbal participation, comments by Fah on independent learning in section 5.4.2 and Song on collaboration in section 5.3.3) and many of their efforts to try to adopt these (see for example, Song in section 5.3.3.1 and Tina in section 5.3.3.2)

However, participants were also aware of the ways in which written assignments were the ultimate measure of their success and how it was their grades in these that would determine whether they obtained their degree certificate and this led some to prioritise their efforts to succeed in these over other practices promoted by their tutors and in the information they received about the programme (as shown in appendix 9).

In this way participants were seen to be proactive in negotiating their own interpretation of community norms and in working out their own pathway through the programme to ensure their success. Over time this led several to contest the community norms. For example, several questioned the role of participatory practices as they realised that there was no correlation between these and success in written assignments (as is indicated by comments made by Song and Tina in section 5.5.3.1) and others became strategic in seeking out other forms of support to compensate for the

perceived lack of support structure available to them from their tutors (as in the case of Fah in 5.5.3.1 above and of Linda in 5.3.4.4 for example)

5. Learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other.

A final form of learning identified, entitled learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other, was evident in all of learner accounts.

On the one hand this comprised reference to a number of things which suggested that one outcome for learners from their engagement with linguistic and cultural others was a developing openness to the linguistic and cultural other during their sojourn. This was visible in a number of ways in participants' accounts. Firstly, some remarked on how their experiences led them to question previously held stereotypes and assumptions (see for example Terence and Fah in 5.4.3.1 and Baljinder in section 5.3.5). Others talked of a growing awareness of similarities between themselves and participants who were drawn from different socio-cultural backgrounds (see for example Gong and Sang-ho in section 5.3.5 above). Some also talked of acknowledging and valuing different perspectives from their own (as in the case of Xiao Hua, Gong and Sami in section 5.3.5 above) and finally, a few participants, notably, Song, Sami, Tina and Ayumi talked of how their experiences had led them, over time to see beyond the linguistic and cultural other, to a recognition that they were dealing first and foremost with other people, whose identities, like their own, could not be understood merely through the use of linguistic and cultural labels (as shown in section 5.3.5. above.).

On the other hand, learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other was also seen to entail a process of learning about linguistic and cultural positioning and how to manage this process. Almost all participants made reference to how they felt positioned and positioned themselves often as a direct response to the visible and audible differences between themselves and others in their in and out of class worlds. With regard to their in-class experiences, see for example comments by Song, Baljinder Tina and Huang-Fu in section 5.3.4.2 and

with respect to their out of class experiences, comments by Song, Eric, Fah in section 5.4.3.

Positions adopted were seen to inform the strategic agentive actions that they took such as for example, deciding to work only with other international students rather than UK students or to stay in their nationality groups on account of their perception of their linguistic positioning (as in the case of, for example Tina and Ida). However, it was also the case that participants shifted their positions over time through the development of new strategic actions. This is, for example evident in the broad shift in the relational networks from term 1 to 2 (as shown in appendices 6 and 7) with many more participants, claiming a connection or friendship with a wider range of linguistically and culturally diverse students than had been the case in term 1 brought on, in part, by a conscious decision to change places in class.

The sort of action outlined above, not only facilitated the generation of new positions for participants, but contributed further to the generation of conditions which were conducive to the generation of further openness to the linguistic and cultural other. However, other actions, such as deciding to remain in their nationality group lead some to move away from this. Moreover, actions such as decided to take up employment as the accounts of Hang Fu and Fah mentioned in 5.4.3 above, exposed them to new forms of positioning which had the potential to contribute to the development of less rather than more openness to other.

From the above discussion, it is apparent that learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other, while evident in all accounts, might take a number of different forms, depending on the complex inter-relationship that was seen to hold between linguistic and cultural positioning, the taking of strategic action and a general move towards increased openness to the other. Thus in some ways, while this form of learning has some parallels with the concept of intercultural learning discussed in chapters 1 and 3 above, since it is also understood to encompass learning about cultural and linguistic positioning, it is therefore much harder to predict what the learning outcomes might be, or to make

assumptions about the positive outcomes of an extended encounter with interculturality.

Reflection on the five forms of learning identified.

Although I have identified five main forms of learning in the cross-narrative account developed in this chapter, it is important to bear in mind how this simplifies a complex picture with regard to learning among these participants. Two important points with respect to this need to be borne in mind. The first of these is that, precisely because of the embodied nature of learning (as mentioned in chapter 3, see 3.2 above) these 'forms' of learning are best not seen as discreet but as intersecting and overlapping with each other. Thus for example, given that these participants were teachers, there was an inevitable overlap between learning about self as learner (learning form 1 above) and learning the subject knowledge and skill (learning form 3) which were about teaching and learning. Similarly, given that the sorts of things mentioned which I have classified as learning about self as learner were actively promoted in the programme these were also closely aligned to learning how to be successful in the programme. That is to say that the sorts of learning that learners identified as significant are likely to manifest in no small measure what was foregrounded as important during their programme of study.

A second caveat with regards to this classification of learning forms is that these inevitably do not illustrate the fact that not all participants claimed to develop all of these forms of learning, and that there is a clear sense that given their unique personal and learning trajectories, that they developed these different forms of learning to different degrees.

Nevertheless, what this broad categorisation does serve to highlight is that an experience of an overseas sojourn, such as the one that formed the focus of this study has the potential to generate an array of learning forms as is likely to be the case in any learning setting. However, it also highlights how such an experience can also generate one form of learning (learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other) that may not be so easily promoted in settings without the same degree of linguistic and

cultural diversity that typifies a global educational contact zone. That is to say, the findings of the cross-narrative thematic analysis would suggest that as many of those with an interest in intercultural communication have argued, that an experience of interculturality does provide a set of conditions that are likely to be particularly conducive to learning about interculturality. The sorts of things highlighted in participants' accounts suggest that this form of learning resonates to some degrees with the discourses of intercultural learning discussed in chapters 1 and 3 earlier in the thesis, with their emphasis on openness to other as manifested in greater tolerance, empathy, critical reflexivity of self and other as cultural beings. However, this form of learning is also distinguished from these discourses of intercultural learning as it is seen to also comprise learning about cultural and linguistic positioning that is the ways in which power and agency play out in the ways in which participants engage with the linguistic and cultural other.

In the following chapter, chapter 6, I report on the results of a secondary analysis of individual accounts which entailed the generation of new narratives which sought to shed more light on this form of learning and thereby addresses the focus of my third research question, what participants learn about interculturality from their experiences.

Chapter 6. Results of secondary analysis of narrative accounts: Learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other.

In this chapter I focus in on the third aim of the research study undertaken. That is the establishment of the extent and the ways in which the experience of interculturality afforded the participants in this study could be seen to promote the intercultural learning that it is widely assumed to develop in the literature. As mentioned in chapter 5 above, the results of the thematic cross-narrative analysis, revealed that one form of learning that was evidenced in all accounts was what I have termed 'learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other' which was seen to comprise two main elements. These were 'becoming more open to the other' and 'learning about linguistic and cultural positioning of self and others'.

The purpose of this chapter is to subject this form of learning to closer scrutiny by presenting the findings of my secondary analysis of the field texts with respect to four of the participants in the study which led to the generation of four new narrative accounts regarding their learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other.

As explained in chapter 4, this secondary analysis revealed (as shown in appendix 15) that while this form of learning was evident in all accounts, there was considerable variability in the way this manifested in individual accounts. Firstly, with regard to how far the various components seen to comprise 'becoming more open to the other' are evident in accounts and secondly with regard to the sorts of positioning that participants alluded to. As can be seen in appendix 15, while some accounts foregrounded cultural positioning, others emphasised linguistic positioning and others showed both to be present. In addition, accounts revealed participants adopted different individual agentive responses to their encounters with linguistic and cultural diversity which both reflected their understanding of their positioning and further informed this over time.

The four participants (Ayumi, Sami, Tina and Huang-Fu) for whom narrative accounts have been generated below, have been selected to illustrate the different degrees of 'openness to other' discernable in

participants' accounts and the ways in which this is seen to relate to their linguistic, cultural or linguistic and cultural positioning and their strategic responses to this over time. Table 6.1 below details the results of the secondary analysis for these participants.

Table 6.1 Results of the secondary analysis regarding 'learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other' for the four participants

Name	Becoming more open to the other				Learning about positioning
	<i>Acknowledge and value diff perspectives</i>	<i>Recognise similarity in difference</i>	<i>Questioning assumptions/s tereotypes.</i>	<i>Seeing beyond cultural other</i>	
Sami	•	•	•	•	Cultural
Tina	•		•	•	Language
Ayumi	•	•		•	Cultural and language
Huang-Fu	•		•		Cultural and language

Following the procedure for generating the narrative accounts discussed in chapter 4 (4.x), as explained, each of the narrative accounts presented below are organised around events and experiences in participants' storylines which were seen to inform their developing understanding of self in relation to cultural other, their actions and subsequent points of learning and supported with extracts from their individual narrative interviews, group interviews and where relevant, portfolios and opportunistic conversations I had with them.

To retain a sense of narrative temporality and to illustrate the way in which participants trajectories evolved over time, each of the four narrative accounts below are divided into three parts: pre-sojourn experience, early experiences, and moving on. In each account quotes from the field texts are used to illustrate the evolving storyline and as with the narrative accounts derived from primary analysis of narrative field texts, each narrative has been given a title capturing the main thrust of each narrative and adopting expressions employed by each in their individual interviews.

These are as follows:

Ayumi: Meeting my unfamiliar self

Tanya: We're all people, just people.

Huang-Fu: Falling from grace and saving my face.

Sami: What's important to me, isn't necessarily what's important to you.

6.1 AYUMI. Meeting my unfamiliar self.

6.1.1 Pre-sojourn experience.

From safety to challenge.

Ayumi, from Japan, was trained as a secondary school teacher. However, after 6 years of working in a secondary school she gave up her job three years prior to travelling to the UK to take up her place on the Masters programme. The reasons she offered for this were that she had found teaching very 'stressful and exhausting' and had decided to take a break and return to university in Tokyo to pursue a Masters in English literature and Western art. Following on from this she had then worked as an advisor for university students who were thinking of taking up a teaching career. After completing the programme, Ayumi decided to stay in the UK to complete a doctorate at the same university and is close to completing this.

Ayumi saw her decision to decide to pursue further studies overseas as related to a number of 'mysteries' and concerns she had with her teaching. The first of these stemmed from her initial decision to enrol on the Masters programme she had taken in Japan described above. Namely, to find out more 'cultural knowledge' to give her teaching more In depth. As she explained:

I chose this as I am very interested in the identity of human beings. I realised that I, as a Japanese learner, need more than just acquiring the speaking of English. Doing my previous Masters course made me think that while my students usually look like they enjoy my

class, my teaching is actually shallow and I should find out more by coming to the UK.

(Ayumi, extract from portfolio)

The second reason she gave concerned her experience of team teaching with a UK teacher who was assigned to be an assistant language teacher (ALT) in her school:

When I was teaching with the ALT she used a lot of activities and did not give detailed explanations about these to the students before they did them. It was uncomfortable to me and a bit confusing but students liked this and I was curious about this. I could see students could talk freely in their own words and this was a way for them to gain their confidence.

(Ayumi, extract from portfolio)

Ayumi also saw the experience of working with the ALT as one which had impacted on her personal development too. After applying for the Masters programme here and then deferring her place for a year, she felt it was what she had learnt from working with the ALT and encouraging her students to 'meet the challenge' of having a non- Japanese teacher that had led her to finally decide to take the 'risky action' of coming to the UK. As she related:

Some teachers hesitated to do team teaching with the ALT but I was willing to work with the native educator. I was proud that I was brave to take this challenge.

and:

I usually encouraged my own students to take the challenge of working with the ALT but realised that I was someone who avoided challenge and preferred to do safe things. I thought that I needed to take the chance myself, though there was no guarantee to be successful. I arrived here with my risky action. It was the biggest challenge I have ever experienced.

(Ayumi, extracts from portfolio)

6.1.2 Early experiences: 'There's no such thing as ideal dialogues'.

On arrival in the UK, Ayumi spent nearly three months undertaking pre-sessional language preparation where she was: “excited to meet so many people from so many different nationalities at the same time and in the same place”. (extract from interview 1). However as with her early encounters once she embarked on the Masters programme, she also explained how she also found this disorientating.

She described several encounters where she struggled with what she perceived to a direct and overly personal style of communication which at times she described as ‘quite shocking’. One event she described was when people started touching her things as she explained:

Some classmates ask me too many personal things. While I would understand this was cultural difference in my mind, it was still uncomfortable, even though they are nice people. One day, for example, someone came to me in the library and while they were talking to me they started checking my things, such as my books and some papers without my permission and then suddenly said Goodbye and left. Is that communication? It was too fast for me.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

Ayumi also recounted another episode that left her with a similar feeling. This occurred early in term 1 in the kitchen with her flatmates:

Ayumi: Most of my flatmates are Taiwanese and Chinese and sometimes they are very direct.

Me: Really, in what way?

Ayumi: For example, miso soup. I offered to get one person some miso soup when I go home in the Christmas vacation but then three boys asked me to buy them cameras.

Me: Do you mean they wanted you to pay for them.

Ayumi: No they offered me money but still it’s too much for me to carry.

Me: What did you do?

Ayumi: I said no but it is a difficult thing for me to say no directly like this and I felt embarrassed.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 1)

In class, small group activities were also perceived to pose a number of challenges for Ayumi in the early stages of the programme and she found

these full of what she called: “complicated elements”. On the one hand, she explained how she found it difficult to manage turn taking in groups and how in her efforts to allow others to take their turns, she often couldn’t take one herself. As she explained:

I hesitate to interrupt my colleagues while they are speaking and then they said ‘Ayumi is the listening and non-contributing type’. But I was just waiting for them to finish. It frustrated and irritated me.’

(Ayumi, extract from portfolio)

Similarly, she recounted how others had told her that they found her a bit ‘strange’ and how this had impacted on her.

Ayumi: In term 1 several people told me my opinion is a bit strange.

Me: What do they mean do you think?

Ayumi: I don’t know exactly but mainly language is the problem I think. The same thing happened in the pre-sessional programme.

Me: How did that make you feel?

Ayumi: It had a negative effect on me at first and I didn’t want to contribute.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

Finally, Ayumi also recounted the difficulties she faced in understanding others too and not knowing how to deal with the fact that she couldn’t understand what they were talking about. Reflecting on incidents like these, Ayumi wrote in her portfolio:

Before I came here I thought real communication was like the typical dialogue of the course book but that didn’t happen to me here. In real life unexpected situations could happen in just simple greetings!

(Ayumi, extract from her portfolio)

6.1.3 Moving on: Committing to the value of supportive dialogue.

Although Ayumi clearly found the situation she was facing challenging, there were a number of experiences that appeared to contribute to her continued investment in dialogue. The first of these was the impression that the task-based experiential learning approach advocated by several tutors was having on her. This led her to profess a clear preference for: “learning by doing and talking” (extract from interview 2) moreover to the view of learning is a process of: “trial and error”. By the end of term 2 she appeared to help her shift her perspective on the difficulties she was having with group work as she explained:

At first I felt it was troublesome to understand what someone said when their ideas are not fluent but then I found that people’s ideas are interesting and creative and I want to find a way to understand. I would like to understand and I would like them to understand me as I think the feeling is not good for me and maybe it’s not good for them. I feel I have to overcome this one. It will take time. I tell myself today I don’t understand but tomorrow maybe I will.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 3)

Ayumi also indicated how she was beginning to appreciate how dialogue could also be an important source of support to her in her out of class experiences too. A turning point in this respect was her decision to seek advice from one of her flatmates to help her resolve some of the communication issues she was facing, as outlined above. In her interview at the start of term 2 she explained:

Sometimes I learned it’s better to ask friends. For 2 months I tried to be patient with those people then I told my flatmate and she gave me advice and it helped me improve things. I learnt that it can be helpful to speak to others

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

The significance of this was particularly apparent for Ayumi following on from her return home to Japan for the Christmas vacation at the end of term 1. As she related:

In Japan I try to do things for myself. When I went home at Christmas I could see how supportive your life in the UK is. I realise

I need people, I never realised that before. I saw needing people in a negative light before but now I see it as a positive thing.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 2)

Moreover, it was during this vacation that she also shared her worries with her father, whose advice to: “turn your anxiety into energy for your challenge” was something Ayumi felt was inspiring and which she claimed led her to resume her studies with a: “new attitude”.

By the time of her third interview in early May, it appeared that this new attitude had led Ayumi to take a number of actions which had transformed her relationships both in and out of class. On the one hand, this had made her more assertive. As she explained:

I don't find it easy to say no, but now I've been here for some time I can say no. I can say my opinion. I got stronger, stronger than in Japan. I've decided to say what I want and not to care too much what others think and I found that others will listen to me more than before and even take my advice!

(Ayumi, extract from interview 3)

Ayumi had also expanded her friendship network considerably. Half way through term 1 she had joined a society run by Methodist and Anglican students but had related in her second interview how she had been: “mainly making and serving lunch and washing a lot of dishes” because she felt too shy to initiate conversation. But by the time of her third interview, she had made friends with a number of the students. She recounted one event with a British friend which she saw as instrumental in helping her acquire the confidence that allowed her to branch out to join a further society (a choral society) and to improve her relationships:

One of my British friends took me swimming. She tried to teach me breast stroke. I thought the swimming pool would be shallow but it was very deep and I was too scared to try this. She said to me: “You can do it but you just need more confidence”. She made me think about that. I decided to change into more positive thinking and this really helped me. It made it easier for me to communicate with people freely.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 3)

It seemed that by the end of year, Ayumi's experience of interculturality had led to a number of key points of learning for her and that these stemmed from her commitment to engage in a dialogue across difference. On the one hand, it appeared that she had developed a very different understanding of dialogue, one which acknowledged how difference complicates dialogue but is also a natural part of the process of meaning-making with others. As she said:

I was shocked by some of my colleagues before but I don't know why, I don't feel it now. Maybe I think of us all as one big family. It's natural that communication involves emotional entanglement and it's natural to have quarrels too.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 3)

It also appeared that closely related to this was her new-found appreciation for community:

Before I came here I thought only individual ideas are important to people but now I think to be a member of a community is better.

(Ayumi, extract from interview 3)

Finally, there was a clear sense in how she felt that the experience of interculturality her stay had afforded her, had enabled her to develop as a person. As she said in her portfolio:

Its' been a successful year for me. If I hadn't come here I couldn't have known what kind of person I am. I couldn't have met my unfamiliar self. Sometimes it made me depressed but mostly it has been amazing to me.

(Ayumi, extract from portfolio)

6.2 TINA. We're all people, just people.

6.2.1 Pre-sojourn experience: Pushing myself out of my comfort zone.

At the time of the study, Tina had been a primary school teacher in Taiwan for 4 years. Tina explained how prior to her sojourn in the UK she had been a homeroom teacher but on her return she had been told by her

principal that she would be expected to be the specialist English teacher for the school. Tina was a keen traveller, and while she had never studied abroad, she had travelled extensively in South East Asia. Tina had a boyfriend in Taiwan and returned in the December vacation to see him. However in the second term of the programme, the friendship she had struck up with Song, another student from Taiwan deepened and they decided to stay on the UK for a further six months beyond the end of the academic year. On their return to Taiwan they married and now have a young son.

Early in her first interview with me, Tina remarked that her reasons for coming to the UK were 'to improve my English and to get a change'. It transpired later that this statement actually hid a complex and protracted process of decision-making.

On the one hand, it became apparent that Tina's decision to come to England was the result of a deep-seated insecurity she had about her English language ability relative to other teachers in her school who had all majored in English at university. It was due to this that she had initially sought out English language tuition with a teacher in Taiwan and it was with her encouragement that she had finally, after some considerable deliberation, applied to come to undertake a Masters in the UK as the following extract from her portfolio illustrates:

Kay my English tutor often encouraged me to study overseas partly because she knew I wanted to be a good English teacher and partly because she also wanted to study abroad but couldn't. Without her encouragement and facilitation, I think I cannot study here because I am not a positive learner.

(Tina, extract from portfolio)

However, Tina also revealed other important elements that affected her decision-making, including the fact that a part of her was very reluctant to leave a secure, well-paid and comfortable job. She remarked, for example, on how the other teachers in her school were deeply sceptical about the benefits of coming and reminded her of how much money she would lose which meant she wavered for some time.

As she commented in her portfolio:

I remember that when I spoke with my colleagues about my decision to study abroad, they were keen to calculate how much money I would lose within the time I studied in the UK. For them my decision was not so smart because studying abroad was not the only way to be successful.

(Tina, extract from portfolio)

Weighing up all these things together, she summed up her decision to come to the UK in the following way: “To tell you the truth, I was so brave to come here. When I was in Taiwan, I was very lazy to do new things. I’m surprised at myself that I achieved it!” (Extract from interview 1).

6.2.2 Early experiences: My life in a living hell.

Tina described finding her early experiences extremely challenging, especially her early days in the English language centre where she felt overwhelmed and struggled to adjust to the new demands this placed on her. As she said in her portfolio:

It was not easy being a student again. I forgot how hard being a student was. During my pre-session programme I felt much pressure towards lots of homework. I even cried when I had a meeting with my tutor as I could not think of a topic for my first assignment and I couldn’t make a good presentation in class.

(Tina, extract from portfolio)

In her first interview with me she described her life as ‘a living hell’ and she made reference to this on several occasions in her portfolio paper. As she said, in her first interview:

I emailed my friends in Taiwan and said: “I live in hell right now. But you should look at things on the upside, I lost lots of weight! I have to overcome many difficulties but its learning!”

(Tina, extract from interview 1)

For Tina it appeared her early experiences in classes in the Masters programme confirmed her belief in her poor language ability as she

explained:

I found it so hard. I knew I was expected to talk but I didn't even understand the questions, how could I say anything! Theoretically I know I should contribute but I couldn't. I remember in one class, the teacher asked the same question to each student in turn and I couldn't think of anything to say. I couldn't listen to other people's opinions I was so worried.

(Tina, extract from interview 2)

Meanwhile Tina was also struggling to adjust to other aspects of her experience too including some difficulties with Diane, a British student who was enrolled on a module which involved, amongst other things, undertaking an observation in a local primary school. She related her experiences in the following way:

- Tina:** I feel under a lot of pressure when I have to work with Diane. I don't like to sit with her.
- Me:** Why not?
- Tina:** For example, once you asked us to have a group discussion but she didn't want to discuss with us. Another time I felt she was disapproving of me.
- Me:** Really? When was that?
- Tina:** It was about our observation form. She said: "Shame on you for not completing it completely". This is not up to her. I felt very angry.

(Extract from interview 2)

Given all of the above, it is perhaps not surprising that Tina made the decision early in the first term to sit with students she felt secure with. As she said:

I sit with Fah, Ayumi, Song and Ida mainly and any other non-UK student. I don't have to care about my grammar or anything and they support me and won't laugh at me..... I know in theory it's a good idea to talk to UK students but in reality, I don't know why, I prefer to sit with non-native students.

(Tina, extract from interview 1)

6.2.3 Moving on: Re-finding her voice.

Despite these early experiences, however, as illustrated by the excerpts from her narrative accounts below, there was a clear sense by the middle of the first term that as her spoken language ability began to improve that she gradually gained more confidence and started to become more visible and vocal. Tina was elected by her classmates as one of their representatives on the staff-student liaison committee in which was designed to provide students with an opportunity to feedback their views on facilities and resources. This was a role that she took very seriously and it was interesting to note that she elected to drop by my office regularly to keep me updated with students' views on various aspects of the programme and wider resourcing issues. During one of her visits, she started talking about her out of class experiences and she recounted the following incident that had taken place in a mobile phone shop which I captured, with her permission, on tape.

Tina: These days I am having a lot of bad experiences.

Me: Really, like what?

Tina: I got cheated in the mobile phone shop. The sales man didn't tell me lots of things about the phone he just wanted me to sign the contract. Many times I went back to the mobile phone shop because I was very angry. Then finally I asked Song to come with me. He didn't say anything but he was there. Suddenly I found my English became very fluent because I was angry. I just began to speak very quickly and not bother about the mistakes and then they knew this lady was very angry. So I solved the problem and I had a good chance to practice my English at the same time!

(Tina, extract from informal chat in term 1)

This event was one example of how Tina was developing a perception of herself who could 'speak' even if her language ability was 'poor'. Later in term 1 I started to receive a series of emails from Tina, mostly about her anxieties around her study, which appeared to be more evidence of the way in which she was finding a voice. In her second interview when I asked her what had led her to start emailing me she gave two reasons. Firstly, she said it was because she had decided to learn to: "ask questions without fear" and partly because she felt comfortable to talk to

me. As she said: “If the distance between the teacher and student is close I like this. It makes me feel comfortable to contact you.” It seemed, therefore that a feeling of emotional connection in addition to improving English proficiency were both important elements in helping her re-find her voice and Tina made reference to the importance of emotions to learning several times during the year. The following extract, an exchange between Tina and Fah, provides one illustration of this:

Fah: at the beginning of the year the kind of support you need is about academic areas but also about feelings.

Tina: Yes, feelings! Emotional feelings! How you feel about people. Definitely!

Fah: Yeah.

(Extract from group interview)

From cultural other to other.

Over time Tina’s confidence continued to grow alongside her improving language proficiency and this led her to branch out and to: “move around the classroom more” by the end of term 1. It was also affecting her attitude to working with the UK students in her classes as she explained in her second interview: “Now I’m not afraid to sit with native speakers”. The gradual expansion of her in-class networks also led her to work more with other non-Taiwanese international students too and the difficulties she faced with some of these led her to engage in an extended process of reflection on her relationships which might be described as a process of opening up to the other, looking beyond the immediacy of visible and audible signs of cultural difference.

In particular these led her to greater clarity around the relational issues and anxieties she had held in the early stages of her sojourn. Firstly, these led her to draw a distinction between language issues and ‘cultural problems’. As she said in her second interview, for example, reflecting on the language problems she had encountered earlier in her stay:

I was a bit distrustful of native speakers at first, but I think it's less to do with nationality and more to do with language now. I had similar bad experiences with other students. Such as with X [another international student]. I couldn't understand what she said and also I found her communication style difficult, too direct. So I came to realise that it's not only with native speakers that I can have these problems. (Tina, extract from interview 2)

This recognition of her need to disassociate her language communication difficulties from other sorts of interactional difficulties was further evident in the following remark she made in the final group interview she undertook with Sang-ho and Fah:

At the beginning I was very afraid of having native speakers in the classroom because I was not very confident about my speaking ability but now I've changed my mind. Even in Taiwan I can't understand people's accents sometimes. So I think about it like this and I came to see this as a normal thing.

(Tina, extract from group interview)

A second insight with respect to her developing understanding of her relationships over the year was a recognition of any relational issues she faced as being more to do with people's 'personality' than to do with their cultural background. These insights were triggered, at least in part, by her working with another UK student who she found much easier to get along with. As she said:

I like Susan. I talked to her several times. Maybe I think she has been in Japan for many years and knows how to communicate with people like me. Maybe at the beginning I always thought more about differences between the native speaker and the non-native speaker but now I changed my mind. I know it's just a different personal style, it's just personality.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

This led Tina to reappraise her earlier experience with Diane and to realise that:

Maybe there had been a 'misunderstanding or something from my point of view. Now I think if it happened again I could accept it instead of being defensive. I think I can tolerate peoples' styles more. I'm open-minded now. We are all people, just people with our own personality. It's not only about culture it's also about feelings.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

Tina's growing relational networks also led her to a reappraisal of the significance of language proficiency to successful communication. Perhaps the seeds for this shift can be traced all the way back to her

efforts to complain about her mobile phone mentioned above and the appreciation that communication can succeed in spite of language proficiency. But by the end of the year, it was possible to detect a clear shift in attitude with respect her English language proficiency as she said with respect to this in the group interview: "I tell myself I may not be perfect but it doesn't matter. At least I can express my ideas and communicate".

However, while Tina's account illustrates the significance of her developing language proficiency to her ability to become more open to the other during her sojourn there is also a sense of the ways in which she remained both conscious and vigilant in the ways in which she sought to protect herself against the way in which she understood herself to be positioned linguistically speaking. Thus in reflecting on the ways she participated in class, she gave several examples of what she saw as her apparent sensitivity towards others which appeared, on the surface at least to manifest a relational mindfulness, but which was always in reality tempered by her own concerns about her language proficiency. This was evident, for example, in her discussion of why she elected not to work with some students in class and why despite branching out, she continued to mainly stay in what she called: "the Taiwanese block". As she explained:

I find it difficult to understand X's pronunciation. It did get easier over time but I still wouldn't choose to sit with her because of her pronunciation. The same is true of Sami. It would be impolite to ask him to repeat things so I would prefer not to sit with him. When I worked with them, I couldn't say anything to them 'cause I didn't understand them so I was just nodding. So it's embarrassing. Either they would feel I am stupid or they would have to know I couldn't understand them.

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

A similar tension was observed in her discussion of non-participation in one class which she did not enjoy and in which she struggled to understand the concepts being introduced. As she said:

I tried to smile a lot, I tried to keep her happy. I tried to protect the face of the teacher. I didn't want to hurt her feelings and I didn't want her to ask me any questions!

(Tina, extract from interview 3)

6.3 Huang-Fu. Falling from grace and saving my face.

6.3.1 Pre-sojourn experience: From local hero to post-graduate student.

Huang-Fu was from China. With more than 20 years of experience he was the most experienced student in the programme and at, 43, was also one of the oldest. On completion of the Masters programme, Huang-Fu returned to China and after a year took up a post as a university lecturer in a newly opened university.

Prior to his sojourn, Huang-Fu had been lecturing in a junior college in China. Huang-Fu was a model teacher in his college, had won a number of prizes for this teaching and was held in high esteem by his colleagues and students. As he explained in his portfolio:

My class is the first choice for visiting colleagues from other institutions and authoritative inspectors to look at, I have more extra-curriculum teaching invitations than my colleagues, I have got a few papers published and I am appraised as one of the model teachers in my college.

(Huang-Fu, extract from portfolio)

Huang-Fu was someone who had enjoyed considerable status in his workplace and was also someone who had not travelled outside of China prior to his decision to come to the UK. Taken together, these generated an extensive process of critical reflection for Huang-Fu, and his endeavours to manage the complex emotions this threw up were evident in his unfolding story of his experience of interculturality.

The tensions in Huang-Fu's account were evident from his first interview with me when he introduced himself in the following way:

My name is Huang-Fu, I come from China. I have more than 20 years experience. As far as I know I am one of the few in our group who has ever had anything published up to now and I have the longest teaching experience. You might wonder why I am coming here to

study so late in life. Actually, I'm interested to write papers but I usually get rejected.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 1)

In his portfolio, however, he added further to his reasons for coming to the UK to study, which were to update his knowledge, to enhance his status, and improve his career, but with the benefit of hindsight he now viewed as 'arrogant' and showed that he gave himself what he called undeserved "airs and graces". As he said:

I saw myself as a shell-collector. So I thought I knew what I came here for. Authentic English, up to date teaching methods, academic writing ability. With the decoration of these three beautiful shells, I hoped to collect here I believed my teaching career would be more fruitful. In the gown and mortarboard of a TESOL master, I could become a guru figure in the local area.

(Huang-Fu, extract from portfolio)

6.3.2 Early experiences: A fall from grace.

Status was one of two important lenses through which Huang-Fu appraised and reflected on his early experiences of interculturality during the programme both within the pre-sessional programme he attended and in the first term of the Masters programme. On the one hand, this reflected a growing realisation, that from his perspective at least, the system in which he had worked, and which had conferred a high status on him was in fact not very effective in a number of ways. This he indicated was evident in the fact that Chinese students were not 'as good' and 'as active' as other students in the English Language Centre which he saw as a collective failure:

We Chinese, we don't have any knowledge about how to contribute. This is a failing and a weakness. Other students can do this better than us.

(Huang-Fu , extract from interview 1)

In his first interview he applied this to his own previous teaching too as the following extract illustrates:

Huang-Fu: I realise I had a kind of complacency before. Now I realise that all of my past teaching was a waste of time.

- Me:** Do you? Wow!
- Huang-Fu:** If I had come earlier my teaching would have been a lot stronger.
- Me:** Gosh, that's a strong statement, isn't it? I mean, you've been teaching a long time, haven't you?
- Huang-Fu:** Yes, more than 20 years.

(Extract from interview 1)

In his portfolio he gave a number of examples of things he was learning which were leading him to hold this view as the following examples illustrate:

I once bragged that my teaching is learner-centred, yet the students were all at my disposal. They had to learn the knowledge that was neither interesting nor useful to them. They were forced to do what they were bored with for the sake of saving my face or for passing the exams

I began to realise that classroom dynamics comes from the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks and that my students were suffocated by my teaching. While I was at great pains to prepare my lesson there was no give and take. I was actually building an authoritative throne on which I would dominate the class.

(Huang-Fu, extracts from portfolio)

Collectively, these conveyed a sense of self-depreciation and what I call a fall from grace which I observed to be one of the defining ways in which he constructed his understanding of his relationship with linguistic and cultural others as will be further illustrated below.

A second way in which status was seen to play out in Huang-Fu's account of his early experiences was a need to protect his face, or preserve the status that he saw as conferred on him on account of his experience and age . Thus while he was unhappy with the evident failure of Chinese students to participate in class, he himself felt unable to do this as this might result in a loss of face. As he explained with respect to his in-class contribution, for example:

- Huang-Fu:** I must be sure of my answer. I don't want to take a risk. I know it's better to be active in class but it's difficult.
- Me:** What makes it difficult, do you think?
- Huang-Fu:** My main worry is my age. I'm older than the others.

Me: What do you mean? Do you think you are too old to be successful?

Huang-Fu: In China, when you are over 40 like me, people will say: “Oh, you are too old” and “your brain is not strong”. But in another way, I’m the oldest in the class and I have so much experience, they will be shocked to discover I don’t know something. All of this makes me hold back my contribution.

(Extract from interview 1)

The complex intertwining of his self-depreciation and his devaluing of his former elevated status together with his efforts to protect his face with reference to the other Chinese speaking students in the group were themes that played out throughout Huang-Fu’s account of his experience.

The second lens, through which Huang-Fu viewed his early experiences of interculturality, was with respect to the emotional warmth he felt people exhibited. Thus, as he recounted in his experiences in the English Language Centre, he was surprised to find that, with the exception of one teacher, teachers were generally ‘unfriendly’. As he said:

X in the ELC is similar to the way I know. He pays attention to students and their feelings but most teachers don’t. Teachers don’t do research to find out more about their students. When you pass them in the corridor they are like strangers.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 1)

Huang-Fu indicated that this made him feel ‘uncared for’ and ‘not noticed’. These perceptions may have compounded his sense of a loss of status and in part accounted for his perceptions of his experiences of working with UK students in the early part of the first term of the Masters programme:

Huang-Fu: I sit with them sometimes but I don’t always feel that they want to talk to me.

Me: How does that make you feel?

Huang-Fu: Not so happy. Because we don’t talk a lot they don’t think we are interesting people. Maybe even stupid. I am trying to change myself, to demonstrate that I am an active person so people will want to sit with me.

(Extract from interview 2)

However, to add further to this complexity, Huang-Fu himself conferred a high status on UK students, which suggested that while they might not find him interesting to talk to, this was justifiable as they were more able and qualified to talk than others as the following extract from his account illustrates:

We pay more attention to these students in class. Their language is better and we all know they have more valuable things to say.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 2)

In the early part of the programme, as with Tina above, it seemed that Huang-Fu's way of handling the complex emotions thrown up by his early encounters was to retreat to the safety of his own cultural grouping. In class he spent much of his time with Xiao Hua and Gong initially, and out of class, they formed a support network which included another Chinese PhD student and a Chinese student who had just completed her Masters at the same university. It was evident from their accounts, that both Xiao Hua and Gong held Huang-Fu in high esteem (see section 5.3.4.4, in Chapter 5 above)).

6.3.3 Moving on: Do nothing and wait it out.

In his second interview, Huang-Fu related a number of incidents both in and out of class which appeared to further add to his view of his reduced status in the eyes of others. Two of these were events that occurred with UK students and both of which might be seen at least as culturally insensitive and at worst as exhibiting a form of cultural racism of the sort reported in Rich and Troudi (2006).

Huang-Fu related the first of these as follows:

X often talks negatively about his experiences in China. He never has anything positive to say. Me, Xiao Hua and Gong, we all feel unhappy about that. For him there is nothing good about China. He's always so willing to air his opinions but he doesn't think about how others will feel.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 2)

The second, in contrast, concerned an event with a UK student who had

never visited China. This was related in the following way:

Huang Fu: Some students in Britain don't know a lot about China.

Me: Why do you say that?

Huang-Fu: For example, the other day when we were discussing how to do group work in class, X said to me: "Are Chinese students passive because of the political system there?"

Me: Oh, right. I see.

Huang-Fu: Maybe if I have an opportunity, I will have a chat with her and try to explain. This is merely a lack of knowledge. This is the way we get misrepresented.

(Huang-Fu , extract from interview 2)

In the third interview with Huang-Fu, I followed up on these two incidents and I asked him in particular if he had pursued his intention to chat to the UK student he had referred to in the second interview. His response triggered a discussion about his experiences over the year of working in one of the university canteens. The exchange highlighted two things. On the one hand how experiences outside the course were confounding a feeling of prejudice and also how his preferred strategy appeared to be not to contest these.

Me: You said you would speak to X about the comments she made. Did you?

Huang-Fu: No not yet,

Me: Why do you think that is?

Huang-Fu: I don't know why. Maybe it's easier not too. But maybe I am still not comfortable to do so because of my language.

Me: Do you still feel that people see people from China as inferior?

Huang-Fu: Yes.

Me: How does that make you feel?

Huang-Fu: I don't accept it but I just try to ignore it. I can see that when I work in the kitchen they have different views about Chinese people. For example Joan our supervisor said "Rupert will be our new assistant supervisor soon".

Me: Who is Rupert?

- Huang-Fu:** Rupert is me.
- Me:** Oh, you don't call yourself Huang-Fu there?
- Huang-Fu:** No it's easier for them if I call myself Rupert. So she started to train me how to be a supervisor but one week later a Canadian girl came to work there and they stopped talking about me getting this job and gave it to her.

(Huang-Fu, extract from interview 3)

Whereas in Ayumi and Tina's accounts above, there was an evident sense in which both took new actions or developed new perspectives on account of their experiences which could be seen to engender a process of opening up the other, this was, arguably, largely absent from Huang-Fu's account. The complexity involved in status management together with a general feeling of lack of warmth in his encounters with people from the UK at least, appeared to leave Huang-Fu to adopt a 'do nothing' strategy.

Enhancing his standing among his fellow students.

In contrast however, among many of his classmates he was increasingly seen as highly knowledgeable and highly regarded with many citing him as someone who they respected and valued and who they enjoyed working with, a sense of which is evident from accounts in 5.3.4 above several of which single out Huang-Fu.

Nevertheless, it became increasingly apparent that this did not hold for his relationship with one student Linda, also from mainland China who, as reported in chapter 5 above, made an early decision to disassociate herself from her fellow nationals. Several students (such as Baljinder and Sami) detected the mutual animosity between Huang-Fu and Linda as the course progressed and Huang-Fu's comment on this in his third interview I suggest revealed in microcosm the complexity of his emotional response to the challenges that an experience of interculturality posed for his established view of acceptable norms and values. As he said in his third interview with me:

I work well with Xiao Hua. I help her do proof-reading for her assignments and Gong too. But I have no relationship with Linda. We

never speak to one another. She rejects my assistance. I try to reflect on my own behaviour but to be honest I can't understand her attitude. It makes me feel a bit paranoid.

(Extract from interview 3).

6.4 SAMI. What's important to me, isn't necessarily what's important to you.

6.4.1 Pre-sojourn experience: Deciding to take the test.

Sami is a Saudi national but his family origins are West African. At the time of the study Sami had been working at a secondary school in Saudi Arabia for two years. Sami had never travelled to a western country prior to coming to the UK. During the year, Sami took on a job of teaching English in the Saudi school in the city at the weekend. In his second term he also met a British student, originally from East Africa, undertaking a PGCE programme, and at the end of the year they married and returned to Saudi Arabia. Sami returned to the UK to embark on a PhD programme one year ago.

Sami saw his decision to take his Masters degree in the UK as motivated in part by a dissatisfaction with aspects of his teaching, in part due to the encouragement of a friend who had studied the programme previously and in part by the opportunity it provided him to "experience multi-cultural groups" which he claimed he had never encountered before.

Sami made a number of remarks which revealed the way he approached his year as a challenge or test. He referred for example to his reason for wanting to experience other cultures in terms of discovering whether he could "learn to tolerate other cultures". The following extract from his portfolio also conveys a sense of the expectations of his sojourn too as something to be endured and likely to be difficult:

I was quite sure the voyage would not be easy but I decided to take a risk and face all the consequences. I told myself "Even if my life is miserable and hard here. I will not leave without the Masters certificate".

(Sami, extract from portfolio)

Finally, he explained how his friend had helped prepare him for his stay by warning him of the difficulties he might face. As he said in his first interview in discussion of a difficult experience in the English Language Centre to be reported below:

My friend told me the way of thinking here is quite different and that what is important to me isn't necessarily what is important to others.

(Sami, extract from interview 1)

This comment, as will become clearer below, is one which reflects his perception of his values relative to others. The ways in which he reflected and acted on his encounter with different value systems as he went through the year was, as will be shown below, a defining feature of his unfolding narrative.

6.4.2 Early experiences: Me and my religion

As with Tina and Huang-Fu above, Sami saw his time in English Language Centre as highly significant to him and devoted considerable time and space to this in his first interview and reflective paper that he wrote for his portfolio.

As Sami explained in his first interview with me, one of the reasons he attached such significance to his time in the English Language Centre was because he had “never experienced multi-cultural groups before” and was not sure how to “function” in such groups. In Sami’s account of his experiences in his first interview with me, one of which he found very challenging, it is interesting to note how religion is foregrounded in the way he interpreted events. This was evident, for example in the way he related his impressions of the different nationalities he encountered. As he said, in a very matter of fact way:

The Swiss students are very brilliant and they have no problems studying here, especially with their talking. The Mexicans, they should be familiar with English but they have a pronunciation problem. The Chinese don't speak out. They like reading and writing. On the other hand, Arabs are good at memorising things, like the Koreans. This is because of our religion and needing to memorise the Koran.

(Sami, extract from interview 1)

This was also something that was central to his account of a key event that occurred during his pre-session course, one he referred back to several times during the year. This related to a presentation he made and subsequently wrote up as an assignment. The topic he elected to speak and write about was the relationship between Islam and Terrorism and he was evidently very unhappy with the feedback he received and the comments of the tutor as he explained:

Me: So how did you find your classes in the pre-session programme?

Sami: They are ok but the tutors are mixed. Some of them understand we are from overseas but some don't understand our background and are not sensitive to us.

Me: Do you feel able to give an example of that?

(pause)

Sami: There was one tutor. He only liked students from Germany.

Me: Really? What makes you say that?

Sami: Many of us felt that. He was very critical of my work. He said my presentation was too direct. I think he thought I was trying to convert people through my talk. That I was tricking people and that I was a liar. We Arabs, we all felt kind of persecuted from this kind of thing.

(Extract from interview 1)

With respect to the write up of his assignment, Sami also complained about the numbers of times he had to draft and redraft this before it was finally considered to be of a good enough standard. When asked how he felt about this, he explained that it made him feel 'angry and frustrated' but that he realised that: "we are supposed to do things on our own" and that "this is good for me".

While these early experiences were clearly important to Sami, it appeared that these were viewed as informative rather than as events that defined the way in which he operated in the early stages of the programme. The impression he created was of someone who was striving to be impartial and even-handed in his dealings with others. Thus for example, with regard to native speaker teachers he observed:

While it is true some like to sit together and some do not allow us time to collect our thoughts before we speak, some are very good. Ruth supports us a lot and she's very patient.

(Sami, Extract from interview 2)

Similarly, while he admitted that the fact that other “non –native speaker” students did not contribute much in class was frustrating for him, he was also appreciative of what he saw as the reasons for this. As he said:

I can understand that they are shy and afraid of making mistakes in front of native –speaker students who have much better English proficiency than them, though I don't agree with their view. I treat people as individuals not native speakers.

(Sami, extract from interview 1)

6.4.3 Moving on: Expanding horizons and expanding perspectives.

By the time of Sami's second interview it was possible to detect some interesting shifts in the positions he had adopted in the early stages of his sojourn. On the one hand, he appeared to have reappraised his earlier thinking with regard to the intentions of the tutor in the English Language Centre whose viewpoints he had initially found upsetting. As he explained:

I now realise that his comments are more to do with the way you look at students here, what you expect students to do. You try to give us power. I re-read his comments a few weeks ago and I realise that he was giving me suggestions to improve and encouraging me, not challenging me, like when he wrote 'you can do it if you want!'. and 'I still believe his way of looking at different kinds of students is wrong, but now I can see some of what he did in a positive way.'

(Sami, Extract from interview 2)

He attributed this shift in his thinking to having had more exposure to the teaching styles of a variety of different lecturers during the first term of the MEd TESOL, and the sorts of comments that he had received in feedback from both formative and summative assessed work.

In contrast, however, it appeared that his earlier efforts to 'tolerate' other cultural groups in class was less in evidence. Thus for example, he appeared frustrated with the decision by many of the Chinese speaking students to form themselves into nationality enclaves in class. As he said: "I've seen the situation with most of the Asian students sitting together. It's

hard to understand how they think, how they work, why they like to do this”.

Similarly his attitude towards native speaker students had also changed somewhat and whereas before he appreciated the efforts of some to be patient with his lower level of English, he appeared to be attempting to reposition himself as superior to them. As he said: “I tell myself I’m better than them. I can speak their language but they can’t speak mine. Anyway, English is not my language”.

It appeared that from early in term 2 that Sami was also engaged in a process of rapidly expanding his out of class network. In his second term Sami took up the post of English teacher in the Saudi school and also developed a wide circle of friends in his hall of residence as Baljinder and Linda, the two students he said he was “closest to” both remarked on in their interviews with me. In his group interview at the end of the year Sami offered some insights into how his out of class life impacted on his in class attitudes in the following way:

Things that happened to me outside of class filled up my brain and as time went on, I had less interest in what was happening in the class. You could say I lost my enthusiasm for the classroom concerns.

(Sami, extract from group interview)

Thus it appeared that his rapidly expanding out of class networks were impacting both on his attitude to his in-class relationships and that the significance of these to his overall experience was increasingly minimised over time.

Sami the cultural mediator.

By the start of term 3 Sami made some striking adjustments to his appearance favouring bright colours and West African ‘kaftans’ with jeans. When I commented on this one day he explained that he found it much easier to be an African in the UK than an Arab so he had decided to promote this part of his identity as the following extract from my research log illustrates:

I saw Sami today for the first time in a while. He looked great but really different too. I remarked on this and he told me he had decided to show his African side a bit more. When I asked him why he said it was because he thought it was easier to be an African than an Arab in the UK. I'm intrigued he's doing this and it's interesting he gave me the reason he did.

(Extract from researcher log, summer term)

During his third interview, we discussed this further and it transpired that from his perspective this decision was more to do with the influence of his growing friendships than to do with the pressure he might have felt from being a Muslim in the UK. As he explained: My closest friend is from South Africa and I feel I can see the point of different ways of life so why not show this in my clothes?

It was also evident from our discussions during this third interview that Sami saw himself as having moved from a perspective of learning to: "tolerate other cultures" to one of developing the capacity to mediate other cultures and in doing so, he had been able to critically reflect on the significance of religion to his relationships with others that had been evident in his earlier interviews as the following extracts from his later interviews illustrate. Reflecting on the in class dynamics he remarked:

We have developed a general understanding of each other. This is a good thing as in our country we don't have a good knowledge of others as we are Muslims and Arabs only. Here I found many different religious and non-religious groups too. I learnt how to understand other views and that we all share the same problems. We just need to understand this and we can work out how to get along.

(Extract from group interview)

I have no idea about Christians until here and I never met a Chinese person in my life. We all look at things from different angles. I realise now that something fairly insignificant to me is really significant to others and that something significant for me seems small to someone else. But now I think we can stand in each other's shoes better.

(Extract from portfolio)

In his portfolio, he assessed how far he felt he had met one of his original objectives in coming to the UK (to experience multi-cultural groups) in the

following way:

I have taken many advantages of this experience as it represents part of my aim of coming to the UK. I am happy with the achievements I have made in my way of thinking even if this way of thinking seems to give me lots of headaches. People at home think I have complicated my life by my new way of thinking. But I can see the point of different ways of life and I can mediate for others about cultures when I get home.

(Extract from portfolio)

6.4 Summary.

The four narrative accounts presented in this chapter reveal the very different ways in which the experience of interculturality afforded by these participant's sojourns in the UK informed their learning about self in relation to cultural other. All four reveal that this generated a profound process of critical reflection that opened them up to new feelings and required they develop new lines of thinking and action that were a direct result of this experience of interculturality.

However, these accounts also suggest that while this form of learning might resonate to some degree with the ways in which this has come to be defined in the literature, as reported in chapter 3, it would also seem to contain a number of other facets and features that have been overlooked and which add depth and texture to the developmental trajectories for intercultural learning presented in the existing research literature. In the following chapter I turn to a discussion of these findings within a broader discussion of the findings of the study as a whole.

Chapter 7. Discussion and implications.

7.1 Introduction.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results presented in chapters 5 and 6 and to consider the implications of these for an understanding of the relationship between learning and an experience of interculturality and how this might be best supported in universities in the UK.

The discussion will be organised around the research questions presented in chapter 4 above. In the first part of the chapter I will reflect on the results regarding the nature of participants' experiences of interculturality resulting from their sojourn and the sorts of learning this was seen to afford (the focus of research questions 1 and 2), with respect to the conceptual understanding of learning presented in chapter 3 and existing research literature on learning and the international student sojourn. This will be followed by a discussion of the degree to which participants learn about interculturality (the focus of my third research question), the forms this takes, and the ways in which this mirrors or extends the existing work on interculturality reported in chapter 3 above. On the basis of this, I will then go on to consider a number of theoretical and pedagogical implications of the findings for theory and practice.

7.2 Experiences and their relationship to learning.

In this section I will consider the findings in light of my first two research questions which sought to identify participants' experiences during their sojourn and the sorts of learning these were seen to generate.

7.2.1 The learning site.

Participants' accounts document a wide range of events and encounters during their sojourn which they deem to be significant to the generation of a number of forms of learning. All in all, the experiences participants saw as significant and as informing their learning suggesting that the 'learning site' reached well beyond the immediate physical confines of the classroom. Accounts made reference to experiences that might take place in class or in their out of class lives. Learning was seen to evolve directly from these experiences but it was also evident that for some at

least, that an out of class event might be significant due to the way it led participants to reflect on their in class behaviour as was the case with Ayumi, for example, as described in chapter 6 (see 6.1.3) above, who described how her out of class interactions gave her the confidence to renegotiate her in class interactions to some degree.

In addition, all participants made reference to previous experiences, whether pre-sojourn or in the early stages of their stay in the UK prior to starting their Masters programme and linked these in various ways to their on-going experiences during the duration of the programme itself. For many there was a clear sense of how pre- programme events and encounters continued to play out during their in-course experiences, particularly in the early stages of the programme. Thus for example Tina's pre-programme struggles with her English proficiency (see chapter 6, 6.2.2) were seen to define her initial decisions to work with others who she felt would be most tolerant of her poor language skills. In contrast, for Huang-Fu (see 6.3.2), an experience of loss of status resulting from events and encounters in the pre-sessional language course he undertook appeared to set the tone and direction of his evolving storyline for the duration of the study.

Many participants conveyed a sense of anticipated future events in their accounts, particularly with regard to future employment and the status that a Masters degree and overseas sojourn would confer upon them when they returned home. This is evident, for example in the comments made by Baljinder and Linda about what people would expect of them on their return home (see chapter 5, section 5.4). For Gong, her on-going discussions with her colleagues about what she was learning in the UK and how this might help them all address the new course book that was to be introduced, appeared to make an important contribution to her overall learning experience. At the end of the year she decided to pursue issues arising from these discussions in her dissertation.

Finally, as Montgomery (2010) found in her study, technology allowed these participants to stay in close contact with friends, family and colleagues back home. On the one hand, these contacts were seen to

provide important emotional support, as, for example, is evident in the accounts offered by Tina and Ayumi in chapter 6 above, but might also serve as an on-going reminder of the world they would be returning to, as in the case of Sami reporting a conversation he had had with his father who was concerned with how much he was changing (see chapter 5, section 5.4). That is to say, as was also evident to some degree in Gong's account, referred to above, there was a sense in which links to home served to monitor at least some participants' encounters with new experiences during their sojourn. Thus, learning was also a manifestation of the ways in which they were engaged in a process of on-going negotiation between their past, present and future.

7.2.2. The nature of participants' experiences.

In general the experiences recounted in participants' accounts can be broadly categorised into two main groups. Those pertaining to the pedagogic practices they encountered in class, and those concerning their relationships with others both in and out of class.

7.2.2.1 Engagement with the pedagogic norms and protocols during their studies.

As reported in 5.3 above, participants in this study made reference to a number of pedagogic practices in their accounts which they deemed significant to their learning, whether positively or negatively. These included references to the programme structure, the assessment mechanisms, the amount and nature of support for learning available, and teaching and learning approaches. Broadly speaking, as highlighted in the programme aims and content in appendix 9, the programme emphasised an experiential and task-based approach to learning, encouraged active participation in whole-class discussions and in small group work, promoted and valued critical thinking, and emphasised self-direction and independent learning. Participants' accounts demonstrated an awareness of this and of the fact that mastery of these norms and values was important for their success.

For many participants references to pedagogic practices were made to highlight the challenges these posed initially, and in some cases continued

to pose throughout the year. While for some, the challenges these presented were viewed negatively and as things they had to struggle to adapt to. It was also the case that many saw these in a more positive light, as learning opportunities, albeit sometimes painful ones, as the findings with regard to assessment practices in 5.3.2 above illustrate. In many accounts, participants indicated a shift in their perspective with regard to their experience of pedagogic practices over time. For many, as the year progressed and as they were better able to manage the demands they faced, they cast practices they had initially viewed negatively in a more positive light. For example, this was the case with Linda's growing appreciation of critical questioning and Eric's changing views on the nature of supportive practice (see 5.3.1.1 and 5.3.3.1 in chapter 5) For some however, it was the case that practices that they had initially felt enthusiastic about were later in the year cited as ones they were now more circumspect about as for example is evident in Sami and Song's changing views on active participation in 5.3.3.1 above. With regard to support needs, these were widely regarded as constantly shifting both in form and response with several participants remarked on increasing need for support once more when they embarked on their thesis writing stage.

These findings can be seen to resonate with other studies undertaken into international students' endeavours to work with the academic practices they encounter during their study abroad sojourns. Those undertaken by Turner (2006) into Chinese undergraduate students experiences of learning in a business school and Cadorath (2005) into how international post-graduate students' learning styles are transformed as a result of a year-long sojourn, for example, highlight similar issues to those remarked on by participants in this study. Similarly the ways in which participants views of academic practices and protocols changed over time, revealing the complex and often non-linear nature of their experiential trajectories, echoes the findings of the study undertaken by Gu et al (2010) discussed in chapter 3.

However, the diverse ways they responded to their experiences, evident in the findings reported in chapters 5 and 6 above, highlights the need to recognise and acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of the international student body, noted in chapter 2, and the problems with the still

widespread practice of adopting homogenising discourses with respect to international students. These findings can be seen to add further weight to the growing body of literature which contests the value of this perspective in explaining the response of international students to the academic practices they encounter (as for example in Ryan & Louis, 2007; Chalmer & Volet,1997).

Thus while many participants compared and contrasted their experience of pedagogical practices during their sojourn with others they had encountered previously, typically in their home countries, there was no clear sense that their responses to their experiences were determined by these. The results, for example contested widely held stereotype regarding learners from East Asian countries such as the belief that students are passive in class and do not participate orally. While there were some who were observed not to engage in much whole class verbal participation such as Ida and Gong, equally there were those, such as Eric and Terence, who did. In this way the findings can be seen to further endorse the growing challenges to unhelpful essentialist constructs such as 'The Chinese Learner' (Ryan & Louis, 2007; Grimshaw, 2007; Clark & Gieve 2006).

Rather, different responses were seen more to reflect the different ways in which individual learners engaged with practices during the sojourn itself or other facets of their personal and professional histories including, professional experience, previous travel and study overseas and issues around language proficiency. For example it was interesting to note how previous experience of study overseas impacted on their perception of their support needs and the ways in which the university, and their tutors constructed them as international students. To give one example of this, while there were those who felt overwhelmed by their experiences and saw themselves as needing a great deal of support (see for example 5.3.3.above where Fah and Sami describe their desire for more support, there were also those who resented this. Thus, as shown in 5. 3.3 above, both Sang-ho and Eric described the support structure as patronizing and infantilizing and in doing this were seen to contest the discourse of international students with which the institution sought to position them (Devos, 2003 and Koehne, 2006).

7.2.2.2 The nature and significance of their relationships.

All participants made reference to relationships whether in or out of class and attached considerable significance to these as evidenced in sections 5.3.4 and 5.4 in chapter 5. Mention was made of teachers, 'native speaker' students, other international students and their fellow nationals. Mention was also made of their interactions with UK nationals in their out of class life such as through employment they took up, in service encounters and in church groups and via student societies. There was an evident sense that an important facet of their sojourn was the development of relationships across perceived linguistic and cultural divides and that there were a number of things that affected how far they achieved this and in what ways they approached this. Recurrent themes in their accounts in this respect concerned how far they felt able to connect emotionally with the other person, language proficiency and their perception of their position and the ways in which they were being positioned by others.

Emotional connectedness.

A feeling of emotional connectedness with others, especially with teachers was a recurrent theme in the narrative accounts. For several, a link between this and learning was explicitly stated and this was also implicit in the accounts of many more. Participants talked about the importance of warmth from the teacher, fair treatment and the right to association and trust as important facets of this (as discussed in section 5.2.3 above). For several participants, (see for example Huang-Fu in chapter 6 above) teachers in the university were seen as less open, approachable and friendly than those in their own countries. In contrast, however, one participant, Terence, suggested that he found his teachers to be more approachable in the USA and had expected that they would also be in the UK and was surprised to find that they weren't (see section 5.2.3).

There has been surprisingly little research undertaken into the importance of emotional connectedness to relationship building either with regard to international students or to the university student population more broadly. Among the few writers who have written about emotional rapport and the teacher relationship in particular, there has been a tendency to see these views as manifesting cultural practices and assumptions. Wu (2002) and ,

Watkins & Zhang (2006) for example see emotional warmth as a quality of good teachers in China. However, it is interesting to note that in a recent study into UK students perceptions of effective teachers in higher education, such things as care, respect, approachability, concern, empathy, fairness and friendliness were all seen as central to their perceptions of good relationships with tutors (Heffernan et al, 2010). This would suggest that these things are in essence attributes of relationship building per se rather than attributable to particular cultural norms and conventions.

Language proficiency.

The importance of language proficiency and its impact on participants' relationships was something that was brought up by many participants. With regard to the importance of developing English proficiency, there was a clear sense that many participants saw developing their English language proficiency as an important outcome of their experience and part of the reason why they had elected to study in an English speaking country. As teachers of English in their own countries, developing their English proficiency was also seen as a means of enhancing their professional standing in their teaching community on their return home. This is clearly evident in Tina's account in chapter 6, for example. It may also have been an important motivator in the attempts by two participants (Song and Ayumi) to seek out more opportunities to interact with UK students and to widen their social networks outside of the class as, as Caruana & Spurling (2007) observe. It is notable, however, that the majority did not actively pursue opportunities to enhance their English including Tina, who claimed this was one of the main reasons why she had come to the UK (see chapter 6, 6.2.1). Somewhat ironically, it seemed that her lack of proficiency meant she felt unable to form the relationships that might have led her to develop this further as her narrative account in chapter 6 above, shows.

Indeed, many participants cited language proficiency as playing a significant role in delimiting their ability to form relationships with others, particularly in the early stages of the sojourn, whether in or out of class (see 5.4). Participants' accounts also conveyed a strong sense of how

they felt their language proficiency positioned them relative to others. Huang-Fu's account in chapter 6 is one of a number which highlight this as shown in 5.4.2 in chapter 5. Huang-Fu and Baljinder both highlight the ways in which linguistic fluency and intellectual capability get conflated in people's minds as Prescott & Hellsten, (2005) have pointed out. Their accounts reveal how they initially assumed that 'native speaker students' were more able and, in Huang-Fu's case in particular how this might led native speakers to see him as less able. As participants' proficiency improved, however, there is also a sense that this allowed them to feel more confident to branch out and expand their networks both in and out of class and many appeared to use this as currency to renegotiate the ways in which they saw themselves relative to UK students in the group as is evident from the group discussions reported in 5.3.4.2 in chapter 5 above and as illustrated in Ayumi and Tina's accounts in chapter 6.

Racial and cultural othering.

A third theme that was evident in several accounts of their experiences was one which related to the ways in which they felt themselves to be subjected to racial or cultural othering during their sojourn. Othering, which can be defined as a process of reducing people to less than what they are through essentialist stereotyping (Holliday et al, 2010; Rich & Troudi, 2006), can take many different forms and is something that was evident in a number of participants' accounts. Although reference to racial othering was only explicitly highlighted by two participants, Sami and Eric, it is implicit in Huang-Fu's account (see 6.3.3 above) of his being passed over for promotion and in his account of his exchanges with one native speaker student's views of the food in China. It is also likely that this was what lay behind Song's account of his travels in Holland (see 5.4.3) and his relief at returning to the UK. On the basis of these accounts it is not possible to confirm whether these participants were subjected to racial othering or not. Nevertheless, there is an apparent sense that they *felt* otherised, whether on grounds of ethnicity, language, and even religion, as in Sami's case (see 6.4.2 above) and as such, undertaking their sojourn entailed a process of confronting the ways in which other's saw then as culturally and linguistically different, and not always in positive ways.

To sum up, taken together, participants accounts of their experiences show how these were not only a backdrop against which their learning took place but were constituted by their own engagement and interpretation of these. These experiences were a form of learning in themselves as engaging in them was a process of encountering the various discourses by which others were seeking to define them (such as international student and cultural and linguistic other) and working out what to do about this. I will discuss this further in section 7.3 below as the sort of learning that this generated is, I suggest, a component of the intercultural learning which is an important focus of interest in this study.

The impact of emotional connectedness, language proficiency and othering on participants' relational networks.

The precise ways the themes of emotional connectedness, language proficiency and othering were seen to impact on relationship building varied from individual to individual as has been illustrated in chapter 6 above. However, two broad observations with regard to their relational networks can be made. Firstly, as has been observed in a number of studies (see for example Coates, 2005 and Maundeni, 2001), there was a sense that participants tended, especially in the first term, to mostly network with students who shared their own nationality whether in and out of class. On the one hand there was an evident sense that compatriots could provide a safe haven and support at a time when things were new and felt to be particularly challenging (as can be observed in 5.2.3 above). However, it was also the case that these acted as a constraining force on some participants and made it difficult for them to break out. As can be seen in 5.3.4.2 above, those participants who opted out of these nationality enclaves in my study were un-popular and found to be threatening. Maundeni (2001) described a similar phenomenon in her study into the enclaves formed by African students in UK universities.

A second observation concerns the fact that as the two relational networks shown in appendices 6 and 7 illustrate, in general these participants did not mix with UK students much in class and, apart from Song and Ayumi, very few made friends with UK students or other UK nationals outside of the university. While this has been construed as a

problem (see for example Merrick, 2004) participants in my study appeared largely unconcerned about this in their interviews with me. Conversely, as Montgomery (2010) found in her study, over time participants started to build networks with other international students who did not share their nationality both in and out of class, and as such, their experiences afforded them a substantial sphere of interculturality in spite of the lack of contact with UK students within which they might engage in a process of intercultural learning.

7.2.2. Learning from experience.

The results reported in chapter 5 and 6 above appear to confirm the social, situated and embodied nature of learning as proposed in chapter 3 above. Participants' descriptions of their learning were closely connected to and seen to emerge from particular experiences, whether these were perceived to be positive or negative and whether these took place in class or out of class. In this sense they appeared to confirm the conceptual understanding of learning developed in chapter 3 (3.2 above). Namely that these experiences afforded learning opportunities, whether formal or informal, and that learning evolved through their physical and emotional as well as cognitive engagement with these experiences.

However, while participants shared many experiences in common, it was also clear that they attached different significance to these. As explained in chapter 5, there was a clear sense that there was no one to one correlation between an experience and its perceived significance and thereby how far and in what ways this was seen to facilitate learning. Rather, there was a clear sense that participants' responses to particular experiences could only be understood by paying attention to their evolving storyline as illustrated by the narrative accounts in chapter 6.

A final observation with regard to the interplay between learning and experience in participants accounts was the significance of relationships to this. In other words, precisely because their experiences took place in a peopled world, the experience-reflection-action cycle was seen to manifest as practical intersubjectivity, that is to reveal the profoundly transactional and relational nature of their learning experiences referred to in 3.2 above. The significance of relationships was evident in their accounts in a number

of ways. Firstly, in the fact that the vast majority of experiences mentioned by participants were ones that involved people and their verbal and non verbal behaviours. People were also cited as significant sources of support that helped or hindered their developing learning trajectories. Furthermore, their perceptions of others or their assumptions as to how they were perceived by others, led participants to take up particular positions during their sojourn and in many cases, to reposition themselves as they went through the year in accordance with their on-going experiences with these people and their evolving networks. Finally, as will be discussed further below, participants' experiences of relationality were also cited as important sources of learning, which I have entitled learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other.

To sum up, taken together, these findings can be seen to illustrate the profoundly experiential nature of learning for these participants and the lateral, temporal and dialogic dimensions of learning as highlighted in the complementary perspectives on learning offered by the transactional, dialogic and positioning orientations of Dewey, Bakhtin and Harre in chapter 3 above.

7.2.3 Learning forms identified in participants' accounts.

As discussed at the end of chapter 5, five forms of learning were identified in participants' accounts. These were:

- Learning about self
- Learning about self as learner
- Learning subject knowledge and skills
- Learning how to be successful in this setting
- Learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other.

As also stated at the end of chapter 5, precisely because these forms of learning were seen to evolve over time and out of their on-going in and out of class experiences, these tended to intersect and overlap in complex ways.

In light of the learning objectives and transferrable skills provided in the programme documentation show in appendix 9, several of these (notably the second and third forms) might be seen to reflect the formal course structure content and thereby be seen to evidence formal learning, while others might arguably be seen to evidence informal learning as discussed in the conceptual understanding of learning discussed in chapter 3 (3.2). However, as observed in chapter 5, these forms of learning were seen to emerge in a variety of ways and were by no means exclusively developed as a result of the efforts of the programme tutors or the materials and other formal opportunities provided. Thus, the findings suggest, as Colley et al (2003) have pointed out, that not only are formal and informal learning opportunities present in all settings, but that they intersect in complex ways.

Applying a social and relational model of learning to an understanding of learning in respect of an experience of interculturality and taking a grounded lived experience approach to data collection as was done in this study has revealed a wide range of possible learning outcomes. Many of these, with the possible exception of learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other, might be those found to evolve from engagement in any formal learning site, irrespective of whether this provides an experience of interculturality or not. A framework developed by Biesta (2009a) for example, proposes three main functions of an educational experience. Namely, qualification, socialisation and subjectification, all of which, I suggest are evidenced in my findings.

The first of these, the qualification function of education, is one which engages with the role of education in ensuring that conditions are in place to enable students to achieve the qualification that they have signed up for. The third form of learning mentioned above could be one associated with this function of education. The second, referred to by Biesta (2009a) as the socialisation function of education, is one that resonates with situated learning perspectives, including the community of practice perspective developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) mentioned in chapter 3 above (3.2) refers to the ways in which educational experiences, whether intended or not, inevitably involve a process of socialisation, whether this takes the form of a conscious attempt to induct

students into the norms and practices of a given academic discipline or whether this refers to the more questionable efforts of the institution to impose the regulatory norms and practices of the institution on to the student. This would seem to align with the fourth form of learning outlined above, learning how to be successful in this setting.

Finally, the third, referred to by Biesta as the subjectification function of education, refers for the ways in which an educational experience can contribute to students empowerment and emancipation as subjects. The first and second forms of learning identified in this study would seem to evidence this, in that in general participants found a clear opportunity to develop a sense of themselves as autonomous subjects.

It is however, striking that in this account, while relationality is implicit in the presentation of these three functions of education, that this is not discussed explicitly in Biesta's framework. Thus there is no mention here of the fifth form of learning identified through the analysis of participants' accounts; learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other. One important reason for this arguably is that this is a unique and a distinctive form of subjectification that is afforded by an experience of interculturality. That is to say, while in some ways an experience of interculturality will potentially afford many of the learning opportunities that are possible in *any* experience of learning, it also has the capacity to generate a special form of learning, that is what we might call intercultural learning.

7.3 The relationship between an experience of interculturality and intercultural learning.

In what follows I will discuss the fifth form of learning identified above, learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other, which as explained above, appears to be a potentially distinctive outcome of an experience of interculturality.

My discussion will draw upon the various ways in which this learning was evidenced in accounts highlighted at the end of chapter 5, referred to collectively as learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other, and my subsequent exploration of the ways in which this was seen to evolve across four individual narrative cases as presented in chapter 6.

7.3.1. Intercultural learning: outcomes and processes revisited.

In chapter 3 (see 3.5.3) I undertook a review of the research into intercultural learning with respect to the potential outcomes of engagement in intercultural encounters which highlighted how this is seen to promote critical reflexivity with respect to self and other as cultural beings through which a greater openness can be generated, broadly seen to comprise increased tolerance and empathy for the other. At the end of chapter 5, I provided the broad learning outcomes for participants in this study, which included learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other, which I suggest is a form of intercultural learning. Table 7.1 below contrasts the learning outcomes reported in the literature with those identified in this study. This I suggest, shows that while there is a good degree of similarity between the two accounts, in the study I undertook, an important additional outcome, one that has not been highlighted in existing studies is what participants learnt about their positioning relative to others and the strategic ways they can manage this.

Table 7.1. A contrastive analysis of intercultural learning outcomes reported in the literature and those identified in this study.

Key outcomes identified in research studies in Chapter 3	Findings from this study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical reflexivity of self and other as cultural beings • Openness to other Empathy Tolerance <hr/>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying similarities across difference • Acknowledging and valuing different perspectives • Seeing beyond the cultural other • Becoming more open-minded <hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of cultural and linguistic positioning of self • Strategic management of linguistic and cultural positioning

However, as also mentioned at the end of chapter 5, to generalize about my findings in this way is to over-simplify, as in reality participants'

accounts revealed that these things were acquired to varying degrees by participants, manifested in different ways and led to different 'actions'. Indeed, as I have suggested in chapter 3 (see 3.4) adopting a transactional, dialogic and relational mode of learning makes it difficult to isolate outcomes out from an on-going individual learning trajectory as these are always the result of previous actions and prospective as well, in so far as they are always orientated towards a sense of projected future. In other words, since learning is on-going, comprised of a dynamic intersubjective meaning-making process of experience-action-reflection, it makes it difficult, and possibly counterproductive, to focus discussions of intercultural learning on discreet outcomes rather than on learning processes.

An understanding of the process of intercultural learning, as discussed in chapter 3 (3.5.3), has also been the focus of a considerable amount of attention in the literature. While much of this has focused on describing learning processes by means of models which detail the stages (personal and psychological) individuals go through in the development of interculturality, there has been more interest in recent years in exploring the lived experience of interculturality and the sorts of things that are learnt. These have raised questions about the ways in which these models concentrate on 'universals' in intercultural learning and present this as a linear process entailing the movement from one discreet stage to another. Moreover they have highlighted, amongst other things the importance of locating learning within discrete individual developmental trajectories borne out of their experiences and the differentiated and potentially non-linear nature of these. This has also been my approach to developing my understanding and description of the process of intercultural learning in the study reported in this thesis.

Adopting a narrative approach has suggested that individual intercultural learning trajectories are those which can be seen to evolve around what Sole (2007, p.206) has referred to as 'positional shifts' that is the ways in which particular encounters with others leads them to generate new understandings of their cultural, social and personal subjectivities vis-a-vis

others and to take up new positions and new lines of action. Below I turn to a consideration of what adopting this perspective contributes to an understanding of intercultural learning.

7.3.2. Learning to live interculturally – insights from the narrative accounts.

While the narrative accounts presented in chapter 6 reveal four very different individual trajectories of intercultural learning, I suggest that they also highlight three inter-related components of an intercultural learning process around which a comparison of the different narrative can be organized. In each account the learning that is generated is seen to manifest the particular ways in which these interact in a participant's unfolding narrative leading. These are:

- Committing to an on-going dialogue with linguistic and cultural others
- Working out how to live together.
- Developing strategies to manage relational dilemmas.

I will discuss each of these in turn below.

7.3.2.1 Committing to an on-going dialogue with linguistic and cultural others

An important observation to make about all of the participants is that the very decision to undertake a one year overseas sojourn for study purposes illustrates to some degree or another, a commitment to dialoguing with difference. While a central preoccupation is undoubtedly with obtaining the Master's degree for these participants, in all 14 accounts, there was an evident sense that participants were open to the possibilities that their sojourn could afford, even if only at the level of the ways this dialogue could lead them to a critical awareness of themselves as foreign language educators. From Dewey's (1938) perspective, as mentioned in chapter 3, taking the decision to travel abroad for study purposes is likely to provide just the sort of 'disturbed equilibrium' that is

the hallmark of a quality learning experience and one which provides us with considerable potential for learning. As indicated at the end of chapter 5, there is evidence in all of the learner accounts of intercultural learning.

With respect to the 4 narrative accounts presented in chapter 6 above, it can be seen that two: Ayumi and Sami, explicit reference is made to the possibility that their sojourn could afford them to learn more about interculturality. Whereas, in contrast, for Huang-Fu and Tina, their orientation towards their sojourn was presented more in terms of enhancing their linguistic and professional knowledge. While these different orientations to the experience of interculturality that their sojourn could afford them may have played a role in their learning, it was their on-going commitment to dialogue with linguistic and cultural others during their sojourn that is seen to be a more important factor in the sorts of learning that this experience generated for them. Ayumi's trajectory, for example, in contrast to Huang-Fu's, highlights the different ways in which participants commit to on-going dialogue with others and the ways in which this leads them to develop very different trajectories with regard to intercultural learning. The reasons for this are seen to reflect their experiences of learning to live together and the different strategies they developed when faced with relational dilemmas, as I will discuss below.

7.3.2.2. Working out how to live together.

A second facet of their intercultural learning, closely aligned to the one above and developing strategies to manage relational dilemmas to be discussed below, was working out how to live together. As mentioned in 7.2. above, the various accounts highlight how they gradually expanded their networks both in and out of class, and as the second of the two visual representations of their relational networks shows in appendix 7 , over time participants identified more people they liked to work with or felt close to the group. In this respect they might be seen to form a community, albeit a transitory one. This is one which can be seen to evolve out of their efforts to work out how to live together but which also over time might be seen to have defined the ways in which they were able to live together. Given the transitory and short-lived nature of the community they formed, this is best understood to operate as a small culture (Holliday, 1999),

rather than representing a community of practice in the ways in which Montgomery (2010) suggested to be the case in her study.

Rathjie (2007) makes the important point that communication always serves to generate community, and that engaging in an experience of interculturality will therefore always be orientated towards the generation of a 'culture' as part of this process. To put this another way, as Fougere (1998) has argued, while interculturality opens up space, it is always a stepping stone to the development of a new place, and thus, arguably these participants were engaged in a process of creating a collective place and a facet of intercultural learning is therefore what they learn from their engagement in this process.

It seems likely that the community that evolved reflected in part the varying degrees of commitment to dialoguing with others that individual participants were prepared or able to sustain. In Ayuimi's account there is a real sense of how significant she felt the establishment of this community to be and of the commitment to dialogue this required which she endeavoured to sustain over the whole of her sojourn. However, in other accounts, such as Sami's, there was evidence of less commitment to this over time, due his increasing investment in other out of class intercultural networks. For Tina and Huang-Fu, while they demonstrated a commitment to dialogue, language difficulties (Tina) and the experience of othering (Huang-Fu) meant that their primary commitment was to those students with whom they shared pre-existing cultural and linguistic norms. Thus within the in-class community there were other smaller cultures, such as an affiliation among East Asian students, and friendship groups that were based around who they shared their accommodation with.

The evolving networks within the group can be seen to manifest the ways in which they sought to manage the relational dilemmas they encountered as will be discussed below. They also manifest the ways in which a part of their intercultural learning was working out how to live together, and how the decisions they made went on to inform their on-going intercultural learning trajectories.

7.3.2.3. Managing relational dilemmas and the role of relational mindfulness

The third facet of intercultural learning I have suggested is evident in their accounts is managing relational dilemmas, and is, I suggest, in many ways the most significant. It was the cumulative effect of what they learnt from their efforts to manage relational dilemmas that informed the extent and ways in which they sought to maintain their commitment to dialogue with difference over the year. Moreover, this was also instrumental with regard to what they learnt about living together and this impacted on the sorts of networks they formed with others.

I suggest that the process of managing their relationships might be referred to as relational mindfulness. In some respects what I propose is not dissimilar to the concept of mindfulness adopted by intercultural communication and psychology theorists such as Ting-Toomey (1999) and (2003). Ting-Toomey (1999:16) describes this as a cognitive process entailing: "Being aware of our own and others behaviour in the situation and paying focused attention to the process of communication taking place between us and dissimilar others". However, in line with the embodied understanding of learning proposed in chapter 3, I understand this to be 'felt' as well as 'thought' and to entail a sense of their relationship with the other as entailing a negotiation of the power relations that hold between them. Below I will consider the different ways in which relational mindfulness was seen to play out in the four narrative accounts presented in chapter 6. In doing this I will highlight a number of concepts which relate to this sense of relational mindfulness that I see as lying at the heart of their intercultural learning trajectories. These include, recognition, a concept first put forward by Charles Taylor (1994), the right to impose reception and audibility as put forward by Bourdieu (1977) , the concept of face and impression management (Goffman. 1959) and the notion of ontological security versus ontological risk, informed by the work of Anthony Giddens (1991) and Ulrich Beck (1992)

Recognition and audibility.

As I have argued in chapter 3, interculturality is by its definition a process which entails the ways in which people with markedly different linguistic

and socio-cultural background endeavour to engage in a process of communication and meaning making. While I have rejected essentialist understandings of this and emphasised the situated relational nature of this process, it is also one, as I have acknowledged, which needs to accommodate the ways in which power is manifest in intercultural exchanges and the ways in which cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences are seen to play a part in this.

Reading through the four narrative accounts in chapter 6, suggests that power issues play an important part in participants intercultural learning trajectories and is significant to the ways in which people develop strategic responses to the relational dilemmas they are presented with. The concepts of recognition and audibility are helpful in conceptualizing this. The concept of recognition introduced by Taylor (1994) highlights the importance of being recognised by others in the way we recognise ourselves and how if we are not recognised for who we think we are, or misrecognised through a process of othering, this can lead to a negative sense of self particularly if: “the people or society mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves,” (Taylor, 1994, p.27). Arguably this process can generate a number of feelings. On the one hand this might lead to a greater determination for our own sense of ourselves to be recognised and continue to struggle for our right to audibility, or as Bourdieu (1977:648), argues, to “impose reception” on the other. However, this might also lead us to experience an identity crisis and a host of associated emotions, including as was mentioned by one of the participants in the study undertaken by Rich & Troudi (2006) reported in chapter 3 above, a feeling of paranoia.

Issues around recognition and audibility were evident in all of the participant’s accounts suggesting that this is likely to be significant to the development of intercultural learning. In Huang-Fu’s case, this appeared to be particularly in evidence around his dealings with UK nationals with a sense of inferiority, and a general self-depreciation and paranoia permeating the story he presented to me. Huang-Fu appeared to accept the various difficult encounters he had with an air of resignation, and retreated to the safer confines of the international community, particularly

the East Asian student body.

It is interesting to contrast Huang-Fu's response with that of Tina, who feeling similarly afflicted by a sense of inadequacy on her arrival in the English Language Centre owing to her language problems, took a proactive stance in dealing with these. Her journey through the year shows the way in which her improving language ability gave her back her voice and in doing this, allowed her to reposition herself to some degree with regard to the UK students who she had felt intimidated by.

The picture with regard to Sami shows how, like Tina, he was proactive in his quest for recognition. Sami felt himself to be subjected to a form of cultural racism on account of his religion in his encounters with one teacher in the English Language Centre, but as with Tina, he pursued a proactive strategy to gain recognition from the extensive network of friends from within the wider international community he made. As ethnically a black African, it appeared that Sami was able to foreground his African identity in order to fit in, possibly because of his perceived failure to impose reception of who he was through his identity as a Saudi Arabian student. Although in discussions with me as to why he had decided to wear African attire, he did not see this as the case (see 6.5 above).

Finally, it is interesting to note how recognition and audibility played out in Ayumi's account. As with Tina, Ayumi's account is one that highlights the ways in which improved language skills were seen to enable her to impose reception and gain more of a voice. Ayumi's account highlights a struggle for recognition among other international students. Her account of her early experiences suggests she felt misrecognised on account of other students' expectations of her capacity to procure cameras and other goods from Japan. Whereas Tina drew upon the support of the Taiwanese student community to enable her to overcome communication challenges she faced, such as in getting herself heard in the mobile phone shop, Ayumi, did not have a Japanese community she could draw upon in the same way. However, she eventually found the courage to ask other international students and later UK students for advice and support, and the introduction to different communication strategies and different

perspectives through which she could view the events she encountered were important contributions to her intercultural learning trajectory.

To sum up, recognition and audibility were seen as important aspects of participants' experience, and events and encounters where they were confronted with issues relating to this were key moments of learning. Nevertheless, the ways in which they responded to these were variable. While for Ayumi, Sami and Tina, the strategic responses developed led them to work on seeking out ways to impose reception, for Huang-Fu, he appeared, on the surface at least, to adopt a position that had a detrimental effect on his self worth.

Face

Another concept that is helpful to introduce with regard to the participants' narrative accounts is the concept of face. Indeed, this was a concept explicitly invoked in two of the accounts. As Oaten & Franklin (2009:109) note, face is a concept that is difficult to define precisely but is one that is closely aligned with self worth, dignity and identity and drive by a desire to maintain a sense of respect, status, reputation and competence whether for oneself or for the other. It is therefore, on the one hand, part of our efforts at impression management (Goffman, 1959) but can also be evident in the ways in which we are mindful of the ways in which others are also engaged in a process of impression management.

Face was another theme that was seen to run through Huang-Fu's accounts and an evident strategic response to the relational dilemmas he experienced with others. As was evident in his account, Huang-Fu saw himself as someone who had enjoyed considerable status in his professional career in China. Huang-Fu also explained how he saw his age and considerable professional experience as conferring a particular status on him in the eyes of other East Asian students in class and he conveyed a need to preserve this in his account. While managing his relationships with UK students and other UK nationals he encountered in his work appeared to leave him feeling inferior and inadequate, the classroom appeared to be a place where he could achieve the recognition he was looking for. Over time, Huang-Fu came to be seen as a well-

respected and valued member of the class community. Thus it appeared that this classroom environment acted as what Canagarajah (1997:193) refers to as a 'safe house in the contact zone': one that allowed him to retain his self-worth. Nevertheless, it was a strategy which appeared to lead him away from maximising the potential for developing the sense of openness to linguistic and cultural other that Ayumi, Tina and Sami were able to achieve to a greater extent.

In Tina's narrative account face is seen to operate in two different senses. On the one hand, she describes a process of retreat to the safety of an enclave largely comprised of students from her own nationality which appeared to be a way of preserving her dignity in light of her 'poor' English skills, but she also spoke on several occasions of her efforts to preserve others dignity (see 6.2.3) Thus, for example, her decision not to work in groups with some students was because she couldn't understand them on account of their accents and she thought it would be embarrassing for them to realise this. Similarly, even when faced with lecturers she didn't like, she claimed to adopt a strategy of trying to save their face (see 6.2.3.above). Sami and Ayumi's accounts also provided evidence of this particular form of relational mindfulness. That is to say that what Sami referred to as: "standing in others shoes" could be seen to be a way for them to keep the dialogue going (see 6.1.3 and 6.4.3 in chapter 6 above).

Ontological risk versus ontological security

A third conceptual distinction that I have found helpful in accounting for the different intercultural learning trajectories presented in chapter 6, is a distinction between ontological risk and ontological security. These terms have been employed by those writing about globalization and the ways in which people manage its effects (see for example, Giddens, 1991 and Beck, 1992) and I find this has a resonance with the learning experience reported in students' accounts. As mentioned above, taking the decision to come to the UK, was an indication, at least to some degree, of the commitment to opening a dialogue with difference and in this respect, it might be seen to be a commitment to ontological risk involving as it did the possibility of encountering ways of being and doing which would challenge the participants' ontological positions.

Nevertheless, part of maintaining a commitment to dialogue was to continue the demanding business of being exposed to risk. The four participants were seen to do that to differing degrees with Ayumi and Sami appearing to take the greatest risks. There was a sense in which this enabled them to develop most with respect to the quality of open-mindedness as their remarks towards the end of their sojourn reveal and it is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this. One possible reason is that they were not able to draw upon nationality based networks to the same degree that Huang-Fu and Tina were. However, it is also interesting to note they both emphasised an initial commitment to dialoguing with difference in their initial interviews too.

7.4. Implications of the study.

The study has raised a number of questions with respect to the ways in which the relationship between an experience of interculturality and intercultural learning can be understood at a theoretical level. It has also highlighted a number of issues with respect to the way in which this develops which are relevant to thinking further about how far and in what ways this might be promoted as part of a strategy of 'internationalization at home' (Teekins, 2007) in the academy.

7.4.1. The nature of the relationship between an experience of interculturality and intercultural learning.

The findings of this study have highlighted that an experience of interculturality can generate many different forms of learning as discussed in 7.2 above. Adopting a social and relational model of learning has also made it possible to see how important experiences and relationships are to the process of learning and the outcomes this develops. It has therefore been able to highlight the ways in which learning is an embodied phenomenon, constituted in our engagements with others in the world. Findings have also highlighted that learning can not only be described as a set of knowledge, but is also about feelings, and our developing subjectivity. Finally, as most clearly shown in Chapter 6, the findings have also indicated how while it is through our engagement in experiences and the building of relationships with others that learning occurs, that learning

outcomes are always differentiated at the individual level as they are closely linked to each individual participant's unfolding narrative. That is to say, as can be seen in the analysis of the data presented in chapter 5, that we might share and generate experiences together, but they can take on very different significances for the participants.

Given the importance of experience and relationships to learning that the findings of this study have illustrated it is perhaps not surprising that one form of learning identified was 'learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other' and that this suggests that for these participants, an experience of interculturality did indeed generate a form of learning engendered by their experience of interculturality that was generated from their intercultural learning. On the basis of my analysis of the accounts I have proposed that intercultural learning outcomes are generated by positional shifts resulting from the dynamic interplay between three things: committing to an on-going dialogue with linguistic and cultural others; working out how to live together; and developing strategies to manage relational dilemmas. Since all of the elements are essentially co-constitutive, I suggest the findings highlight how a sphere of interculturality is something that is made by participants. That is to say it is locally situated but also dynamically evolving. As such, the precise nature of their intercultural learning is likely to be a reflection of the local lived reality of their experience of interculturality.

Nevertheless, while intercultural encounters are worked out and reworked out through the process described above, the findings have also highlighted a need to acknowledge that these are located in time and space and as such will be informed by the wider discourses concerning such things as race, culture and religion and power differentials implicated in these on account of global historical, economic, and political forces. That is to say, as the findings have suggested, that to talk of intercultural learning is to acknowledge the ways in which part of what is learnt is how you are positioned by others and how you can mobilise your resources to address and potentially transform this situation. This was, I suggest, central to the four intercultural learning trajectories I explored in chapter 6.

7.4.2. Intercultural learning and relationship-building universals.

At the end of chapter 3, I proposed that interculturality might be interrogated from a cosmopolitan realist perspective, one that assumes people everywhere share a universal orientation to world openness (the essence of a 'cosmopolitan or global imagination', Delanty, 2006:27) but that this could manifest differently in different locales. A starting point for developing a conceptual understanding of global citizenship is, as Delanty (2006) and others have argued, precisely the 'real' ways people develop this cosmopolitan imagination in the messy reality of their lived experiences as this study has revealed. However, the particular form that this takes locally is assumed to be predicated on the assumption that there are universals of intercultural communication. In what follows, on the basis of the study findings, I reflect on what these universals might be. I will argue that what lies at the heart of intercultural communication are universals of relationship building and the efforts to develop an ethical response to the other and that these both underpin and ultimately transcend an understanding of communication as a system of linguistic semiotic.

There are clearly considerable differences between the four intercultural learning trajectories I have explored above, and as mentioned in chapter 6 these have been selected to illustrate a number of important differences discernable across the learning trajectories of all 14 participants. Nevertheless, the components of interculturality mentioned in 7.3 above (committing to an on-going dialogue with linguistic and cultural other, working out how to live together and developing strategies to manage relational dilemmas) suggest that ultimately interculturality is primarily a process of relationship building reflecting the fact that we are social beings first and foremost. Ontologically speaking, as Bakhtin (1984) argues, we are always in dialogue with others, with ourselves, with our pasts and with our futures, and as such we are always open to the possibility of dialogue and might be seen to share a body of knowledge as to how this works. In other words it is our openness to form a relationship with the other that might be seen as universal.

Clearly, communication breakdowns can happen even between people who speak the same language and share a set of sociocultural norms with respect to how communication can proceed. Therefore, if there is anything universal about relationship building this is likely to go beyond the surface level of language. The concept of relational mindfulness I have introduced to account for the findings is one, I suggest, that points towards by highlighting relational orientations such as commitment to dialogue and the significance of recognition and face. Central to this in the accounts would appear to be a feeling of *emotional connectedness* to the other as mentioned in 7.2 above. This is something evident in many accounts as revealed in chapter 5 and 6, whether explicitly stated or implicit. As I will argue below, this sense of emotional connectedness can be seen to be predicated on a number of things chief among which is ethics; the expectation of ethical treatment of self by the other, and in efforts to develop an ethical response to the other.

The importance of emotional connectedness and ethical treatment of the other as relationship-building universals.

There was a clear sense that many judged the behaviour of others against what they deemed to be their treatment by the other and that this was significant to a feeling of emotional connectedness with the other. The importance of warm relationships and an attitude of care towards the other were themes that reoccurred in participants' accounts. For Huang-Fu and for Sami, for example, it was the lack of care they felt tutors in the English Language Centre showed them that was seen to be at the heart of their response to their encounters there. Similarly for Ayumi it was the care shown by supportive others which led her to become more open to the other.

I would therefore propose that these very different accounts of intercultural learning in my data are united by a common thread and that this is an expectation and a shared commitment to what might be called an ethical treatment of the other. In taking this stance, I am informed by Appiah's (2007) ideas on the ethics of identity, Appiah argues that while there is no universal code of ethics that can be applied, nevertheless, ethics lies at the centre of people's response to others. From this perspective, Huang-

Fu's decision to disengage from dialogue might be understood as the view that since there was nothing ethical in his treatment by many of the UK nationals he worked with, he felt he had no common ground on which to build his relationship with them and thereby retreated to a place where he felt he would find a more ethical response. To provide another example, Tina's ability to overcome her initial difficulties with one of the British students, Diane, might be construed in terms of her decision to remain open to the expectation of ethical treatment, that is to find an ethical response to the other beyond the immediate cultural other she encountered. In her terms, an important part of her intercultural learning journey is the realisation that underneath the apparent cultural and linguistic differences between herself and others was something in common, the fact, as she put it that: "We are all people, just people" (see chapter 6, 6.2).

Inevitably, on the basis of such a limited number of accounts, it is not possible to make strong claims for relational universals that inform the ways in which participants orientated themselves toward, engaged in, and generated learning outcomes from their experience of interculturality. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that we need at least to acknowledge that spheres of interculturality are not only spaces of knowing but felt spaces and that it is addressing this as much as building knowledge capacity that needs to be addressed in articulating and supporting learning in and from an experience of interculturality.

7.4.3 Supporting intercultural learning on the university campus.

The findings provide some interesting insights into the experience of interculturality for one group of international students at one university in the UK. As I have stated earlier in this thesis, since the international student population is one that is best viewed as diverse and heterogeneous, it is important to be cautious in assuming that these findings can afford a set of recommendations for how universities can best draw upon the international student body to promote intercultural learning for all. Nevertheless, they do provide some interesting insights which could

inform the debates with regard to 'internationalization at home' that the academy is only just beginning to have.

A first observation is the way in which this cosmopolitan realist perspective on the experience of interculturality for these participants fleshes out the 'thin' institutional vision of interculturality that is widely promoted in the rhetoric around the opportunity that growing numbers of international students afford. In doing this it reveals that the reality is a good deal more complex than the sanitised banal model of interculturality that currently informs thinking. Nevertheless, the findings in this study show that a great deal about global citizenship is being learnt by participants and has helped illuminate what sorts of things are seen to afford the development of openness to the other and what makes this more difficult. Chief among these I suggest are the opportunity for contact, the willingness to commit to a dialogue across difference, and being met with ethical treatment. What these findings also show, however, is that amongst this particular group of international students, while their experience in the UK has provided them with the opportunity to build these skills of global citizenship, this has been done, by in large, without recourse to the UK student population. In other words, somewhat ironically, while these participants have benefited from the opportunity afforded by internationalization in this university, this appears to have been a missed opportunity for the UK national student body. As has been well-documented in research studies as mentioned above in chapter 2, international students do not mix much with UK students and often do not form friendships with home students. While, with one or two notable exceptions, previous literature has suggested that this is a problem for international students, I would suggest that this as much if not more of a problem for the UK student population, at least with respect to the efforts to promote global citizenship on the back of the increasing numbers of international students on UK university campuses.

My findings have, as mentioned above, highlighted the importance of the opportunity for contact, the willingness to commit to an on-going dialogue across difference, and being met with ethical treatment in the development of an openness to other that might be seen to lie at the heart of global

citizenship. But they have also highlighted the reality of communication and the struggles for recognition across ethnic, linguistic and cultural divides. These are all things that would suggest a pedagogy which places greater emphasis on the importance of relationship building rather than what can often end up as a tokenistic globalization of the curriculum. While globalizing the curriculum is helpful in providing opportunities for students to meet alternative perspectives and can help increase the recognition of these in the academy, what this study has highlighted is that it is ultimately through the opportunities for sustained engagement with each other that the appreciation for the other as a person can be built. The challenge is to think creatively about how opportunities can be generated to facilitate this process, and how the sorts of relational mindfulness I have identified in this study can be promoted.

I do not believe that this will be easy. As Appiah (2007:6) has argued: “A thorough-going ignorance about the other is a privilege of power” and the stumbling block may be more to do with the perceived need for global openness to other on the part of UK students. On the other hand, as Coates (2004) has argued international students are often pragmatic about their sojourn. While many are interested in finding out more about the UK and its citizens as part of their year abroad experience, they are not on the whole interested in assimilation or acculturation and are adept at building networks with other international students to support them through their temporary stay in the UK. From my own experience, buddy programmes I have developed with a Sports science colleague, at his instigation, have proven to be one way to break down some of the barriers between the home and international student communities in UK universities and these have in several cases led to mutually enriching long term friendships. I have also found that a Face Book page set up several years ago on my behalf by an enterprising UK student, has taken on a life of its own and provided a forum and global meeting place for many of the international and home students who have been through my programme – affording them an opportunity to carry on the development of a global dialogue well after their programmes of study have been completed. I suggest that what is needed is to explore further how opportunities such as these can be further developed and explored.

Chapter 8. Conclusion.

The purpose of this thesis has been to report on a study into international students' experiences of interculturality during a year long sojourn at a university in the UK and what they learn from these. My intention as outlined in chapter 1 being to interrogate some widespread assumptions about the potential for contact with the linguistic and cultural other to generate new forms of learning, often referred to as intercultural learning. In conducting the study I have adopted a grounded approach to exploring interculturality and learning. This is one which has adopted a relational non-essentialist perspective on interculturality and a complementary relational dialogic and transactional understanding of learning. The narrative inquiry strategy adopted has allowed participants perspectives to be foregrounded and their accounts of their experience and its significance to reveal the sorts of learning that their sojourn afforded them over time. Through this I have identified one form of learning, 'learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other' as a form of intercultural learning. While in some ways this is similar to the ways in which this has been described in existing literature, some new insights into this have also been generated.

In this final chapter of the thesis, by way of a conclusion, I will highlight what I see as the main contributions to knowledge emanating from the findings to be. I will then go on to critically reflect on the process of undertaking the study and offer some suggestions for possible future research directions on the basis of this discussion.

8.1 Contribution to knowledge.

I believe that the approach I have taken to exploring the relationship between learning and interculturality is one that can make a useful contribution to theorising intercultural learning and that through this, can provide useful insights into how this can be best supported within the context of internationalization in UK universities.

Foregrounding the *inter* part of intercultural as I have done in this study has, I suggested, provided a useful counterbalance to the tendency in much of the literature to emphasise the *cultural* part of interculturality which pushes us to foreground intercultural encounters as places where culturally bound subjects meet. While participants do mention national culture as a way for accounting for the ways in which they engage in experiences with others, they mention many other things as well which relate much more to the immediacy of their efforts to make meaning with others. Thus, by foregrounding inter-relations and transactions, it has been possible to see when and how national and regional 'culture' is important and when it is not, instead of imposing this as a lens through which to look at what happens in an intercultural encounter.

The study has also made an important contribution to an understanding of the ways in which a sphere of interculturality is one which is embedded in and draws upon wider discourses which position participants as more or less powerful. This has been largely neglected in the research into intercultural learning to date. These discourses have been shown to exert an important influence on the ways in which participants manage their relational dilemmas in this study, and recognition, audibility and face have all been highlighted as important ways in which to acknowledge the need to engage in research which acknowledges the messy reality of intercultural encounters. In other words, the findings suggest that if we are to take seriously the idea that an experience of interculturality affords learning, we would do well to develop more robust accounts of this which move away from an idealised understanding of the outcomes of an intercultural encounter and towards ones which acknowledge their full complexity. The understanding of this offered in this study can be seen as a small contribution in this direction.

Another contribution of this study has been its attempts to consider the potential of a cosmopolitan realist perspective to developing an understanding of the ways in which the nature of interculturality and an experience of interculturality can draw upon a universal shared orientation towards communication and meaning making with the other. I have drawn a tentative conclusion that this may have less to do with a universal communicative competence than with the ethical orientation towards the

other that underpins this. This is clearly something that would need to be further investigated. However, I suggest, as with the other insights into intercultural learning undertaken this study has offered, that this might provoke and stimulate debate with respect to how and where we look for evidence of intercultural learning.

Taken together, I suggest my study raises a number of important questions regarding the current narrow and banal accounts of intercultural learning presented in the literature, and which have been co-opted by those interested to promote global citizenship at university level and more broadly. By examining what happens in the local real-life encounter with the cultural and linguistic other it has revealed a number of facets of interculturality that might be used to develop a more nuanced understanding of this and a better sense of what it is that needs to be taught and how.

8.2. Critical reflections on the study and some possible future research directions.

The study reported in this thesis is one that has been developed out of my own extensive professional experience of working in global contact zones and my own interests in better understanding these for professional purposes. When I embarked on my PhD several years ago, it was with the intention to better understanding international students' perspectives on the experience of intercultural learning. At that time very little attention to the international student perspective in research had been undertaken. While since then many more studies have appeared which take this perspective, I still find that a focus on a relational understanding of interculturality such as I have applied here has not been the focus of much attention. However, theoretically speaking there have been some important shifts in theoretical understandings of interculturality in my field, notably in the work of Kumaravadivelu (2008) and Holliday, (2010), particularly with respect to the potential of critical or realist forms of cosmopolitanism. I have been able to draw upon these and feel that they have a close resonance with the practical situated understandings of learning I have promoted and doing so has I believe strengthened my theoretical framework.

With respect to the study design, with hindsight there are a number of things I might have done differently. Chief of which is to have also sought out the views of the UK students who formed part of the student cohort that was the focus of my research. This would perhaps have generated data and findings that could have shed different sorts of light on global citizenship and its promotion in UK universities. Similarly, narrative inquiry, as I have come to realise is an area that offers a number of creative ways of presenting the sorts of data I generated and I acknowledge there are perhaps a number of ways in which I could have told the story that was generated out of this study differently as discussed in chapter 4. Nevertheless, I believe the thesis has succeeded in throwing up a range of new ways of thinking about interculturality which can serve as the basis for a range of future research projects both within the context of interculturality and UK universities but also more broadly and will I hope be felt by others to make a useful contribution in this respect.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview guides for individual interviews.

Interview 1. (Baseline interview)

Key Themes:

- Background information.
(their personal and professional background and what led them to apply to the programme and to study in the UK)
- Previous experiences of intercultural learning and their significance
- Expectations of the programme
- Experiences of the programme to date and their significance.
- Experiences of university life and living in the UK more broadly and their significance.

Interview 2.

Key Themes:

- Revisit points raised in interview 1.
 - Check if experiences mentioned in interview 1 hold the same significance or are viewed as significant in new ways.
 - Reasons for change
- New experiences of the programme since interview 1 and their significance.
- New experiences of university life and living in the UK since interview 1 and their significance

Interview 3.

Key Themes:

- Revisit points raised in interview 2.
 - Check if experiences mentioned in interview 2 hold the same significance or are viewed as significant in new ways.
 - Reasons for change

- New experiences of the programme since interview 2 and their significance.

- New experiences of university life and living in the UK since interview 2 and their significance

- Overall impression of their experiences of their sojourn and its significance to their learning

Appendix 2: Guide for group interview

These statements are things that were mentioned in many of the interviews I conducted. Please discuss these together. You do not need to reach agreement in your discussion.

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES.

- What lecturers did in class had an effect on your experience (either positive or negative).
- Class size made a difference to how you participated.
- Having English as a first language speakers in class made a difference to how you participated.
- Your language proficiency had an effect on your learning.

CHANGE.

- Your views of what was good practice shifted as you went through the course.
- How much support you felt you needed for your learning changed as you went through the course
- The way you participated changed as you went through the course.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES.

- These students who had previous experiences of learning in a western context had an advantage in this course.
- Those students who had had a previous experience of learning in a multicultural setting had an advantage in this course.

OUT OF CLASS EXPERIENCES.

- What happened out of class had an impact on the way you felt in the classroom.

THE MULTICULTURAL NATURE OF THE GROUP.

- The multicultural composition of the class had an effect on your learning (positive or negative).

Appendix 3: Letter of introduction to the research project and invitation to attend first interview.

8th October

Dear xxxx,

I am writing to you to invite you to take part in a research project which I am undertaking towards my PhD in Education. The focus of my project is international students' experiences and learning during their stay in the UK. I would like to focus on students in the MEd TESOL group which is why I am writing to you. I am hoping the insights gained can help me and my colleagues get some useful ideas of how we can improve the experience for students such as you.

The project will take place over the entire year and will entail 3 individual interviews at various stages of the year and a group interview towards the end of the year. The interviews will be tape recorded with your permission and will be conducted exclusively by myself. Although I am your programme director, during the interviews I will assume the role of researcher. I will treat your responses in strictest confidence and would like to assure you that nothing you say will be used to make judgements about you during your classes or at any other time during the year.

The results of the study will be used for my PhD study and any future publications related to this but you are assured of anonymity and at no stage will your name be revealed.

The first part of the research will take place in the next two weeks and will involve an individual interview with each participant. This interview will be tape recorded with your permission and will last no longer than 45 minutes.

If you would like to take part in the study, please can you sign the attached consent form and return this to me. Please can you also email me to indicate a time and a place when it would be convenient to hold the interview?

I should stress that if you decide to take part that you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage and for any reason.

Best wishes,

Appendix 4: Follow up letter sent to participants ahead of second interview.

10th December

Dear XXXX,

Now that the first term is coming to an end, I would like to invite you to take part in the second stage of data collection for the study. This will involve two further individual interviews and a final group interview towards the end of the year.

I would like to hold the first of the follow up interviews in the weeks beginning January 5th or January 12th. The second interview will take place at the start of term 3. I hope to conduct the final group interviews in late July.

As with the first interview, your interview will be tape-recorded with your permission and will last no longer than 45 minutes. The second interview will focus on your in and out of class experiences during term 1 and will pick up on and develop themes emerging from the first interview. I will pass you a summary of your interview in advance of this to help you remember what we talked about. Your third interview will do the same but for term 2 and the final group interview will involve a discussion of your overall experience of your stay in the UK in groups of 3 or 4.

Please could you let me know if you are happy to continue to participate in the research as soon as possible? I should stress that there is no obligation to continue to take part if you would rather not do so. If you would like to continue, please can you let me know by email and indicate a time and place that would work best for you. If you do decide to continue, please could you complete the attached consent form which is similar to the one you completed before you undertook the first interview?

Many thanks and best wishes,

Appendix 5: Consent form.

CONSENT FORM

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

..... (Signature of participant) (Date)

.....

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

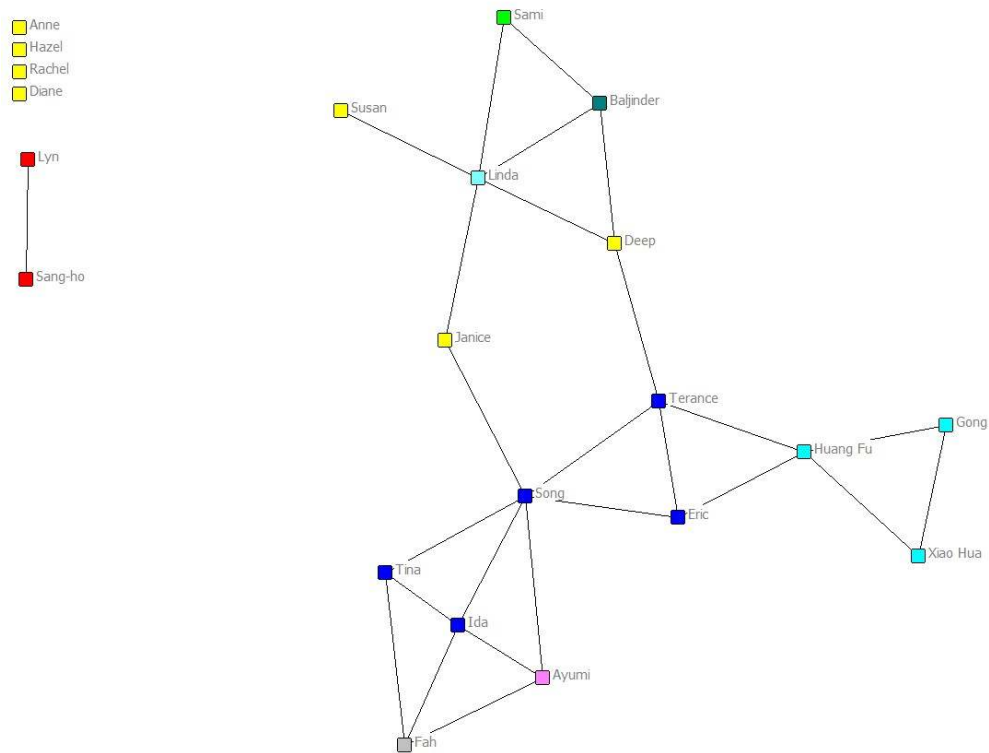
Contact phone number of researcher(s):.....

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

Appendix 6: Participants' relational networks. Term 1



Key

Light blue

China

Yellow

UK

Dark blue

Taiwan

Pink

Japan

Grey

Thailand

Red

South Korea

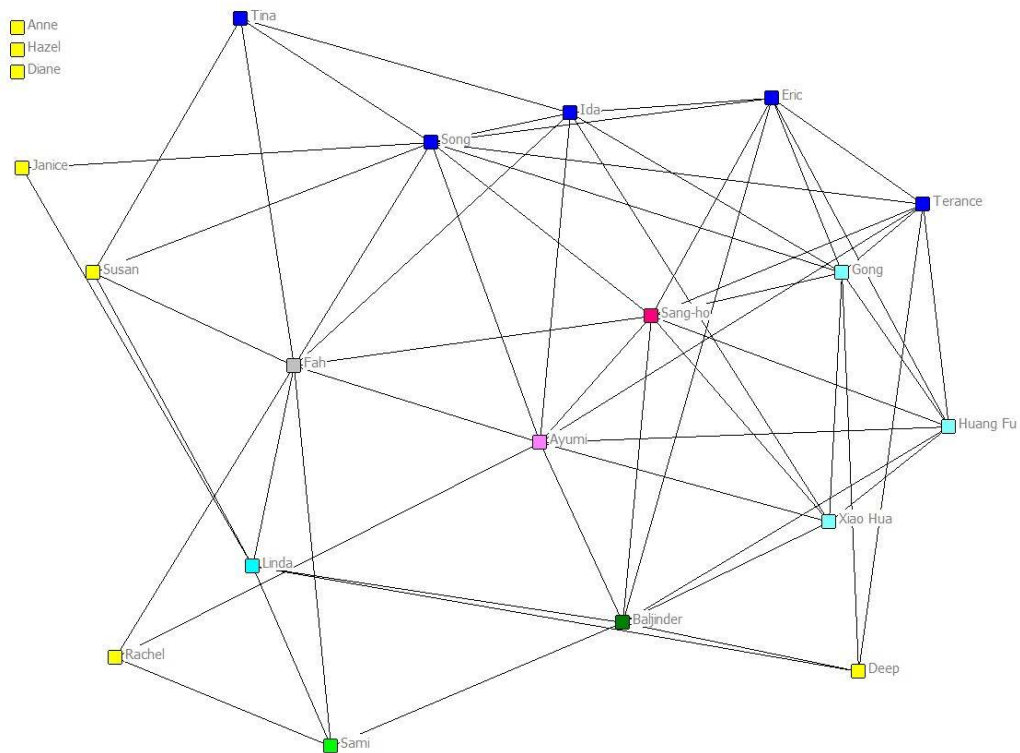
Dark green

Malaysia

Light green

Saudi Arabia

Appendix 7: Participants' relational networks. Term 2



Key

Light blue	China
Yellow	UK
Dark blue	Taiwan
Pink	Japan
Grey	Thailand
Red	South Korea
Dark green	Malaysia
Light green	Saudi Arabia

Appendix 8: Details of participants

Name	Nationality	Gender (F = female M = male)	Age	Professional experience	Previous study overseas
Sami	Saudi Arabian	M	26	2yrs secondary	No
Baljinder	Malaysian	F	35	16 yrs tertiary	Yes
Song	Taiwan	M	27	2yrs secondary	No
Sang-ho	South Korea	M	38	12yrs secondary	Yes
Xiao Hua	China	F	23	1.5yrs secondary	Yes
Fah	Thailand	M	26	4yrs tertiary	No
Tina	Taiwan	F	24	4yrs primary	No
Ida	Taiwan	F	23	2yrs primary	No
Linda	China	F	26	3yrs secondary	Yes
Terence	Taiwan	M	27	2yrs secondary	Yes
Huang-Fu	China	M	44??	21 yrs tertiary	No
Ayumi	Japan	F	29	6yrs secondary	No
Eric	Taiwan	M	28	6yrs secondary	Yes
Gong	China	F	38	15yrs secondary	No

Appendix 9: Details of programme content and procedures.

The following description of the programme draws upon extracts from the programme handbook for the academic year when the study was undertaken.

The MEd in TESOL follows a flexible modular framework which is designed to accommodate the needs of a wide range of TESOL professionals. We believe that this is a major advantage of our programme as it provides you with the opportunity to plot your own route towards a master's degree by focusing on those aspects of TEFL which are of particular personal relevance and interest to you. The programme is suitable for teachers of English as a second or foreign language who may teach either in the UK or overseas, as well as for teachers of primary, secondary and tertiary levels. It is also suitable for teacher trainers and other officials concerned with language teaching.

AIMS

The overall aims of the M.Ed programmes in the School of Education are:

- ◆ to provide the knowledge, understanding and skills for students to analyse educational policy, theory and practice;
- ◆ to support students' development as autonomous professionals;
- ◆ to provide students with the procedural knowledge to develop conceptual understanding and analyse data;
- ◆ to provide the organisational and transferable skills central to professional autonomy;
- ◆ to support students ability to define and evaluate complex educational issues drawing on national and international perspectives;
- ◆ to equip students with the methodological knowledge needed to select appropriate methods to conduct research.

Additional aims of the MEd in TESOL are to:

- ◆ provide a background to the various fields involved in applied linguistics and language teaching methodology;
- ◆ guide you to reflect on and question your existing practice in an informed way;
- ◆ equip you to select, adapt or design materials and activities for language teaching appropriate to your own context;
- ◆ assist you in developing the confidence to think out your own solutions to language learning/teaching problems, and to justify them.

Objectives

On completion of the programme you will have:

- ◆ identified and evaluated concepts and issues related to TESOL;
- ◆ deployed arrange of personal and professional skills relevant to the workplace;

- ◆ investigated issues in teaching and learning and communicated the findings to others;
- ◆ engaged in critical debate about current issues concerned with TESOL drawing on evidence from theory, research and practice;
- ◆ analysed the relationships between policy, theory and practice in a range of educational contexts, including those you are familiar with;
- ◆ developed the ability to reflect critically on existing practices and have identified and justified solutions to problems relevant to your own teaching and broader professional practice;
- ◆ considered the contribution you can make to policy practice, and professional and curriculum development in the workplace;
- ◆ developed the ability to conduct a small scale piece of research and to present this in an appropriate format.

Personal Transferable Skills

The MEd in TESOL programme aims to promote the following transferable skills:

1. an ability to manage your own personal learning development by clarifying personal values, setting personal objectives, managing your time and tasks, negotiating learning contracts and evaluating your own performance;
2. an ability to learn effectively (both independently and co-operatively by using appropriate learning technologies, library skills and a wide range of academic skills);
3. an ability to communicate effectively by expressing ideas and opinions with confidence and clarity to a variety of audiences and for a variety of purposes;
4. an ability to work productively in different kinds of teams by, for example, taking responsibility to carry out agreed tasks; asserting one's own values and respecting others; planning within the context of a team's assignment;
5. an ability to identify the main features of a given problem and to develop strategies for its resolution;
6. an ability to use data effectively in learning and skills processes by collecting, organising, collating and analysing relevant data.

Outline of the programme.

The programme can be taken full-time over one year or part-time over two or more years. To obtain a MEd in TESOL students must complete 180 credits. It is also possible to exit the programme with a post graduate certificate (60 credits) or a post graduate diploma (120 credits).

To obtain the required credits you may select from a range of modules. For those students undertaking the MEd in TESOL one of these modules must include a dissertation module.

TESOL modules currently on offer:

Language in Context	30 credits
Fundamental Aspects of Language Theory	30 credits
Psychological Aspects of Language	
Learning and Teaching	30 credits
Language Teaching Methodology	30 credits
Further Issues in Language Methodology	30 credits
Course and Syllabus Design	15 credits
Language Teacher Education	15 credits
Teaching English to Young Learners	15 credits
Language Learning and Technologies	15 credits
English for Specific Purposes	15 credits
Materials Evaluation and Design	15 credits
The Teacher as Reflective Practitioner	15 credits

In addition to lectures, seminars and workshops relating to courses taught in the modules above, there are a number of additional optional activities and sessions that will take place during the year and that are part of our programme. These are detailed below.

- Visiting Speakers
- School Visits
- Issues in Education Lectures
- Study Skills Classes
- Mini-conference with students from X programme at X university
- Academic and pastoral support tutorials.
- Writing support tutorials.
- Programme meetings

Study groups

During the course it is important that you learn to study on your own and to become increasingly self-directed. One of the major sources of learning at your disposal are your fellow students, and you should get into the habit of talking over ideas and issues with your colleagues. This is an invaluable means for you to clarify your own ideas as you attempt to put them over to someone else, and to gather ideas from your classmates. We very strongly recommend that early in the course you form study groups and discipline yourselves to meet regularly. We shall help you form these early in term 1.

Writing your assignments.

An assignment will generally consist of the following stages or elements.

- (i) A (brief) review of relevant literature;
- (ii) pulling out from the literature the main points or theoretical principles for your purpose;
- (iii) and applying these ideas in some way, (e.g. a lesson plan) to your own teaching context.

You should draw from your knowledge of methodology, linguistics, psychology, and other fields as relevant, as well as from your own experience. Try not to see the separate courses as isolated compartments. They can all be drawn on to inform what you do.

Try to process or think about what you have heard and read, and discuss its application to your own teaching situation. Credit will be given for your own ideas and sound arguments to back up your ideas. An assignment should not be simply a repetition of lecture notes or of the literature.

Appendix 10: Open codes identified from cross-narrative analysis.

1. Experiences and encounters

Relationships:

- 'Native speaker students'
- Teachers (+ive and –ive)
- Friends at home (before and during the programme)
- Family contact
- Contact with colleagues back home
- Friendships
- (in class and out of class)

Travel:

- Travelling in Europe
- Host family
- Going home at Xmas or Easter

Previous study:

- Pre-sessional programme
- Previous experience of overseas sojourns
- Previous experience of post-graduate study

Contacting other non-programme students

- In other universities
- Contact with other students from other programmes (UK/Non UK students)

'Active learning' (+ive /–ive)

- group work
- task based learning
- experiential learning

Other programme practices and activities (+ive and –ive)

- Assignments
- Mini conference
- Visiting speaker
- School visits
- Teachers' teaching

Support (+ive and –ive)

- tutorials
- pre-reading
- handouts
- teacher questions
- teacher feedback
- previous graduates from the programme
- other students on programme/ outside of programme.
- Study groups

Out of class activities.

- Jobs
- Service encounters
- Joining Societies
- Socialising and personal life - including forming new relationships

2. Factors impacting on experiences.

- Language
- Feeling inferior to others
- Cultural difficulties
- Experience levels
- Anxiety
- Relationship difficulties

3. Forms of learning evidenced in accounts.

- Learning new knowledge about subject
- Learning new skills related to profession
- Learning about self as professional
- Learning about self as cultural being
- Learning about the danger of stereotyping
- Learning to take risks
- Learning to tolerate uncertainty
- Learning to be more open-minded
- Learning how to 'play the game'
- Learning life skills
- Learning how to manage time
- Learning how to work independently
- Learning study skills
- Learning how to challenge others view points
- Learning how to stand up for oneself
- Learning how to accept others viewpoints and behaviours
- Learning how to tolerate uncertainty
- Learning how to form a community with others
- Learning English
- Learning critical reflection (on programme content and practices and of self)
- Learning how to pass assignments

Appendix 11: Final categories and themes adopted.

Pre-programme experience.

- Socio-cultural background
- Previous educational experience
- Previous study overseas
- Undertaking a pre-session course
- Input from significant others (friends, family former students, colleagues)

In class experience.

- Programme content and structure.
- Assessment
- Pedagogic practice
 - Active learning
 - Support
- Relationships to others in class
 - Tutors
 - UK students
 - Other international students
- The multi-cultural nature of the class group

Out of class experience.

- Contact with class members out of class
- Contact with other students out of class
- Contact with other people out of class
 - Service encounters
 - Employment
 - Travel
 - Societies and church groups
- Contact with people at home (family, friends, colleagues)

Forms of Learning.

- Learning about self
- Learning about self as learner
- Learning subject knowledge and skills
- Learning how to be successful in this setting
- Learning about self in relation to linguistic and cultural other

Appendix 12: Sample interview transcripts for interviews with Tina

Interview 1.

Tell you me about yourself

In my university or...? **Anything really just tell me anything about yourself.** Just tell you my background? Ok I studied in my first year History but in my second year I changed my mind and started to study education.

Why did you change your mind?

Because I thought it would be easier for me to find a job to be a teacher. But even I was a student of the education school I also chose to study the history because both of them are interesting. After I graduated from university at that time I could choose to be a primary school teacher or the junior high school teacher because of my qualification but I also had to pass the exam and I passed and I choose to take the test of the primary school.

Why did you choose to do that?

To tell the truth school I finished the test of the primary school the first and after several days I found a job and at that time I was so tired of taking a lot of exams so I said 'ok' and decided to be a primary school teacher because I thought maybe my personality or my character was suitable for a primary school teacher and until now I thought 'yes' it was right.

What do feel about your personality or your character that makes you suited to be a primary school teacher?

I think in my class I feel confident and my students love my style. Sometimes a lot of my students told me about my clothes or my travel experience.

Have you done a lot of travelling?

I love travelling – I have been to Bali island 5 times– In class, I tell my children about my experience . When I talk to the children I always give my experience behind my experience – e.g. how to be a good person in other countries and how to make other people in other countries to respect Taiwanese people. I think my students love to hear my experience about travel. Because for them the world is so big and so large. So I thought I was good at the teaching just in the primary school.

Do you think teaching in a primary school is different from teaching in a secondary school?

Yes, because primary school I didn't have a lot of pressure about exam. I can teach them a lot of things, not only from a course book. I think at their age we can teach them a lot of things behind the course book.

Are you more free in a primary school than in a secondary school?

Yes. A lot of my friends are senior high school /junior high school and they work very hard because they always thought about how to make their students pass the exam to senior high school. It's different. My pressure in primary school is how to communicate with their parents. Sometimes the parents are very strange about how they communicate with you if they didn't like you or didn't like what you taught. They wouldn't tell you directly but tell our principle or other people

and then the other people they came to my class to tell me. But I disliked because I didn't know who, who give such a wrong message.

Do you have regular meetings with parents in your school?

Yes, we have one time just for each term. But sometimes I could use the telephone. I always use the telephone to communicate with the parents. If the parents they really cared about their children's education I think they glad to talk to me. But sometimes I find some parents who dislike to have my telephone call.

Why did you come here to the UK?

To improve my English ability. When I go back to my school I will teach English. My school chose me to be an English teacher so when I go back I should be the English teacher. My major was not in English. When I have studied here I will have masters in TESOL so I will be the right person to teach English in our school.

Does your school pay for you to come here?

No. And I think my principal she didn't like the teachers to continue to study – especially to go abroad.

Why did you decide to come here?

I have been teaching for many years and I want to do some change in my life. When I look at my colleagues in Taiwan, if they taught over twenty years they didn't improve themselves very well because if you didn't do something wrong you can have your job for many years, twenty years or twenty five years but I think I have to improve myself because I want to be something different than other teachers. I want to be a confident person. I was so brave to come here (laughs loudly)

Why do you think you were brave to come here?

When I was in Taiwan I was not so independent. I was lazy. I didn't want to go out, so on weekends I always stayed in my room. But, since I came here I learned a lot of things. Been studying the relationship between my other classmates.

What kinds of things have you learnt?

I stayed in the Language Centre for 5 weeks – it was a tough time for me because my spoken English is not so good. I was upset because I didn't know how to speak to some people especially from different countries. I try to speak English even when I with other Chinese people. I try to control myself not to speak my native language – but it was hard because some Chinese friends questioned the need to speak in English and not in Chinese and sometimes I think they dislike me. And at that time I didn't know how to write the essay and I had to learn how to write an essay. So I had learn a lot of things. And that's why I lost my weight. I email my friends in Taiwan and I say 'I live in hell now, but you should look on things on the up side. I have to overcome many difficulties but its learning!

Well you seem very positive about it.

Yes, I have to learn a lot of things so sometimes even now I encourage my other Taiwanese friends – maybe they have the same problem with me and one of my friendship she didn't know how to communicate with the foreigners. Because in her class there was only two non-native speakers so every day when (SHU) has to go to class –She's not happy. She was lonely. So until now every day she

always tells herself that her English is very poor. And I think her teacher can see her face – no confidence.

How do you feel about being in this group – the group you have now, which is very mixed with people from many nationalities?

We chose the same table – I sit with Fah and Ayumi and I don't have to care about my grammar or something and I am comfortable. The reason we feel comfortable is that we are not UK people so sometimes we just have to communicate with each other and I don't have to care about my grammar or something. They support me and they don't laugh at me. So now I just think I am just like a children.

Do you think you will be uncomfortable if you sit with native speaker teachers?

Yes. I remember the one time maybe the beginning of the first term we had to discuss a question on the blackboard. At that time I was arranged to discuss with Deep but for me he just like a native speaker. At that time I was afraid of answering the question because her speech was very fast but I could not understand what he said. I need some time to digest to just think about. But I didn't know him very well so I might think it was impolite to ask him to speak more slowly but I tried to understand but I didn't understand but he didn't know because he couldn't understand my feelings.

I know in theory it's a good idea to talk to UK students but in reality I don't know why, sometimes I dislike to talk to them. These days I had a lot of bad experiences. I went to the phone shop. I had a lot of bad experience. Maybe I didn't understand their speaking or something – I felt I was cheated to sign a contract for the mobile phone. The sales man didn't tell me lots of things about the phone he just wanted me to sign the contract. For many days I went back to the phone shop again because I was very angry. Suddenly I thought my English was fluent because I was angry. I asked Song to go with me. He didn't do anything but he was there. I just began to speak very quickly and they all new this lady was very angry. I solved the problem and I found a good chance to speak my English.

Is that normal in Taiwan that students don't speak too much in class?

Yes, yes. It's our educational system. The teachers didn't encourage the students to speak or to express their opinions. When I came here I know I have to speak something But, maybe.. when I was in class maybe I had some idea but when it was my turn to speak I felt I couldn't remember anything about my task..

Do you prefer to be forced to speak in class or do you think the teacher shouldn't force you?

If in the first stage I think the teacher shouldn't ... I think I like this way. I think a lot of students I think we all have the same problem, we didn't have a lot of chance to speak English in our own country. Especially if we come from an Asian country where he educational system is totally different. We need time to realise and think about the course. For me I just , I have to concentrate myself to listen. Other students they are speech. A lot of students don't speak loudly.

What aspects of the teaching style here have surprised you?

The distance between the teacher and the students is very close. In Taiwan I always felt a long distance between the teacher and the students. I like this it makes me feel comfortable.

I don't like teachers that are too serious. I like the teacher to smile. To encourage us to say something. I don't like the serious teacher. I'm nervous it makes uncomfortable in class. Like psychology class. When the teacher asked each student to express their own opinion. A lot of students begin to worry about what they were going to say and I couldn't listen to other people's opinions because I was nervous. I had to think of some ideas and speak out. I was so worried about what I was going to say I didn't pay attention to what others were saying but after I finish my speaking... Especially I have to speak in English. Maybe next time I will sit in front so I have to speak first so then I am free and I can hear what other people say.

Are you finding the work you have to do ok?

Of course the work is very hard for me. I know as a postgraduate student I have to study by myself. Like today at lunchtime I was surprised because one classmate she complained about the whole educational system. Maybe she wanted to learn something from here but maybe she thought the teacher couldn't give her the knowledge so she was upset and frustrated but I just think I am a post-graduate student! Of course I have to learn things by myself! I couldn't depend only on the teacher or the course book. Actually you have to study by yourself. I know which kind of learning style is best for me. Now I am trying to find out which study skill is best for me now.

Interview 2.

Can I pick up on one or two things that you said in your first interview

'I live in a hell now'. 'I was very brave to come here'.

I'm better now. I had my vacation – you know I went ... Vacation for me is very important.

What did you mean by I live in a hell now?

I didn't have the confidence because my English speaking was very poor and my writing was so very poor.

Do you feel more confident now than you did?

Yes, but for me I didn't have much chance to speak English. Maybe after class I can talk to my classmates. My flat mates are mostly Taiwanese and don't like to speak English very much. I can watch film or TV to practice listening but speaking, you have to find some people to speak.

I said I live in a hell because everything was unfamiliar to me. Even when I went to the shop I couldn't understand what people were talking about. Now I think it's better even though I sometimes still couldn't understand what they were talking about. Now I think almost all lecturers I think I could understand. Sometimes I don't understand the content.

Do you still prefer not to sit with native speakers?

Now I'm not afraid to sit with native speakers – depends more on the personal style of the people. Maybe at the beginning I always thought about the difference between the native speaker and the non-native speaker but now I changed my mind. I know it's just a different personal style.

What personal style do you find most helpful and what personal style do you find unhelpful?

I know you would ask that question!! **Is it too difficult to answer?** No. In the young learners class. One student, her name is Susan, I talked to her for several times and I like to talk to her because I didn't feel pressure to talk to her. Maybe I think she has been in Japan for many years and maybe she knows how to communicate with people like me – I don't know I just feel very comfortable to talk to her. But Diane I felt much pressure to talk to her – I didn't want to sit with her. She was the one who made me most uncomfortable. For example, once you asked us to have a group discussion. In the group was maybe four persons. Three Taiwanese students and Diane. She didn't want to discuss with us. She just wanted to find the correct answer from a text book. And she made all of us feel very strange. Another time I felt she was disapproving of me but after we talked together I did feel that perhaps from my point of view there was a misunderstanding or something.

In what way?

Completing the observation form – she said shame on me for not completing it completely. In her face I couldn't see any humour and she made me feel bad about that.

Do you always sit with the same students in class?

Sometimes I did, sometimes I didn't. Ok maybe in the beginning I chose to sit with my flat mates and people from my country but later, if I was late I chose any place I could sit and I'm ok with that. But I like my group in psychology because I think we could talk and express our feeling and be very happy. But I do feel more relaxed in this sort of class. Maybe if we come from the same country we can communicate better – maybe we have the same cultural background. I don't know. I just feel I prefer this way.

You said you had had some bad experiences with native speakers in the first interview. With your mobile phone for example.

I was a bit distrustful of native speakers but I think it's less to do with nationality and more to do with language.

I had a very unhappy experience with a Korean friend outside the course. We tried to explain just one thing but after we explained our feeling/opinion I think he totally misunderstood. In my opinion when you are speaking a different language something like this will always happen. So I came to realise that it's not only with native speakers. It's not just because you are UK people and I am Taiwanese people.

Have you had any experiences like that inside the class (besides the problem with Diane)?

If there are things I don't understand I ask other students after class. I didn't ask the teacher because maybe I still feel I can't express my opinions very well in English. So I just ask the other students.

How have you found being a course representative?

It has been a good experience. For example other classmates they have some opinions they want to express to the teacher but finally they didn't so they tell me and I can say something to the teacher so I think for me it is a very good experience. I found people have opinions but are not happy to express their experiences to me. Not all of the classmates talk to me.

Which students do you feel most close to?

In this my closest friend is Song. 'Because he can give me many suggestions' and he's very nice and I always follow him to ask him and he's very nice. I'm happy to work with everyone, but I didn't know many students very well, even if they are Taiwanese students. Every person in this class is friendly and helpful.

Would you like to comment on the differences between the teachers you have had?

The teachers have the different style like the students have different styles. In psychology I felt very nervous for the first 6 sessions – especially in group discussion because I didn't know what the teacher want us to do and I was afraid of speaking- but towards the end I got used to her style and I know how to response her answer and I thought, this is not so bad and I didn't feel so nervous. Maybe I got used to the teacher's teaching style.

What about other teacher's teaching styles?

I didn't feel that one class was more or less problematic or challenging than another. I could adapt myself and of a different style very well. I worked out how to deal with these different types of class. I was nervous at first but once I'd worked out the style and procedure I could handle them well.

Which teaching techniques are helpful or unhelpful?

Group work and group assignments are helpful – we don't have much chance to talk to other students after the class. I think if the teacher asks each group to do some homework or something it's a good chance to know the other classmates. If you have to work with different classmates they can give you different opinions to see if my idea is right or not. I think the person is very important.

I think learning by doing (experiential) I don't think too much information is a good thing – I need a break. It's more practical for me. Now I think oh my god I'm a student and I used to do that to my own students. I'll do things differently when I go back.

What's the main thing you have taken from this course so far

Theories – at first I didn't feel this was good but now I think it's useful

What did you learn about being in a multicultural class?

We need time to get used to each other. Now it's better because I know students' personal style. If I know their style I can respect them more.

Do you feel your teachers respect the different cultures and treat the students fairly?

Yes. I think the teachers always respect the different cultures. I remember very clearly one time in Young learners class with Diane, because you ask her what kind of topic do you want to choose. Sometimes in my opinion I think 'Oh the teacher respect Diane so much because you always ask her opinion and I always know she has many opinions – you gave her longer than others to decide.

What do you think has been most helpful?

I always ask Song to give me some suggestions. We always went to the library to borrow books and share opinions on the same topic. We always choose the

same topic and we share the same ideas. If your close friend is your classmate it would be better.

What do you think has been least helpful?

I can only think about helpful. Now I'm a student now I know I need pressure.

Interview 3

I'm going to pick up on our previous discussions and then discuss your general impressions of the course. Do you still tend to sit with the same people as before?

I've stayed close to my own cultural groups – but moved out a bit towards other Asian students. I was surprised by one student's speech (from mainland China) because I couldn't understand it. It's not simply about culture it's also about a feeling. So I find it difficult to understand Baljinder's pronunciation. So it did get easier but I still wouldn't choose to sit with her because of her pronunciation. The same is true of Sami. It would be impolite to ask him to repeat things so I would prefer not to sit with him. To save their face I just nodded but if they then asked me for my view I couldn't say anything because I didn't understand them – so it was embarrassing. Either they felt that I was stupid or they would know I couldn't understand them.

Is that a strategy you use generally?

I didn't like to ask the teacher in class or out of class as I think maybe they will feel I am stupid. I did have tutorials with people and I realised that there were other things you could talk to tutors about not only making a plan for assignments.

What other things did you do to help you?

I started using people who weren't Taiwanese for help. For example, I asked a Greek student and she helped me – it was quite difficult at first. Now I think it's very interesting to ask non-Taiwanese people for help. Her thinking style is quite different to mine and she asked me a lot of questions which made me think.

Would you feel the same way about your experience with Diane as you did on the module you took with her?

The experience with Diane – now I think I could accept it instead of being defence. I think I can tolerate people's styles more. I'm open-minded now.

Why are you planning to stay longer?

I like the learning environment here. I love to see different cultures. Teachers help and friendly and good classmates. If I go back to Taiwan all I have to do is work every day. I love to be a student again.

What didn't you like about research methods course?

The teacher didn't respect the students' opinion very much. Her speech made us uncomfortable. She wasn't interested in us as people and that's why no one wanted to work for her.

Style of teaching seems important to you. Did your view of teaching style change as you went through the year?

The teaching style is important for me, but now I know also that it's good to know different styles. I feel more flexible about that.

What has changed in the way you learned?

In the first term it was difficult for me to find useful books. Now I'm better able to locate information by myself. I feel more confident I know where to go and what to do if I have a problem. For example re accommodation (she came to ask for interviewer's help with a problem with her accommodation). Partly about confidence and partly because I am more familiar with you.

Has it been a successful year?

Yes! Mainly because I was brave enough to come. I managed to get through difficulties and I'm proud of my achievement.

Do you think that language is important to success?

Especially in assignments. Language was crucial to success. – but I don't see it as critical as before – so long as I communicate that is the main thing. It doesn't matter if I'm not totally accurate. Body language also important.

How about culture?

Culture did have an impact in the first term but not now.

Do you have any regrets?

I couldn't have done things differently –it's a process you go through.

Going back to Taiwan made me realise lots of things about here – how old the teaching style was.

What would you do to make things better?

It's not the teachers . the teachers are ok it s the students. Some of them are very stupid. Most of the problems came from the students themselves.

Students who always complain – Baljinder and Terence – Baljinder is too needy. The teachers are very nice. At the beginning I didn't know how to ask for help.

Do you have all the information you need to take up your job of teaching English in your school?

Not everything but I know how to find the information by myself when I need it.

Appendix 13. Sample interim research text developed for Tina.

TINA. A brave girl from Taiwan

Biodata.

Tina was from Taiwan. She studied education at university and became a primary school teacher. At the time of the study she had been a teacher for 4 years. The reason she chose primary education is because she thought her personality was suited to this and because she passed the primary exam (which was the first one she had taken). She is currently a home room teacher but when she returns to work her school want her to be the school's main English teacher as currently they don't have one.

She thought that doing the masters would help her to be able to respond to the new education reform in Taiwan (the nine year integrated curriculum) which she saw as a turning point to rethink the importance of continuing to study. She also wanted to improve her English as she felt inadequate compared to other colleagues who were English teachers and thought that study in the UK would really help with this. Tina saw this as a very big step to take, and recounted at length the different conflicting advice she had from different colleagues and friends before finally making up her mind to come. Tina was a keen traveler and had travelled extensively in South East Asia but had never been to Europe before. She undertook a 5 week pre-session course ahead of embarking on the M.Ed programme. Tina was a popular student and elected as one of the representatives of the group on the Staff-student liaison committee.

Tina had a long term boyfriend in Taiwan and returned to Taiwan in December to see him. However, in the second term of the programme, the friendship she struck up with another student from Taiwan, Song, turned into a fully fledged relationship. Tina and Song stayed on in the UK for a further 6 months beyond the end of the academic year and rented a small flat in a nearby seaside town. On their return to Taiwan, they married and now have a young son.

Pre-course experiences – informing expectations

EXPERIENCE	IMPACT
Friends in Taiwan	Encouraged her to come and persuaded her not to give up during the difficult days of adjustment she went through in the ELC.
Making the decision to come to the UK	Proving to herself that she could do things – saw herself as very lazy prior to this.
The five week pre-session course	Tanya referred to this as a highly significant experience for her and extremely challenging, referring to this as 'a living hell'. She saw this as due to her poor spoken English. She suffered a crisis of confidence, lost a lot of weight and so on. (see diary extracts)
Becoming a postgraduate student	Assuming that she is supposed to be autonomous and independent (critical of a student who isn't)

During the programme

Experiences (in class)	Impact
Seating arrangements	Sitting with non-native speakers (esp. Eck and Akiko) means that she can relax. It won't matter if she makes mistakes and they won't laugh at her.
Tutors – where the distance between students and teachers is close Where it isn't Research methods tutors Me	She feels comfortable and can get more familiar and she feels she can ask people for help She feels nervous and uncomfortable. Resistance (she wasn't interested in us as people and that's why no one wanted to work for her) The characteristics of a good teacher
Other students	A resource for support and to help her with problems she is facing (esp. Song) Stays close to her own 'cultural group' but her friendships are not only cultural but also to do with feelings (emotional responses that transcend culture)
Native speaker students – mixed feelings Sally and Jane. Distrustful of native speakers	She felt Diane was disapproving but afterwards she realised that it might have been her own misinterpretation
Language Difficulty understanding others (e.g. Sami and Lyn)	Affect communication and ability to take up some learning opportunities. This crucial to success Felt it was best to stay quiet to save their face. Embarrassing for them that she doesn't understand them
Being a course rep	Some students chose not to speak to me
Group work and group assignments	Realising that different people can enrich your knowledge
Learning activities	Preference for experiential learning rather than lecturing and realising that that is what she used to impose on her own 'poor' students.
The course structure	Creates a lot of pressure. Has friend studying at another university who wants more structure, so values it increasingly
The course content	Learning is everywhere not only inside the classroom but also out of it

	Impact of psychology module (and other examples) - reflection
Visiting speaker	Public participation.

Experiences (out of class)	impact
Buying a mobile phone – not having the contract explained properly and feeling cheated	Getting angry and getting what she wanted. Asking Song along for moral support. Realising how much more fluent she was when she was angry!
Living with mostly Taiwanese flat mates	Difficult to practice English
Overseas trips during the course	Made her re-evaluate her experience here. Made her realise that people are actually really quite nice
Seeking help from non-Taiwanese student (Greek student)	Her thinking style is quite different from mine and she asked me a lot of questions that made me think.
Song	He helped her realise that learning is everywhere

Networks – the Taiwanese students (esp. Ida and Song) but also Ayumi and Fah

Overall impressions – it was a successful year (Song!) but also because she's proud of herself for being brave enough to come and staying the course ('I'm proud of my achievement'). Language did affect her experience. I know how to find information if I need it

Comments about transformation – also a journey of intercultural transformation – learning is like a lifelong journey

(Signed off her email as 'Tina, a girl who wants to finish her assignments as quickly as possible!')

Appendix 14: Titles assigned to the narrative accounts generated for each participant.

Participant	Narrative title
Terence	But I'm a post-graduate student now.
Eric	I'm a U curve student!
Fah	Learning to feed myself
Tina	A brave girl from Taiwan
Ayumi	Finding my higher self
Linda	When the going gets tough, the tough get going
Baljinder	Being good enough is never enough
Song	I'll do it my way.
Xiao Hua	Miss Co-operation.
Gong	One foot in and one foot out.
Huang-Fu	From guru to student
Sami	I'm better than that!
Ida	Alive in the bitter sea
Sang- Ho	A proper Masters student

**Appendix 15: Results of secondary analysis of research texts
regarding learning about self and linguistic and cultural other.**

Name pseudonym	Question assumptions + stereotypes	Recognise similarity across difference	Acknowledge + value different perspectives	Seeing Beyond Cultural other	Learning about lang + cultural positioning	Strategies for managing self and linguistic and cultural other
Sami	•	•	•	•	• (cultural)	Adopts western dress + seeks out other international sts
Baljinder	•		•		• (lang)	Seeks out support in + out class
Song		•		•	• (lang)	Stay in national group
Sang Ho	•	•	•			Stay with Asian grp
Xiao Hua			•			Stay in national group
Fah			•		• (cultural)	E mail tutor Move round class
Tina	•		•	•	• (lang)	Stay in national grp save own + others face. Take risks
Ida		•	•			Stay in national grp
Linda		•	•		• (lang)	Stay out of national grp + take risks
Terence	•	•	•		• (lang + cultural)	Stay out of national grp
Huang-Fu	•		•		• (cultural + lang)	Keep silent + stay in national + Asian group
Ayumi		•	•	•	• (lang + cultural)	Seek out new friends + take risks
Eric	•		•		• (cultural)	Adjusting conversation style
Gong		•	•		• (lang)	Solve issues through discussion

Appendix 16: Ethical approval form

STUDENT HIGHER-LEVEL RESEARCH
DISSERTATION/THESIS


UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER
Graduate School of Education

Certificate of ethical research approval
DISSERTATION/THESIS

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, and then have it signed by your supervisor and finally 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/guidelines/> and view the School's statement on the GSE student access on-line documents.

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: Sarah Rich
Your student no: 520027686
Return address for this certificate: internal mail
Degree/Programme of Study: MPhil/PhD in Education
Project Supervisor(s): Prof Rupert Wegerif and Dr Fran Martin
Your email address: s.a.l.rich@exeter.ac.uk
Tel: 264846

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed: Sarah Rich date: 16/3/2011

NB For Masters dissertations, which are marked blind, this first page must not be included in your work. It can be kept for your records.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
undated: April 2011

Certificate of ethical research approval

Your student no:

Title of your project: Learning to live interculturally: an exploration of the interplay between experience and learning of a group of international students at a university in the UK.

Brief description of your research project:

The study comprises a longitudinal narrative inquiry which examined 14 international students experiences of interculturality during their one year sojourn in the UK.

The study sought to establish what they learnt from this experience and in what ways this might critical inform the current conceptualization of intercultural learning in the literature.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

The study involved work with 14 adult international students enrolled on a year-long post-graduate programme at a university in the UK

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

- a) **informed consent:** Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents:

Participants were contacted in writing informing them about the research project and inviting them to take part. They were asked to sign and return a version of the form attached indicating their willingness to take part. They were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage and a subsequent letter ahead of the second interview cycle conducted reiterated their rights and invited them to reconfirm their willingness to participate.

- b) **anonymity and confidentiality**

As part of a process of informed consent, participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality with respect the data generated by the study and of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage should they wish.

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:

Data was collected primarily through 3 interviews undertaken with each participant at regular intervals throughout the year. At the end of the year a number of group interviews comprised of three or four participants were also undertaken.

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee
updated: April 2011

Participants were also asked if access could be provided to portfolios developed during the year and subsequent reflective papers. 9 of the participants provide access to these. Data was also collected via field notes and emails that participants were invited to send.

With respect to interviews (individual and group), these were undertaken at a time and place of participants choosing. These were taped to facilitate transcribing but I made it clear that participants could ask for the tape recorder to be turned off at any stage. Prior to the start of each interview, participants were passed a summary of the previous session and invited to amend this if so required.

It was made clear to participants that they were under no obligation to share their portfolio materials with me and I respected the right of several not to do so.

All data was stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in my office.

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.):

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's Research Support Office for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: _____ until: _____

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): *[Signature]* **date:** *17th May 2011*

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference: *D/10/11/71*

Signed: *[Signature]* **date:** *23/05/2011*
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from <http://education.exeter.ac.uk/students/>

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