Cultural, Linguistic, and Academic Adaptation: An Ethnographic Study of Teenage Chinese EAL Students in a UK Independent School

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Declaration

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

I confirm that the word length of this thesis (exclusive of bibliography and appendices) is 83004

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Abstract

This thesis tells the story of four teenage Chinese EAL students' learning journey in an independent school in London. The purpose of this study was to understand, in depth, the issues of cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation they faced as the teenage Chinese EAL students and find out how these students were supported to meet linguistic, cultural and academic challenges in their learning journey. Ethnography was adopted as the methodology in this study because it is an ideal educational tool that enables learners to describe aspects of their cultural lives, feelings, beliefs, needs and actions.

This study shows that although the participants had positive expectations of UK education and considered it an alternative route to success before coming to the UK, they encountered significant challenges such as failing to form friendships with local students, encountering gaps in modes of learning, and having difficulties in studying their core subjects, as well as other issues due to cultural, linguistic and academic factors. EAL lessons were arranged by the school with the aim to improve students' English proficiency. However, participants were concerned that the EAL classes did not correspond with international students' linguistic needs.

The teenage Chinese EAL students' experiences of intercultural adaptation provide independent schools with significant insights into the linguistic difficulties, cultural differences, and different learning pedagogies that these students would encounter in their transition to the UK education system. The study suggests that intercultural communication and understanding should be enhanced through further development of linguistic and cultural awareness to help teachers develop a better understanding of students' cultural differences, previous educational experiences, and their learning styles to better support young international students in their academic transition. International students especially teenagers should be given more cultural, linguistic and academic preparation and support before and after the journey begins.

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PART ONE BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This chapter aims to provide an autobiographical account of my English learning and teaching background both in China and the UK, within which my research originated, thereby demonstrating the motivation for my study. It justifies my marginal position as both an insider and outsider in this ethnographic study.

Chapter 1 My Way into The Research

1.1 Introduction

My interest in doing a PhD came from my English learning and teaching experiences both in China and in the UK. I had been learning English since primary school for more than 16 years and obtained a bachelor's degree in English in China, yet I still encountered challenges and dilemmas while doing my master's degree in England. This experience made me eager to find out the kinds of challenges international students might face and the reasons why they are challenged as learners while studying abroad.

My academic experience at the University of Warwick inspired my great passion to follow a career path in education, and I have become particularly interested in teaching students within an intercultural context, helping them improve their proficiency in English. Thus, I have been working as an English as an Additional Language (EAL) teacher in different independent schools, as well as being an education guardian for teenage Chinese EAL students in London since 2012. Over the last nine years, I have found an increasing number of Chinese teenagers coming to study in independent schools in England. As they have transferred from the Chinese education system to the English education system studying all subjects in English in a new country, most of them encountered difficulties in their academic study and social lives. My primary aim was to explore and identify these often-unseen factors that could contribute to their disadvantages as Chinese teenagers in a new school system. I carried out my research using an intercultural lens in relation to foreign language acquisition, systems of education, and curriculum and pedagogy across China and England. I then extended my research into the area of bilingual education with a focus on supporting Chinese EAL teenagers to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically through their learning journey in England.

Most studies have been done with international Chinese undergraduate and postgraduate students studying in UK universities (e.g. Spencer- Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Huang, 2008; Matthew, 2014;

Wang, 2018). However, there is a lack of research with younger Chinese groups, particularly 14-to-18-year-olds studying GCSEs/A-levels within the British education system, thus my research is innovative and fills this gap.

1.2 English Learning Experiences Across China and the UK

1.2.1 English Learning Experiences in China

Like most students of my age, I started learning English in primary school when most of the English lessons were focused on basic vocabulary and everyday dialogues. I still remember my primary English teacher, a beautiful young lady, guiding the whole class in reading aloud during each lesson. She also required us to write every English word in our notebooks and gave us dictations to check our performance. Sometimes, we were required to role-play the dialogues in the lesson by reading out the lines one after another. The main objective of the lessons was to make us memorise new words and the dialogues.

From the first year of lower secondary school, equivalent to Year 7 in a UK school, English was positioned as an important core subject in the curriculum, and the performance of it would decide whether children could attend good upper secondary schools (equivalent to the British sixth form), and later continue on to universities. Since students who wish to attend universities have to succeed in the National Entrance Examination for Colleges and Universities (*Gaokao*), teachers are given responsibilities to prepare them for this lifetime exam by working out standardised answers to various exam questions and figuring out exam techniques to achieve high scores. Therefore, during this stage, almost all of the English lessons at schools were exam-oriented, and a grammar-translation approach was widely adopted for teaching English in the classroom. This method was dominant in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, and its common features were a structurally based syllabus, teacher-centred focus, minimal contextualisation, and an emphasis on form rather than meaning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). During my secondary school career, students were trained to do numerous multiple-choice exercises, cloze exercises and reading comprehension, engaging with rote learning of vocabulary and grammar as they were focal parts of *Gaokao*. It is worth mentioning that the listening comprehension assessment has not always been included as part of *Gaokao* in the last two decades. When it was included in the exam, it became part of the routine training in class; however, when it was not, it was completely left out and ignored in class. Moreover, since spoken English was not included in the *Gaokao*, speaking skills were not required to be developed in the curriculum during secondary education. This exam-oriented language learning environment has inevitably led to Chinese students' lack of practice in

listening and speaking, which are considered major obstacles in communication when they go and study abroad (Huang, 2006).

Another aspect is that when we were learning English, the emphasis was placed on the passages over dialogues. I still remember the class teacher wanted us to memorise every text in the textbook New Concept English (Alexander, 1963) word for word and sentence by sentence because 'learning by heart' is commonly believed in China to be a shortcut to build one's language sense when learning a foreign language. In fact, New Concept English is still a very popular textbook in China. However, learning a language is not only about learning to read and understand literally but also learning to speak and communicate purely for the sheer sake of daily interaction (Ding, 2008). The increase in opportunities for communication around the world has also created a larger demand for speaking proficiency in English (Black and Cameron, 2002). It seems that the English class at school level lacks the capacity to offer adequate opportunities for improving spoken English. Therefore, like many English learners, I paid for private tuition at the New Oriental School after class where I was taught by Chinese English teachers as well as native English speakers. My passion and interest in English, particularly in speaking, were greatly aroused by engaging with class activities such as debates, group discussions, role-plays and presentations. This is what I understand now as the 'communicative approach' with its emphasis on learners, interaction and communication (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Unfortunately, as *Gaokao* was considered as the only criterion to determine whether a student could be admitted to a good university, I could not maintain a balance between studying an extra speaking course and the main subjects at school. Since the entrance exams were highly competitive, all of the students were required to attend school during weekends and even during public holidays in the final year of secondary school to prepare for the coming exams. We were given extra workloads to work through every day. Therefore, I had to give up my speaking lessons in the private language school.

Owning to these years of intensive preparation, thankfully, I was successful in the exams and admitted onto a BA course in English at the School of Foreign Languages in one of the prestigious universities in China in 2006. The university education was not exam-oriented. Having survived the tough high school life and the highly competitive *Gaokao*, I felt totally relaxed and enjoyed learning and devoting myself to studying English. The majority of the modules were about the English language itself, such as listening, writing, reading, speaking, pronunciation, and grammar. The second year integrated more cross-cultural learning about English: for instance, translating, British and American cultures, second language acquisition and English literature, which I had a great interest in.

My favourite module was speaking. I found that a great deal of emphasis was put on pronunciation in our English department; even during the speaking lessons, teachers put much more emphasis on pronunciation than communication. An American accent was the dominant variety at the university. Most teachers encouraged us to listen to VOA (Voice of America) every day and imitate the American pronunciation and intonation. I think this is might be the influence of behaviourist psychology on language learning (Skinner, 1957) which led, in the US and UK, to the 'Audiolingual method' in the 1960s and 1970s. This approach is based on habit-forming and drilling in the target language only (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Therefore, during four years of studying at BIT, only teachers from America, Britain and Australia were employed to teach us spoken English in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class. It was interesting to note that those who could speak with a pure or American-like accent were regarded as good English speakers without any consideration of their communication skills. However, in the UK, we have some international students and PhD students at my university who come from different backgrounds but can communicate freely, and they do not consider accent as a communication barrier. Things are different in China and English language teachers still perceive Standard English, including accurate grammar and standard American accent, as the correct English. This criterion is not only applied to the English learners but also to the teachers; as Jenkins (2007) found in her study, in the current academic fields, 'standard varieties still tend to be more highly evaluated than non-standard' (ibid.: 70). This might be the reason why Chinese English teachers have little tolerance for what they perceive as non-standard English and grammar mistakes in students' speaking and writing while foreign teachers show greater tolerance.

The hierarchy of English variants is not the only issue that I noted. I also found that Chinese students were passive and reticent about speaking in class, even when our foreign teachers attempted various activities to make them engage. I thought this was because we were shy and when I shared my explanation with my Australian tutor, she did not agree with me but told me that 'shyness' was one of the personality traits but not the phenomenon itself. She saw the same students talking a lot after class, and they were not shy at all. She thought they were just afraid of making mistakes. I then thought English proficiency might be a factor, yet most of us had passed CET 6 (College English Test) and some achieved IELTS (International English Language Testing System) 6.5 and above. I kept wondering what other factors were affecting their reticence in class. I firstly thought about the teaching methods in class and how classroom activities were organised. As for the speaking lessons taught by Chinese English teachers, students were mainly taught to how to perform an English speech or presentation. In most cases, however, students rehearsed and recited their speech before delivering it in class or in public. The teachers simply gave feedback to correct our pronunciation most of the time. Although I asked for other feedback from my teacher concerning the theme, idiomatic fluency of

expressions and the impact of language, they seemed to care little about it and gave me a general judgment only. To them, their way of teaching was a norm that they had inherited from their learning experience and they seemingly perceived it as beneficial and sufficient (Gu and Maley 2008: 226).

The Chinese academy was fully aware of students' shortcomings in speaking English, and they tried to tackle the problem by offering more opportunities for students to practise. Our English department held the college's English speaking competitions each term. I participated in every competition and won the first prize most of the time. However, the competition assessment criteria were based on the pronunciation, intonation and methods of presenting the speech. All candidates were given a topic one month before the competition, which meant that we could write down the speech, recite it and practise it over and over again before attending the competition.

As I won many prizes in the speaking competitions and did well in all the important English tests, such as CET 6 and TEM 8 (Test for English Majors), the most authorised and recognised English tests in China at the time, I was considered a good English speaker at the university. I felt proud and confident about my English competence, considering whether I had gained an advantage over the other classmates. In the final year of my undergraduate course, I decided to further my education abroad. The first thing that I needed to prepare for was taking the IELTS because I needed to reach the language requirement in order to be admitted to the overseas university. With enough confidence in my English competency, I took the IELTS in a Chinese exam centre. However, to my surprise, I obtained unsatisfactory scores in speaking (6.0) and writing (6.0). I retook the tests twice, but I still failed to reach my targeted scores.

It was the first time that I began to doubt my actual English ability and particularly my speaking. I could not understand why I could not pass the IELTS speaking test with Standard English pronunciation, good grammar and a large vocabulary. I was considered a good English speaker in the university. How could I fail the exam? I started to think whether foreigners (referring to native English speakers) had different attitudes and criteria for judging one's English speaking proficiency from the Chinese English teachers and learners? In order to find the answer, I took one-to-one IELTS lessons with a native English speaker who pointed out that I lacked the ability to develop my ideas on different speaking topics. He also pointed out that I did not speak naturally enough; he thought I was reciting and memorising while speaking, which indicated that I was weak in communication skills.

I began to rethink my approach to studying English and my attitudes towards speaking skills. A good English speaker should not only be good at pronunciation or reciting some speeches. Instead, we should

have something to talk about. We should be able to communicate. Then, I began to prepare for my IELTS speaking exam by getting familiar with the exam topics and questions. I spent most of the time thinking of ideas in response to the questions, and I also collected opinions and ideas about most of the exam questions, particularly for those that I had few ideas about. I googled the answers online and I interviewed some foreigners for their opinions using the IELTS topics. I compared the answers given by Chinese interviewees and foreigners to see if they thought differently. After collecting data for three months, I greatly enriched my knowledge in all areas, but it was not enough. I paid for an English native speaker to give me mock exams during which he asked me questions from all fields, and I tried my best to respond to him with different opinions and speak naturally. Thanks to the preparation, I finally achieved 8.0 in IELTS speaking which was considered a high score among international students, and among Chinese students in particular. According to a report from the British Council about performance in the IELTS Test Taker in 2015, the average score for Chinese candidates was 5.4 in speaking, ranking them at the bottom of the world list, while German candidates achieved an average score of 7.3 in speaking, the highest score in the global ranking.

Thanks to my success in IELTS, I was recommended by the head of IELTS in a famous IELTS training institute to teach IELTS speaking in the international school at Beijing Normal University Zhuhai Campus during my final year of my BA study. For most students, speaking was the weakest of their skills. They preferred memorising answers during the preparation stage which did not prove to be helpful. However, once I adopted a topic-based teaching methodology in the speaking lessons to get them familiar with the exam topics and develop their ability to express their ideas as well as teaching them some exam techniques, most of them improved greatly in the IELTS speaking section.

Due to my success in IELTS, and excellent academic performance of my undergraduate study at BIT, as well as my teaching experience, I was successfully admitted to a Master of Arts in English Language Teaching Studies and Methods (ELT SM) course at the University of Warwick in the UK.

1.2.2 Learning and Teaching in English in the UK

With great excitement and expectation, I arrived in the UK in September 2010. However, the sudden plunge into a new country turned my excitement into anxiety, frustration and confusion, which I encountered both in my daily life and my academic studies. One of the most serious frustrations was the language barrier. Having studied English for more than 10 years and achieved a total score of 8.0 in IELTS, I never expected that I would face language difficulties in the UK. To my surprise, I discovered that not everyone spoke English like BBC or VOA newscasters. Instead, there were a

variety of accents from all over the world. Never having been exposed to other accents besides American and British ones, I found it a great challenge to understand and communicate with people around me. This greatly affected my socialising with other students on campus. I stayed in the university accommodation with seven flatmates from Pakistan, South Korea, France, Greece, Kenya, England and Scotland. I found it difficult to communicate with them because I could not understand their English since they did not have a 'standard accent'. Furthermore, I felt anxious about speaking to them as I paid too much attention to the correctness of my English rather than its communicative purpose. What made me feel more frustrated was that while communicating with the local people, I found that my conversation was restricted to saying 'Hello', 'How are you?' or 'How is everything going?'. I found it hard to continue the talk with them. I began to ask, why was this? Was it because of my language barrier or was it because we did not have common interests or because we had cultural differences?

In order to understand my problems, while taking the core modules in ELT (SM) studies such as Conversation Analysis, Text and Discourse Analysis, Second Language Acquisition, English Language Teaching Methodology and English as an International Language, I was able to conduct some observations with the Chinese students at Warwick who were experiencing conflicts and struggling to adjust to a foreign culture and study, even though they were going to become English tutors and had acquired scores over 7 or equivalent in IELTS. I was fascinated by observing their behaviour and their responses to the international language classroom activities. Based on the basic knowledge of ELT, ESL, EFL, etc. that I learned from my core modules as well as my observations, I completed my research on Task-based language teaching methods in the international classroom. My findings revealed that Chinese students were anxious and reticent in the classroom, where they were unwilling to participate in the speaking activities. I also found that most of them were pursuing correctness in class rather than a communicative purpose because of their fundamental belief that Standard English was the only acceptable form of language for their overseas studies. For my fellow Chinese classmates, it is worth highlighting that when we were doing research in the ELT area, we were all aware of the situation of Chinese students and we all discussed about it in seminars. However, most of us could not step out of this loop ourselves, so how could we expect our students to make a change in the future. As Heusinkvelt (1997: 489) points out, 'the greatest shock may not be in the encounter with a different culture but in the recognition of how our own culture has shaped us and what we do'. I was curious to find out which factors contribute to Chinese students' anxiety, reticence and reluctance to speak in a foreign classroom. What contributed to their language difficulty? And what strategies should the teacher take to motivate them to be active participants in the classroom? Was it affected by their language barrier or their cultural background? If this difficulty was derived from their

cultural backgrounds, how can we minimise this impact? Is it a good idea to send Chinese students to study abroad at a younger age? I read Woodrow and Sham's (2010: 9) investigation of British Chinese students who had been brought up in a British environment or received an early education in the UK, 75% of whom still showed reluctance in the classroom to interact with questions and answers and preferred solving the problem after school rather than bringing it up in class. Therefore, does cultural influence come not only from the academic system but also family background or peer pressure?

My academic experience at the University of Warwick inspired my great passion to follow a career path in education, and I have been greatly interested in teaching students in the international context, helping them to crack the difficulties of learning and living in a foreign country. Thus, during my MA studies at the University of Warwick, I worked on a part-time basis in the IELTS society, teaching international students who were studying the foundation programme at Warwick to prepare for the IELTS. Moreover, I also provided a free IELTS teacher-training programme in the society for those who were interested in teaching IELTS in China during the summer holiday. In the teacher training programme, I mainly analysed the Chinese students' problems with IELTS, their learning preferences and the expectations of their teachers as well as the teaching methods that should be adopted to help them. I discovered that some English teachers had different opinions about English teaching methodologies. Most of them felt surprised to learn that Chinese students' learning habits and preferences were totally different from those of European students. What they found hard to understand was that Chinese IELTS learners expected teachers to teach them techniques to pass the exam. Those teachers who taught IELTS in the way that they taught general English without providing any exam techniques were not welcomed by Chinese students. This programme greatly broadened my views on methods of teaching English in different cultural contexts through exchanging ideas and experiences with local students who planned to become IELTS teachers in China.

After I obtained my Master's degree in 2011, due to my previous work experience both in China and in the UK, I easily found a job in a language school in London, working as a course development tutor and an IELTS teacher. Then, in 2012, I was employed by an independent school in London to teach the Chinese students who were doing GCSEs/A levels in the UK. My main responsibility was to improve their English competency by getting them involved with the local students at the school both in class and out of the class, participating in classroom activities, introducing language skills and techniques to them, helping them get used to different learning environments, and more importantly helping them pass IELTS so that they could reach the university language requirement. In addition, I also worked as the Director of Education for an overseas education training school in mainland China

from 2014 to 2015, developing courses, designing the syllabus, writing IELTS books, teacher training, etc. This school mainly prepared Chinese teenagers to study GCSEs/A levels in UK schools.

1.3 Mediating Across Two Educational Systems

I studied in China from nursery school to university, and after obtaining my undergraduate degree, I went on to do my Master's degree in the UK. Since graduation, I have been teaching in independent schools in London for about nine years. These experiences have enabled me to gain a deeper understanding of the teenage Chinese students in my research who studied in China for nine years before transferring to studying in England. My research has been carried out in England, but it has been useful to draw on my experiences of both systems to better understand the students' transition and the challenges students encounter in a new school system. Thus, in the next section I discuss the education structures, curricula, exams, and university admissions across two countries from my perspective.

1.3.1 The Educational System in China

I was born in a small town in the south of China in Guangdong Province. However, when I was three years old, my parents sent me to a big city so that I could start my schooling much earlier. Most Chinese children in urban and economically developed areas begin schooling at the age of three in kindergartens, where they take part in and complete three years' worth of pre-school education (Hu, 2002). However, children who come from rural areas do not start their education until they are six and must complete nine years of compulsory education, consisting of six years of primary education and three years of lower secondary education, regardless of whether they live in developed or less developed regions (ibid.). As my family sent me to the big city, I had the chance to attend school from the age of three. I remember that my parents were very busy with their work in my hometown, thus my grandparents and my aunt went to the city to look after me while I was studying in one of the best private kindergartens in the city. My education during kindergarten focused on certain skills such as singing, dancing, painting, reading comprehension and writing basic Chinese characters. I had a very relaxing and wonderful learning experience during that time.

After studying in the kindergarten for three years, I attended primary school like the other students in China at the age of six. I went back to my hometown for my primary school education because, generally, children only attend primary school according to their address registered in the household registry (known as the Hukou in China) if they choose to study in a state school. For private schools, there are no restrictions, but parents have to pay high fees for their tuition. During my primary school,

students studied several main subjects such as Chinese, mathematics and English, Moral Education, nature Studies, society, Physical Education (PE), health, music, and fine art. From Year 1 to Year 5, I had a carefree life as we seldom had any exams, and my parents did not put any pressure on me as long as I finished all my homework and behaved properly in school. At the end of Year 6, all students in the majority of the cities in Guangdong province were required to sit the exams (Chinese and Mathematics) for entry to lower secondary school which is called Middle school in China (from Year 7 to Year 9). This exam is similar to the 11 plus exam in England, which decides what kind of secondary schools students can be admitted to. There were about 30 secondary schools in my city, and the top three schools - called Experimental School, Number One Secondary School and Number Two Secondary School - were highly competitive. I still remember that there were more than 20,000 candidates taking the exams during that year, while only those whose results ranked in the top 200 were admitted to the top three schools. Parents would feel very proud of their child if he or she was admitted to study in one of those top three schools in my city. Those primary schools with the largest number of students being admitted to the top three Secondary schools also benefited from the boost in their reputations and appreciative comments this achievement would bring. Thus, from primary Year 6, all other subjects, such as music and PE, as well as any extra curricular activities, were cancelled. Instead, we spent the whole day studying Chinese and mathematics, preparing for the exams. Most of my classmates went to private tuition at weekends in order to increase their chances of getting higher marks. My aunt, who was my father's younger sister, taught mathematics in the primary school that I studied at. I lived with her during Year 5 to Year 6 as my parents were sent to work in Hainan Province which was far from my hometown (about an eight-hour drive). She tutored me at night, teaching me how to work out many challenging questions in maths as well as explaining exam techniques. Thanks to her, I achieved good results in the final exams, especially in mathematics, obtaining full marks in the paper. Luckily, I was admitted to study at Number Two Secondary School.

After six years of education in primary school, I entered the lower secondary school with great excitement and curiosity. In the first two years of secondary school (Year 7 and Year 8), I studied Chinese, mathematics, English, politics and Physical Education as the core subjects. Furthermore, we studied ancient Chinese history and geography, but because these two subjects were not the required subjects for exams, we learned them in a casual and relaxed way. In the final year of lower secondary school (Year 9), in addition to the five core subjects, we began to study physics and chemistry which were also compulsory subjects in the final exams. During the first two years of my secondary school education, while spending time and effort on all my school lessons and homework, I still enjoyed my life by participating in all kinds of activities such as arranging dancing activities for the school performance shows, taking part in sports events, participating in choir competitions, etc. Despite

spending a lot of time on these extra activities, I still maintained my ranking among the top 10 for all the school's internal exams in my year group (a total number of 80 students).

However, when it came to the final year, studying was very stressful because in China, after nine years of compulsory education, most students must complete a difficult exam, the Upper Secondary Education entry exam, known as *Zhongkao*. Those who successfully pass the exam begin three years of upper secondary education known as High School Education in China, whereas those who have failed or did not attend the exam are enrolled in vocational education or placed directly onto their career path (Hu, 2002). During my time in the lower secondary school, Chinese, English, mathematics, politics, physics and chemistry were the required subjects in the exams. Moreover, we had to attend the Physical Education (PE) exam from which students were assessed on 100 meters running, rope skipping and long jumping. The PE exam results were also added to the final result of the *Zhongkao*. During my third year at the lower secondary school, besides studying core subjects, the PE teachers required us to be in school by 7 am so that we were trained in the school playground every morning in running, skipping and jumping. We were not allowed to attend any extra activities during school time except working on the core subjects and doing PE training.

The *Zhongkao* was much fiercer than the exams taken in the final year of the primary school because there were more candidates taking the exams. To enter the lower secondary school from primary school, candidates were only those who lived and studied in the same city. However, for upper secondary school entry exams, candidates not only included those who were based in the city but also those who came from different towns including those from the rural areas. Students were trying their best to compete with each other in order to get a place in a key school in the city.

Luckily, I achieved a good result in the *Zhongkao* which enabled me to study at the top upper secondary school, a state boarding school in my hometown. In most Chinese upper secondary schools in China, students study the core subjects for three years: Chinese, mathematics, and English, and study the other remaining subjects for two years: politics, history, geography, physics, biology, and finally chemistry. Additionally, in their final year, students are required to choose a specific field to study from two groups: sciences and humanities. For instance, the choice could be physics, chemistry and biology or politics, history, and geography (Hu, 2002; Qi, 2004). After the completion of their upper secondary education, students take a highly competitive exam called the Chinese National Entrance Examination for Colleges and Universities, also known as *Gaokao*. Students must take six exams as part of the *Gaokao*, with three core subjects (Chinese, English, and mathematics) and another three selective subjects from either physics, chemistry and biology or politics, history, and geography (Yang, 2014;

McBean, 2008). However, during my time of upper secondary school education (from 2003 to 2006), the system in Guangdong province was different from those in other areas in mainland China. We had to study nine or ten subjects (such as English, Chinese, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, politics, history, geography), and English 2, a subject for students who were interested in choosing an English major in university. Therefore, the upper secondary school education was the most stressful for us because under this system, we had to study nine or ten subjects while students in other provinces only studied six.

My life in upper secondary school was very tough not only because of the heavy study load of ten subjects but also because the *Gaokao* was widely considered to be the most significant exam in China since it is the deciding factor about whether a student can be admitted to university (Qi, 2004; Yang, 2014). Students who successfully pass their exams move on to study in a university. Depending on their examination results, students enter a specified university. The higher the score a student obtains in the *Gaokao*, for instance, the better the chance that they are admitted into a prestigious university. Those who do not reach the undergraduate entry requirements of any university have three options: study a diploma course in college; re-sit their exams for next year; or begin their career (Hu, 2002).

In order to succeed in the *Gaokao*, almost all of my schoolmates worked very hard from morning till midnight Monday to Sunday particularly for those who came from less developed towns or rural areas because they considered passing the *Gaokao* and going to university was the only way for them to leave their hometown and got a better job in the cities. Some told me that that they could not imagine the shame of failure and the disappointment from the parents if they failed. Thus, they were learning like a machine trying to store as much knowledge as possible. My life every day during that time was about rushing between the school accommodation, classroom and the dining hall preparing for the exams. I chose English 2 as one of my subjects because I had a great passion for English and my career goal was to be an English teacher or interpreter, but I felt very frustrated by having to study biology and chemistry. I was very upset and kept wondering why I should study those subjects which had nothing to do with the course that I would study in the university. Luckily, unlike other parents of my classmates, my parents did not push me to work harder as they thought that if I failed the exams, they would send me abroad to study because it was becoming more and more popular to send teenage children to study aboard among a great number of my parents' friends or colleagues. However, I insisted on continuing to work hard and study until the end of the exams. I still remember it clearly on the last day of the exams when I came out of the exam centre, I saw a crowd of anxious parents waiting at the gate with packed lunches discussing the exam with their children anxiously. While my parents did not come due to work, they asked my uncle to arrange a bunch of flowers waiting for me at the

gate and invited me to have a nice meal in one of my favourite restaurants to celebrate the 'end of suffering'.

One month later, the exam results came out. To my surprise, despite the disadvantages of studying science subjects, I did well in English and English 2 as well as Chinese and mathematics. I was finally admitted to study the Bachelor's degree in English at a university after three years of tough education in high school.

Table 1: Educational stages in China

Ages	Education	Levels	Exams
6-12	Primary school (Compulsory)	Grades 1-6	Entry Exam to Upper Secondary School in Primary Year 6
12-15	Lower secondary school (Compulsory)	Grades 7-9	*Zhongkao* in Year 9
15-18	Upper secondary school (Compulsory)	Grades 10-12	*Gaokao* in Year 12
18+	University or college (Noncompulsory)	Diploma /degree	Internal exams or national Exams depending on the course

1.3.2 The Educational System in the UK

I have been teaching in the independent schools since 2012, while also acting as the guardian for my niece who arrived in England in April 2017, as well as some Chinese teenage students who are at different stages of their studies in the UK. This experience has helped me understand the education system in England well.

The English education system is divided into four parts: primary education, secondary education, further education, and higher education. It is necessary for pupils to attend primary and secondary

education between the ages of five and sixteen years. According to GOV.UK (2020), students can leave school in the summer when they turn 16 years old. After that, they have two options. They can choose to receive full time education for a post-16 course in a college or a school. Alternatively, they should start an apprenticeship or traineeship which allows them to be an employee earning a wage and getting holiday pay, work with experienced staff, learn practical skills related to the job, and so forth.

In England and Wales, the National Curriculum was first introduced in 1988 by the Education Reform Act which provides a framework for compulsory education in state schools. The most recent version was released in 2014 and set out for all year groups of students between the ages of five and sixteen. It governs which subjects are taught such as English, maths, and science as well as religious studies in primary and secondary schools, and the standards children should achieve in each subject (DfE, 2014). All state-funded schools need to follow the National Curriculum in order to promote the spiritual, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at school and in society and to prepare pupils for opportunities, responsibilities and experiences they will encounter in later life (See section 78, Education Act, 2002). Other kinds of schools such as academies and independent schools do not have to follow the National Curriculum, but they do have to teach a broad and balanced curriculum covering English, maths and science.

- Early Years Foundation Stage - Nursery and Reception

Generally, children attend nursery education between the ages of three and four in England. My niece came to the UK at the age of three with her mother and both live with me in London. As her mother's English is not fluent enough, I act as her guardian dealing with everything concerning her education and living in the UK. When she first came, I applied for her to study at a nursery school near my university which cost about 65-75 pounds per day for her tuition. Although the fees were high, the nursery offered excellent care and learning provision for children within a warm and nurturing environment. The nursery staff were very easy-going and approachable and always gave parents a big smile and a warm welcome whenever I dropped off or picked up my niece. The educational content focused on understanding the world, language and communication, basic phonics, numbering, literacy, expressive arts and design. Moreover, the school also paid great attention to the physical, personal and emotional development of the children. My niece had a wonderful experience in the nursery school where she quickly acquired English language skills. Before she came to England, she did not speak a word of English, yet after half a year of studying at the nursery school, she spoke like an English native speaker. However, what I liked most about the nursery school was that each child had a personal file which recorded the child's performance and development in different stages through sticking a picture

of the child to show what she or he was doing, writing a diary or just showing a piece of work he or she did, etc. For example, my niece's key teacher wrote several entries about my niece: 'Dance Class: Jenny Su copied exactly the poses and movements that Lizzie the dance teacher did…'; 'Jenny using the scissors to cut along the lines…'; and 'In the nature garden while planting sunflowers seeds, Jenny wrote her name independently on a lollipop stick…'. From the personal file, parents are able to view what their child does or learns in school and how their child improves in different stages.

After studying in the nursery school for about a year, my niece applied to a state school near my home to enter Reception when she was four years old, which was free. The Reception curriculum in the school focused on literacy, mathematics and phonics. I remember that she brought one book home each week as well as a reading record. The book she read was a story book related to the phonics they had learned that week. For example, she had learned 'sh' sound one week, and she was then given a book to read called *Wish Fish* where most sentences featured words with 'sh' sounds. She did not have any textbooks, which was unlike my experience of learning in China where students were given a textbook for each subject taught at school, but her teacher sent an email summarising the main focus of the week every Friday to let parents know what was being taught at school.

- Primary education - Key stage 1 and 2

Children who are between the ages of five and eleven are required to attend primary school where they will be assessed at Key stages 1 and 2. In state schools, the major goals of primary education are accomplishing literacy and numeracy skills as well as establishing a foundation knowledge in science, mathematics, and other subjects (Department for Education, 2014). When my niece was five years old, she left the state school at the end of Reception. Then, she was transferred to study at the junior school of an independent school where I had been teaching IELTS and Chinese in the senior school since 2012. She started from Primary Year 1, and now she is in Year 3. During three years of supervising her study and acting as her guardian, I have gained a better understanding of the curricula of the independent school where students are learning more diverse subjects compared with state schools in the UK and primary schools in China, such as English, phonics, mathematics, science, music, computing, art and DT (Design Technology), drama, French, religious study, history, geography, physical education, games, swimming, piano, singing and forest school. Besides, there are a wide arrange of after-school clubs for children to choose from such as dancing, yoga, colouring, football, gymnastics, netball, and so forth. She has English and mathematics lessons every day from Monday to Friday while the other subjects are taught once a week.

- Secondary education - Key stage 3 and 4

After primary education, students are assessed and move onto secondary school once they are 11 years old. Those students who would like to go to a grammar school for their secondary education need to sit the 11 plus exams which include four papers: English, mathematics, verbal reasoning and non-verbal reasoning. Some private or public schools also require students to take 11-plus exams, but most independent schools have their own entry tests. As for the independent school where I work, students who finish their primary education in the same school can move onto the secondary school without taking the exams, while applicants from other schools need to attend the school's entry exams to get a place.

According to the Department for Education (2014), students learn between eight and ten subjects during secondary school, studying core subjects such as English, mathematics and science as well as foundation subjects such as art and design, computing, foreign languages, geography, history, music and so on. At the end of Year 11 (aged 16), it is essential for students to prepare for an important exam called the GCSE, (General Certificate of Secondary Education). Generally, students take between five and ten GCSEs, with English and maths obligatory at most schools (DfE, 2014). Each year, I support about 10 Chinese students who are studying in the independent school I work for. I mainly help them to improve their English proficiency during weekends or half-term holidays as the language barrier is the biggest issue, which hinders their understanding during lessons and their communication with the school teachers. Furthermore, I support them to deal with school affairs such as writing emails, communicating with the school about their study, attending parents' meetings and so forth. My role of supporting the Chinese students has enabled me to achieve a better understanding of the subjects and the curricula of the school. From Year 7 to Year 9, they learn more subjects than students in the Chinese secondary school education as they have to study 15 subjects (such as art and design, biology, chemistry, physics, computer science, design technology, drama, English, geography, history, maths, PE, music, theology and philosophy, and Spanish). In addition, students also need to study English as an Additional Language (EAL) if English is not their first language. From Year 10 to Year 11, they have to take between eight and ten subjects for their GCSE exams, with English, mathematics, and science (physics, biology, chemistry) compulsory for all students. In addition, they still need to choose another three to five subjects from art, design technology, computer science, music, history, geography, philosophy, media, business, and modern languages (Chinese, Spanish, French, Japanese, and Russian) depending on their interests and their academic potential in each subject.

- Key Stage 5, Post-16 and Further Education

After taking the GCSE exams, pupils may choose to leave school and start an apprenticeship or traineeship, or they have the choice to continue their studies into further education. UK students who plan to study a degree course in college or university must complete A levels or a Foundation course, or other courses such as BTECs or GNVQs.

A-level courses are the most popular option among students. All the students that I have supported choose A-levels after taking GCSEs in England and also a lot of students transfer to do A-level courses directly after finishing the Chinese *Zhongkao* exams. For the A-level programmes, nearly all pupils study three or, exceptionally, four subjects for two years and take examinations in these at the end of the second year. They may also take one or even two additional subjects for one year only at the Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level and take examinations in these at the end of that year. Some schools offer examinations at AS level to pupils in those subjects they are studying for A-level course at the end of the first year of the two-year course. However, in accordance with the Department of Education for reform in 2015, the AS has been removed, and students instead take at least three A-level exams at the end of Year 13 (DfE, 2015).

Table 2: Educational Key Stages in England

Age	Education
4-5 years old	Nursery (Not-compulsory)-Reception (compulsory)
5-7 years old	Key Stage 1-Year 1 to 2 (compulsory)
7-11 years old	Key Stage 2- Year 3 to 6(compulsory)
11-14 years old	Key Stage 3- Year 7 to 9(compulsory)
14-16 years old	Key Stage 4- Year 10 to 11(compulsory)
16+ years old	Key Stage 5-year 12 to year 13 (not-compulsory)

1.3.3 Studying Across Two University Entrance Systems

Having been an undergraduate student in China and a postgraduate student in England, I found that the university undergraduate admission procedures and criteria are different in China and England. In mainland China, the higher education institutions draw up admission plans and make a general announcement detailing all the admission quotas for all provinces. In the Chinese education system, exams play a significant role in student success. Upper secondary school students at the end of their final year (Year 12) sit the *Gaokao* nationwide on the same dates and candidates submit their application forms containing their university and major subject preferences. Finally, higher education institutions admit applicants according to their *Gaokao* scores and preferences (Yang, 2014). The *Gaokao* result is the only criterion for admission. Only the students who perform the best in high-stake tests may enrol at prestigious universities. Almost all high school graduates wish to enter a good university, but less than 50% of them eventually achieve their goal due to the large number of candidates taking the exams to win one of the small number of admissions available to top universities (Qi, 2004).

However, in order to apply to a UK University for an undergraduate course, applicants should apply through the University and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), a UK-based organisation operating the application process for British universities, by a certain deadline. Students normally submit the application during the first term of Year 13 between September and December. During the application, students are given predicted grades by each subject teacher based on the student's performance and previous internal exams at the school. These predicted grades are used as part of the admissions process to help universities understand an applicant's potential. Most universities will send a conditional offer to an applicant based on qualifications, subjects, predicted exam grades, personal statements and academic reference. An A-level is the qualification most widely recognised by universities in the UK. Usually, most universities recognise A-levels or similar certificates, taken in at least three subjects. Before 2015, under the old system, students studied AS levels in Year 12, and took the AS exams in May and June, and the AS results formed 50% of the overall A-level grade. The new reforms in 2015 show that AS levels no longer count towards the final A-level qualification. Instead, students sit all their exams at the end of Year 13. With these changes, assessment is mainly by exams unless students' essential skills need to be tested, as in some courses. A small number of top universities require an admission test or an interview in addition to qualifications. To meet the entry requirements students have to achieve the grades requested in the conditional offer in the final A-level examinations. International students whose first language is not English need to take a specific English language test to meet the language requirement of the course in addition to their A-level results (UCAS, 2020).

When my target students were transferring from the Chinese education system to the UK, they were required to sit entry exams (English and mathematics) as well as to attend interviewes with the admission team in order to secure a place to study GCSE or A-level courses at the independent school. While studying in the UK school, they have to study all their subjects through the medium of English and take the additional English language test for their future entrance into university. Then, in the final year of their A-level courses, they sit the exams along with the local students and students from other countries in order to meet their requirements of the university they hope to enter.

1.4 Identifying My Research Interest and Questions

1.4.1 Research Interest

During my nine years (from 2011 to 2021) of teaching both in England and China, I have found that more and more Chinese students are coming to study in the UK. With China's 'Open Door' policy implemented since the 1980s and the follow-up impact of globalisation on the Chinese economy, culture and education, English has become the major foreign language taught at and required by schools, universities, and work places in China (Yang, 2000). As a result, an English medium education in various subjects and disciplines is now looked upon as one of the most desirable qualifications required by job markets (Counsell, 2011). In response to this cultural, economic and political climate, recent decades have witnessed an increasingly large number of Chinese students, at various levels, coming to study in English speaking countries. Among these countries, the UK has become one of the most popular destinations for overseas students (Counsell, 2011). Owning to several reasons such as its world-class academic reputation, superior teaching styles and methods, advanced research facilities, administrative systems, and library and IT provisions, Chinese students are enthusiastic about education in the UK (Bourke, 2000; Counsell, 2011; Matthew, 2014). Another significant reason is that the UK is perceived as the home of English language and culture. Therefore, the English medium of instruction in classes, seminars and lectures provides students with content-and-language-integrated learning opportunities to improve their language skills through cultural mixing with UK students as well as through a range of subjects, thereby extending their cultural competence and developing an awearness of both the host and their own cultures (Van Der Maid, 2003; Huang, 2008; Greatrex-White, 2008).

From a different perspective, many UK education institutions are very keen to attract more funds from recruiting overseas students who pay higher fees than home students (Brush and Barty, 1998; Nania

and Green, 2004). In addition, since the 1963 Robbins Report and the resulting expansion in higher education throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the UK higher education system has adopted a market-oriented mechanism for university recruitment and graduation, which the Chinese have labelled 'easy-in and tough-out' in contrast to the Chinese centralised mechanism for higher education admission and approval known as 'tough-in and easy-out' (Li and Yang, 2011). This enables easier access for self-funded Chinese students and has started, in recent years, to attract not only university students but also younger students studying GCSE/A-level courses before entering UK universities. According to the statistics from the UK Council for International Affairs (UKCIA, 2017), there has been a dramatic rise in the number of young Chinese learners enrolled in secondary schools doing GCSE or A-level courses in the UK. For those teenagers, *Gaokao* is highly competitive due to the large number of candidates taking the exams but the number of first-class universities is limited, which makes it hard for these students to succeed (Mori, 2000; Wang, 2006; Dimmock and Leong, 2010; Yang, 2014). Knowing that they would not have any advantage over other competitors in China if they fail to get good enough grades in the *Gaokao*, these students from better-off families decide to go and study GCSEs or A-level courses in the UK schools, which they think serves as an alternative, easier route for them to gain access to a UK university. Because the UK university system provides such renowned accessibility and accountability (Yang, 2014), these *Gaokao* 'losers' or low achievers from better-off families are frequently sent to the UK to gain an English-medium graduate qualification (Lowe, 2007).

However, serious challenges do exist for the younger students as they are adolescents and at a critical period of their lives both physically and mentally. This is widely evident in the English secondary and post-16 schools and colleges. Being a class teacher myself in one of the independent schools in London since 2012, I have found that most Chinese students aged 14-18 studying GCSEs/A levels are not accustomed to the new learning environment, the so-called learner-centred classroom where students are required to take part in class discussion, volunteer to speak, and contribute to lessons by asking questions and exchanging opinions (Yu, 2009). As a result, most of them are often reticent, left out and frustrated in class particularly when the focus is on speaking and class discussion. Why is that? What has made them challenged learners? Where has their initial incentive for going abroad gone and their motivation to learn? Who is to blame – the English or the Chinese? What should teachers do to motivate them and get them engaged in class and in class activities? With this difficult puzzle and these troubling questions in mind, I decided to embark on this PhD study.

My main aim was to find answers by exploring the following questions: Do teenagers experience education shock (Yamazaki, 2005) and language shock (Agar, 1996) because of their young age? How does their intercultural experience become a 'transformative learning process which leads to a journey

of personal growth and development' (Gu and Maley, 2008: 226)? What role do the school and their peer group play in this progress? I also explored the area of bilingual education with a focus on supporting Chinese EAL teenagers to succeed linguistically, culturally and academically in their learning journey in the UK. My background experiences, work and research placed me in a good position to conduct the research and find out both decisive and contributory factors that are responsible for their struggle and linguistic and cultural adaptation.

1.4.2 Research Questions

Based on my interests and the particular aspects of cultural and linguistic adaptation issues brought up from my own teaching experience and observation as well as a gap in the literature, with few studies conducted on the 14-to-18-year-old Chinese students in the UK, the following research questions were formulated to further investigate my target group.

My main research question: How can teenage Chinese EAL students be best supported to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically?

Sub-questions:
1. What has motivated Chinese teenagers to come and study for GCSEs/A levels in UK independent schools at such great expense?
2. Why are they particularly challenged learners in relation to cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation?
3. How are these students supported to meet the cultural, linguistic and academic challenges in their learning journey?

1.5 Significance of the Study

My experiences in both China and England from nursery to higher education as well as supporting Chinese EAL students in the independent schools in London have enabled me to better understand the educational journey and challenges for my research participants. Most Chinese teenage students have studied in the Chinese educational system for about nine years before they transfer to the UK school, studying all subjects through the medium of English instruction in a new educational system. Thus, they encounter many challenges and cultural shocks both in their studies and their lives during their learning journey in a new environment.

Notions such as 'culture learning' (Furnham and Bochner, 1986), 'social identification (Deaux, 1996)' and 'culture synergy' (Jin and Cortazzi, 1997) have been put forward to broadly account for the issues related to international students' adaptation. Among the groups investigated, Chinese undergraduates and postgraduates have been the main target groups. However, there is a lack of research with younger Chinese groups, particularly 14-to-18-year-olds studying within the British education system, which I think is becoming more important these days with the growing number of young learners studying in the UK. These younger learners are very sensitive when taking into account early overseas study, early independent living, and the switch between education systems and the international differences in classroom environments. Moreover, their developing identity and sense of self -meaning the extent to which they perceive themselves as acting and thinking more locally, or the extent to which they adopt the values of the host country plays a significant role in their task accomplishment, classroom interaction and academic achievement. These teenagers are exposed to UK culture for a sustained period but maintain the value of their own culture while studying abroad. This means their adaptation issues are ongoing and complicated. As an EAL teacher, education guardian and recruiter, I was able to accompany the teenage Chinese students from China to the UK; I maintained close contact between the school, parents and students during their study in the UK school and witnessed their development during the journey. This guaranteed that I could participate in their lives and carry out the research with them over a long time period, watching what happened, and listening to what was said. The teenage Chinese students were studying GCSEs/A-levels in the independent school and later pursued their education in the universities in the UK. Their long-term intercultural experiences were very important for my study.

While previous research raised awareness in higher education institutions of the need to provide more guidance and support for international students, whereby diversity in the classroom has been encouraged and teaching methods should be more sensitive and diverse (Zhou et al., 2008), while it has not had much effect in the secondary schools. Because of my role moving between insider and outsider researcher, I was able to collect data from different sources through different research methods. For example, I could collect data from students, teachers and parents through participant observations, interviews, reflective journals, field notes, messages on social applications, attending parents meetings and so forth. This helped me check the validity of the data and provide an in-depth description of meaning in a particular setting. Furthermore, my bilingual role enabled me to talk to the participants both in Chinese and English, and then employ translation as a technique to transcribe and present the data. All of these methods enabled me to get an in-depth description of teenage Chinese EAL students' experiences in the UK. The teenage Chinese students' experiences of intercultural adaptation provide a reference through which independent schools might understand the linguistic difficulties, cultural

differences, different learning pedagogies and learning preferences that students meet in their transition to the UK education system. The study also suggests guidance for facilitating international young learners to overcome cultural shock and linguistic barriers to achieve academic success for the schools and teachers to enhance their understanding of teenage Chinese students.

1.6 The Structure of the Thesis

My study sets out to investigate the challenges that Chinese teenagers aged 14-18 will encounter while doing GCSEs/A levels in the UK and how to support them to succeed linguistically and academically in their learning journey. The thesis is based on the study of teenage Chinese EAL students in an English independent school. It consists of nine Chapters.

The first chapter, as can be seen above, aims to provide an autobiographical account of my English learning and teaching background from which my research originated and demonstrates the motivation for my study. It justifies my marginal position as both an insider and outsider in this ethnographic study. This chapter further explains the current situation within my research context and the interest and importance of the study. Furthermore, this chapter also compares the education systems of China and England in terms of their education structures, curriculums, exams, and university admission procedures to help us to understand the differences between the two systems, and the challenges that Chinese students may encounter while transferring from one to another. The structure of the thesis is also provided in this chapter, demonstrating the themes of each chapter and their relationship within the framework.

Chapter 2 explores how, as studying and living in a new country, the Chinese teenagers may encounter 'cultural shock' and 'academic shock'. This part will review the intercultural experiences of the Chinese overseas students in the literature and discuss how Chinese culture influences their learning in the intercultural classrooms.

Chapter 3 focuses on second language acquisition (SLA) theories as a framework with which to understand how a language is acquired during different stages and the subsequent implications for second language teaching. SLA acquisition theories were developed along the lines of first language acquisition theories. Over the past three decades, however, a larger number of SLA theories have formed which provide explanations of how language learning takes place that offer guidance to second language teachers. Each theory accounts for language acquisition from a different perspective.

In Chapter 4, I discuss how English as an additional language (EAL) lessons offer important language support for the young overseas students in the school; therefore, its policies and practices as well as its limitations and challenges will be discussed in this section to understand how Chinese teenagers are supported to meet the challenges linguistically and academically in their learning journey in the UK.

Chapter 5 will mainly discuss the distinct forms of methodology employed in this study. Firstly, the general features and rationales of the research approach adopted in this study will be firstly discussed, and then the details about the particular methods employed for collecting data, research design and ethical considerations will be analysed, in which I will explain why ethnography is chosen as the research approach and how the issue of validity is understood when analysing the data collected. In this chapter, I will also introduce the four participants and describe how I conducted the interviews with them.

In Chapter 6, thematic analysis will be applied to the data, which will be analysed in depth within a theoretical framework of cultural adaptation and adjustment. Analysis of the data will be based on my research questions to discuss Chinese teenagers studying and living in an independent school in the UK; their motivation to study in the UK; and the difficulties and dilemmas due to cultural factors that Chinese students encounter both in their social lives and academic studies.

Chapter 7 will analyse the linguistic challenges that Chinese students encounter while studying all core subject with instructions through the medium of English. Students' previous English learning experiences will be analysised in order to understand how language was taught previously and why they are challenged learners in relation to linguistic adaptation in the UK school.

Chapter 8 will focus on the issues in EAL classes, analysing how Chinese students are supported to meet their linguistic needs, the challenges they encounter, and the mismatches between EAL teachers and Chinese students. This chapter will also discuss bilingual pedagogy, which has helped Chinese EAL students achieve their language requirements of their university application.

In Chapter 9, I will summarise theoretical and methodological implications and the main findings of the study and offer insight to improve the awareness of the challenges that Chinese teenagers may encounter as well as putting forward suggestions on how to support them in their learning journey. In this chapter, I will also point out the possible areas for future research.

PART TWO THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following three chapters investigate the literature and theories in the field of intercultural adaptation and adjustment, and second language acquisition (SLA) as well as EAL pedagogies in order to set them as a theoretical framework for analysing collected data.

Chapter 2 Intercultural Adaptation and Adjustment

2.1 Introduction

International students may encounter a range of difficulties and changes as a result of being in a new culture (Berry, 2006), especially for those students whose home culture varies greatly from the host culture (Wang, 2018). This chapter will discuss the theories and review the existing literature to help us understand the intercultural experiences of international students studying in a foreign country. A large amount of research has been done on investigating the issues of international students' adjustment and adaptation when they are living and studying in foreign countries (Chen, 1999; Campbell and Li, 2008). Students attending schools or universities with a different culture have to contend with novel social and educational organisations, behaviours and expectations as well as dealing with the problems of adjustment common to students (Zhou, et al., 2008). The research literature confirms that international students have encountered many difficulties since their arrival, which include, cultural gaps, language-related difficulties and academic challenges in and after class.

2.2 Theoretical Perspective on Intercultural Adaptation and Acculturation

2.2.1 Acculturation Theory and Acculturative Strategies

The concept of acculturation was originally proposed by anthropologists in the 1930s (Sam and Berry, 2010: 473), who coined the term to define those phenomena which result when groups of individuals from different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact leading to subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (Redfield et al., 1936: 149-152). Berry defines acculturation as 'the dual process of cultural and psychological change that take place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members' (Berry, 2005: 698). He points out that almost everyone who lives in or moves to a 'culturally plural society' would experience some degree of acculturation (Berry, 2010:473). Zhou et al (2008) explain acculturation as the process of adapting into a second culture that one does not belong to which then results in culture change due

to continuous contact and cross-cultural interactions between the two distinct cultures. For example, when students go to another country for study, they come into contact with another culture. Acculturation is what may happen when two cultures come into contact with each other and the process of acculturation involves cross-cultural communication, cultural learning, changes and adaptation (Lam, 2017).

In a later study on acculturation stress, Berry (1984) proposed an acculturation framework and suggested four types of acculturation strategies such as assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalization (Sam and Berry, 2010). According to Berry (1997), integration occurs when individuals can adopt the cultural norms of the host culture while maintaining their culture of origin. Separation occurs when individuals reject the host culture as they prefer to preserve their original culture. Assimilation occurs when individuals adopt the cultural norms of the host culture over their original culture. Marginalisation occurs when individuals reject both their culture of origin and the host culture. This framework suggests that the adoption of a strategy depends on the individual's desire to maintain their original culture and their willingness to interact or merge into the new one. In other words, acculturation depends on whether or not the sojourner desires to keep his or her heritage culture as well as whether or not to internalise the host culture. This framework analysed acculturation from a new perspective of breaking down the factors and elements during acculturation process. However, there is criticism that acculturation is described in terms of strategies that a sojourner may adopt whilst these will also be very dependent on the actions of the host culture.

2.2.2 U-Curve, Culture Shock and ABC Theories

Lysgaard's (1955) U-Curve theory and Oberg's (1960) culture shock theory are two main theories of acculturation which have been widely used for studies into sojourners. U-curve theory is a framework that depicts the transition from one culture to another (Megan, 2008). The U-curve model for adjustment was first introduced by a Norwegian sociologist Sverre Lysgaard in 1955, and it has been developed by other scholars over the following decades (e.g., Oberg, 1960; Chang, 1973). For example, U-Curve theory was proposed to describe cultural adaptation by Oberg (1960). According to this model, the adaptation process goes through four stages: honeymoon, culture shock, recovery and adaptation. The honeymoon stage is a period lasting a short period of time (Harris and Moran, 1979), during which sojourners feel excited and fascinated by their new life after arrival.

Culture shock often occurs when individuals are attempting to live, work, or study in unfamiliar cultural contexts. According to Oberg (1960), the term culture shock refers to a kind of anxiety which occurs

in people when they arrive in a new culture. For example, people feel anxious because they lose familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse and they are encountering other cues that are strange to them (Hall,1959 in Brown et al., 2010). After the honeymoon phase, sojourners reach the culture shock phase as problems arise because of cultural differences and misunderstandings. Thus, during this phase, people experience tension, frustration and depression due to being unfamiliar with the new culture (Torbiorn, 1982; Black and Gregersen, 1991). In this model, the sojourner needs to recover from culture shock to adapt successfully to the new culture. Culture shock experiences serve as a force that drives strangers to learn and adapt. It is through the presence of stress that strangers are compelled to strive to achieve the level of learning and self-adjustment that is necessary in order to meet the demands of the environment and to work out new ways of handling their daily activities (Ruben, 1983) In the recovery phase, the intercultural adaptation process of the individual centres on 'a step-by-step psychological journey from the fringes to the centre of a foreign culture, from a state of denial or ignorance to a state of understanding and empathy' (Anderson, 1994: p. 295). During this stage, individuals start to be able to solve some problems and hold a more balanced view towards the host culture. Finally, the adaptation stage is the time when the sojourners have adjusted to the new culture.

According to the U-shaped curve culture shock model, we can summarise that the entry point of the sojourner is seen as a 'honeymoon high', which indicates how an individual first arrives in the host country with excitement, fascination, and optimism, followed by a drop in mood due to culture shock during which the individuals may experience increased feelings of homesickness and start to reject the new environment, and finally they return to the top through cultural adjustment and adaptation (Lysgaard,1955). U-curve theory and culture shock theory indicate that acculturation focuses entirely on the individual who has moved to a new country. When sojourners enter a new culture, some of their old cultural habits are to be replaced by new ones. For example, after living in the new country for a longer period of time, they leave behind their heritage culture and adopt more and more of the values, traits, and attitudes of the host culture (French et al., 1974). The underlying assumption of these theories is that sojourners desire to leave their cultural heritage behind and assume the traits and attitudes of the new culture. Oberg's (1960) four-stage model is the first culture shock model that has been widely used in studies and as a baseline for research over the last 60 years. However, researchers have criticised the lack of rigour in its methodology and pointed out that there is little empirical evidence for a U-curve pattern in acculturation (Church, 1982; Furnham and Bochner, 1986). Studies also show that not all individuals undergo acculturation in the same way (Fritz et al., 2008).

Many critics argued that Oberg's culture shock model tends to view culture shock in a negative and passive way. Ward et al. (2001) introduced a broader culture shock framework in order to develop a

model of the acculturation known as the ABC model. It is an active process describing how sojourners feel, react, and think when they live in a new culture. This model has more comprehensive and dynamic features for measuring culture shock as an active and on-going process. There are three components in the ABC model such as affect, behaviour, and cognition. The affective element indicates the feelings and emotions of how sojourners cope with acculturation stress, while the behavioural element looks at how people acquire new skills and learn to adapt to their new environment. The cognitive component identifies how individuals develop, change and maintain their social identities.

2.2.3 Psychological Adjustment

Adaptation is the process of change in response to a new environment. It is one component of acculturation which relates to the change in a group's culture or the change in individual psychology in response to a new environment or other factors (Berry et al., 2006). Intercultural adaptation is a learning process of modifying behaviour undergone by people who move to a new country for different reasons, such as traveling, work and study (Pietilä, 2010). Teng (1977) pointed out that intercultural adaptation is a dynamic process which aims to extend the degree of mutual understanding, to explore the power of mutual respect, and to expand the space of mutual acceptance. Kim and Ruben (1981) also defined it as the process through which people in cross-cultural interactions change their communication behaviour to facilitate understanding and thereby decrease the probability of being misunderstood when speaking with someone from a different culture.

According to Ward and Kennedy (1992), intercultural adaptation can be broadly divided into psychological, and sociocultural adaptation. The psychological model is mainly situated in a stress and coping framework, while sociocultural adaptation is situated within the cultural learning framework. The psychological acculturation dimension is concerned with an individual's satisfaction and overall emotional or psychological well-being (Ward et al., 2001). Ward and his colleagues pointed out that psychological adjustment is best understood within a stress and coping framework, and sojourners will encounter the greatest difficulties when they are faced with the most immediate life changes, especially when coping resources and social support in the new environment are limited. According to Berry, we need to consider the psychological changes that individuals undergo when faced with a new culture (Berry, 2004: 28). These could be behavioural shifts, such as changes in the way one speaks, dresses, eats, and so forth, or attitudinal shifts, such as the way they view these differences compared to their heritage cultures. Although, acculturation stress is a universal phenomenon, not all acculturating individuals experience psychological stress in the same way (Berry, 2004). Psychological adaptation can be influenced by personality factors such as agreeableness, openness to experience,

conscientiousness, and extroversion (Bakker, Van Oudenhoven, and van der Zee, 2004; Ward, Leong and Low, 2004). Social support and relations with host nations have also been found to predict psychological adjustment (Hall, Edwards and Hall, 2006).

2.2.4 Sociocultural Adjustment

Sociocultural adjustment refers to cognitive and behavioural factors associated with effective performance in the host country, such as the ability to 'fit in' and interact with others successfully in the new cultural environment (Ward et al., 2001). Black and Stephens (1989) specify three main domains for sociocultural adaptation: general adjustment, interaction adjustment and work adjustment. General adjustments are concerned with managing daily life, whereas interaction adjustment is related to interactions with the host nations and work adjustment refers to the accomplishments of work-related objectives. For overseas students, general and interaction adjustments are the main sociocultural adjustments which involve how the sojourner handles daily life in the new culture, and how well they get on with both local students and students from other nationalities (Black and Stephens, 1989; Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006).

Furthermore, sociocultural adaptation is a process of getting to know the sociocultural conventions, such as the behavioural rules of the host culture (Chen, 2013). Acculturation researchers feel the sociocultural dimension of acculturation is best understood from a cultural learning perspective (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006). Furnham and Bochner (1986) in the interview and in their reflective journal strongly advocated for the cultural learning model, which has its origins in social psychology, focusing on behavioural aspects of intercultural contact. The process of adaptation is influenced by the general knowledge about a new culture, length of residence in the host culture, language or communication competence, friendship networks, previous experience abroad, and social skills (Bochner, McLeod and Lin, 1979; Ward and Searle, 1991; Furnham, 1993; Ward and Kennedy, 1993; Ward et al., 1998; Yang et al., 2006). Sociocultural cultural adaptation is influenced by cultural learning and the acquisition of social skills (Ward and Kennedy, 1999). Culture learning begins with learning about oneself as a cultural being. Once we become aware of what culture is and how our own culture affects our individual identities, we can compare and contrast our culture with others.

2.2.5 In Between Psychological and Sociocultural Adjustment

Psychological adaptation is better analysed by employing stress and psychopathology approaches, while sociocultural adaptation is better understood within a social skills or cultural learning framework

(Berry, 1997; Ward, 1996). Ward et al. (2001) pointed out that psychological adaptation concerns people's sense of physical and psychological well-being, while sociocultural adaptation concerns people's sense of how well they can fit into their new environment. For example, psychological adjustment refers to an array of psychological outcomes related to a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, subjective well-being, and emotional satisfaction in a new cultural environment (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1994). It is predicted by personality, life changes, and social support (Ward and Kennedy, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994; Ward and Searle, 1991, Ward, 1996; Wilson, Ward and Fischer, 2013). Sociocultural adaptation, on the other hand refers to the competence of handling daily living problems and social interactions within a new cultural context. It is measured by the amount of difficulty the sojourner has in the performance of daily tasks and is dependent on variables such as language proficiency, length of sojourn, cultural knowledge and competence, cultural distance between the home and host cultures, and the amount of contact with host nationals (Searle and Ward, 1990; Ward and Kennedy, 1992, 1993a, 1993b).

Moreover, psychological and sociocultural adjustments fluctuate differently over time. The greatest adjustment difficulties occur at the point of entry for both; however, sociocultural problems tend to steadily decrease and eventually level off, while psychological problems show much more variable outcomes (Ward & Kennedy, 1996a, 1996b; Ward et al., 1998).

2.3 Intercultural Adaptation Approaches

2.3.1 Longitudinal Approach

The longitudinal approach to adaptation generally suggests that there are stages that an individual goes through when adjusting to another culture. Culture shock and Kim and Ruben's (1988) systems theory of intercultural transformation address various psychological stages that an individual goes through when immersed in a different culture over a long period of time. These approaches do not suggest that an individual adjusts behaviour upon initial exposure to cultural differences. Instead, an individual experiences stress or difficulty based on extended exposure to new ways of doing things. These approaches predict that, over time, the person will learn and become accustomed to the ways of the new culture and thus will 'adapt' to cultural differences.

2.3.2 Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

Communication Accommodation theory (CAT) was developed in 1971 by Howard Giles, a professor teaching communication at the University of California. CAT provides a wide-ranging framework with which to predict and explain many of the adjustments that individuals make to create, maintain or decrease social distance in interaction (Giles and Ogay, 2007). It has been used to explain why two people adjust their communication style toward or away from each other during cross-cultural interactions (Cai and Rodríguez, 1996), referring to how people adjust their style of speech to help the message sender gain approval from the receiver which increases the efficiency in communication between both parties. 'A person's identity influences their use of language, paralanguage and non-verbal behavior to accommodate others through either convergence, divergence or maintenance' (Herbrok, 2011: 55). This theory explains the process of how identity influences communication behaviours to reach the desired level of social distance between the communicators (Abram, O'Connor and Giles, 2003: 213).

CAT suggests that speakers use strategies of convergence or divergence/maintenance to signal their attitudes toward each other. Convergence is used to seek approval, improve communication clarity and comprehension (Cai and Rodríguez, 1996), which involves changing linguistic or paralinguistic behaviours, such as language, dialect, tone of voice, and so on, to become more similar to a conversation partner. According to Gallois et al. (1988), the more a speaker converges towards their partner, the more favourably the person is likely to be evaluated by the listener. Conversely, divergence is used by a speaker to emphasise differences with their partner. A strategy similar to divergence is maintenance, which indicates that a person persists in his or her original style regardless of the communication behaviour of the interlocutor (Bourhis, 1979). Central in the theory is the idea that speakers adjust or accommodate their speech styles in order to create and maintain positive personal and social identities (Gallois, 2005). Adjustment of communication behaviour is based on the perception that an individual has of the conversation partner's communicative behaviour.

2.3.3 The Hierarchy Hypothesis

The hierarchy hypothesis suggests that when individuals fail to reach communication goals, they will tend to choose the least cognitively demanding option available to them. For example, if a person believe that their conversational partner is a non-native speaker of their language, they are more likely to adapt their language earlier in the interaction rather than later (Berger and diBattista, 1993: 223). In other words, they may think that a non-native conversation partner is more likely to misunderstand and

therefore adapt a message before a misunderstanding actually occurs during conversation. They will first change lower-level elements of their messages such as speech rate and vocal intensity instead of more abstract message elements that deal with the organisation and structure of the message content (Cai and Rodriguez, 1996). One of the simplest ways to attempt to rectify a misunderstanding is simply to repeat what has been said previously. Repetition does not require major alterations in content or syntax. It is assumed that alterations of content and syntax require more abstract and complex alterations. It is also assumed that message features such as vocal intensity and speech rate do not require as much cognitive resources as changes in syntax and content. Consistent with this reasoning, Berger and diBattista (1993) find that when initial messages were not understood, the subsequent repeated message showed significant increases in vocal intensity and reductions in speech rate.

2.4 Related Studies on New Arrivals

The sociocultural dimension of international student adjustment relates to their experiences of the host society and people (Ecochard and Fotheringham, 2017). Arriving in a new country, international students often need to adjust to life changes and cultural differences. Students may face many difficulties in their daily life. For example, they need to become familiar with the new environment in a short period of time, becoming accustomed to living in accommodation or with a host family, making a new circle of friends, becoming familiar with the transport system and adapting to local food, weather and social conventions (Bamachandran, 2011; Wu, Garza and Guzman, 2015). All these sociocultural aspects might challenge them on their arrival. For example, students might find it hard to get used to the living conditions and environment of the school accommodation where they may have to share a room with other students whom they have not known long, especially those from different cultural backgrounds or who speak a different language (Sivtceva, 2016). However, these difficulties (such as becoming familiar with accommodation and transportation, adapting to new food and weather, etc.) are short-term difficulties which can be solved quickly after arrival. At the same time, other challenges (such as making friends with the local students, having feelings of loneliness and depression) are long-lasting life issues while studying in a foreign country (Henze and Zhu, 2012). Many studies have revealed that international students face difficulties in establishing friendships with students in the host country (e.g. Heublein et al.,2004; Ye, 2006). Therefore, they often feel lonely and isolated in a new country where they are confronted with different cultural conventions (Edwards and Ran, 2006).

2.4.1 Friendship

Friendship with local students plays an important role in sociocultural adaptation and adjustment for international students (Hendrickson, Rosen and Aune, 2011; Ozer, 2015). Host students are carriers of the host culture, traditions and language (Sivtceva, 2016). Interacting with host students enables foreign students to learn about the local culture and improve their language proficiency, which helps them to adapt to the new country (Sawir et al., 2008). However, many studies show that international students encounter difficulties in making friends with local students while studying and living in the host country. They tend to be closer to those students who come from the same home countries and share similar cultures (Ye, 2006; Edward and Ran, 2006). According to a survey by the Council for International Education (2004), 15 percent of international students studying in the UK said they made friends with local students, while the majority of overseas students revealed that they were much more closely integrated with students from the same countries and other international students than with those from the UK. Heublein et al. (2004) conducted research on four universities in Germany which showed that one third of the international students in a German University said they had little contact with domestic students. Feng carried out a study in the USA which also indicated that the amount of intercultural communication between international students and the local students is low due to lack of common interests with their native American peers (Feng, 1991).

In terms of friendships, there are a wide range of factors affecting Chinese students making friends with local home students such as a language barrier, lack of common topics due to differences in cultural backgrounds and values, few opportunities to meet each other outside the classroom, and seeking support from their Chinese peers, etc. (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006; Henze and Zhu, 2012).

Language is one of the most significant factors that impedes international students' attempts to make friends and interact with locals (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000; Barratt and Huba, 1994), which often leaves them feeling isolated and helpless. Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) conducted an empirical study on the psychological and sociocultural adjustments of Chinese students at a British university and most students revealed that they were reluctant to interact with British students because of a lack of confidence in their English language ability. This appears to be a huge barrier to any improvement in their ability to communicate in English (Fischer, 2012). Chinese overseas students also found it hard to understand idioms and local expressions, especially English humour (Shi, 2007), due to the language barrier and lack of cultural knowledge, which also affected them making friends or interacting with local peers because when they were chatting with the home students, they felt embarrassed when they

failed to understand their humour. They did not know why the UK students laughed and why it was humorous due to a lack of previous access to English idioms and local expressions (Yang, 2017).

Lack of mutual interests is also an important factor affecting the ability of Chinese students to make genuine friends among domestic students. Some research reported that international students failed to make close friends with students of the host country because they found few common topics with each other (e.g. Feng, 1991; Lam, 2006; Henze and Zhu, 2012). For example, Spencer-Oatey and Xiong (2006) conducted an empirical study on Chinese students' psychological and sociocultural adjustment to Britain. Chinese participants revealed that they found it difficult to make true friendships because of a lack of common interests due to the differences in lifestyle and values. Ding (2008) conducted an ethnographic study on the cross-cultural experiences of Chinese students in London, and her findings showed that international Chinese students' social interaction with English peers remained at the superficial level of daily greeting because they failed to find mutually interesting topics while communicating with their English peers. Chinese students in the US also revealed that they did not have many interests in common with their local peers (Feng, 1991:9) and their friendships with local students were just as 'hi-bye' friends. Social and cultural diversity such as different family and cultural backgrounds and values may cause people from different countries to have little in common and thereby interfere with their attempts at communication (Lam, 2006).

Researchers also illustrated how the lack of opportunities to meet and mix with local students contributes to the difficulties overseas students making friends with local peers. For instance, in Henze and Zhu's study (2012), participants said that they had little chance to communicate with British students as they were studying on a course where there were no British students. Some students who shared a house or a flat with other Chinese students had extremely limited opportunities to meet and mix with their local peers.

Seeking help from students with the same cultural background is also an essential reason why Chinese students make more Chinese friends rather than domestic friends while studying abroad. They feel more comfortable and confident when communicating with students from the same linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Sivtceva, 2016). Moreover, they would like to spend time with other Chinese students who have a better understanding of their previous experiences as well as the challenges now facing them. Friendship networks with students from a similar cultural background play an important role in adjusting to the new environment (Edwards and Ran, 2006). Thus, the majority of newly arrived international Chinese students prefer staying within their Chinese groups rather than with their local

peers because they think they will be better supported by Chinese peers who have lived in the host country for a longer period of time (Ye, 2006).

2.4.2 Loneliness and Depression

Many studies also showed that international students experienced psychological stresses in terms of uncertainty and signs of depression, loneliness and anxiety, which affected their adaptation to life during their study in a foreign country (Robertson, Line and Jones, 2000; Meza and Gazzoli, 2011; Berry et al., 2011; Henze and Zhu, 2012). For example, most overseas students have left home for the first time and they arrive in their target country alone and lonely. They are distant from family, friends, and familiar environments (Henze and Zhu, 2012), and they have to share accommodation with comparative strangers, learn to cook, deal with financial stress and find out what is expected of them at school or university. All of these adjustments can take their toll in terms of general psychological well-being, which causes them to experience feelings of stress and loneliness (Spencer-Oatey and Xiong, 2006). Furthermore, when failing to make friends with students from the host countries, many international students experience feelings of frustration and isolation even though most of them do stay close to their co-national friends. Robertson et al. (2000) also pointed out that loneliness is a serious problem among international students. Swawire et al. (2008) conducted studies in Australian universities and found that one third of international students reported cultural loneliness, while Oei and Notowidjojo (1990) reveal that overseas students experienced depression and loneliness while they were studying in Australia. In addition, because the host culture is unfamiliar, it upsets the sojourner's familiar routines which can create anxiety and psychological uncertainty (Black and Oddou, 1991: 301). For example, Meza and Gazzoli's (2011) study points out that students experienced feelings of uncertainty and anxiety while studying hospitality management in Switzerland, which affected their ability to adjust during the acculturation process.

Acculturation researchers have emphasised the role of social support in attenuating the stress of adjusting to an unfamiliar cultural environment and in promoting physical and psychological well-being during cross-cultural transitions (Adelman, 1988; Mallinckrodt and Leong, 1992; Ward and Rana-Deuba, 2000). They identify how social support provides valuable resources for coping with stressful events and for maintaining good physical and mental health (Chu, Saucier and Hafner, 2010; Cohen and Wills, 1985).

Families and friends are important social support for international students. However, a lack of social support due to distance from family and failure to make local friends, as well as the uncertainty of study in the host country, may contribute to feelings of loneliness and anxiety for international students.

2.5 Related Studies on Linguistic Issues

Language is considered one of the greatest academic issues hindering smooth adjustment (Galloway and Jenkins, 2005). Although all international students take language tests such as IELTS, TOFEL (The Test of English as Foreign Language) or other relevant English language tests to meet the language requirements of the schools or universities before being admitted to study in the English-speaking countries, English is still one of the biggest barriers for international students while studying in those countries (Li, Baker and Marshall, 2002; Ward and Masgoret, 2004)

2.5.1 Language Related Difficulties

As a result of the linguistic barrier, most Asian students find it difficult to communicate with lecturers and other students, hard to follow instructions, complete assignments, do exams, or ask questions in class (Chen, 1999; Campbell and Li, 2008), which greatly affects their chances of successful adaptation to academic study overseas (Chen, 1999). For example, Chinese students express concern about the adequacy of their listening and speaking skills in order to effectively communicate with their teachers and peers in the classroom and engage in academic readings and especially academic writing which they report as being particularly frustrating (Edwards, Ran, and Li, 2007). One significant reason is that in their previous English learning experience, they were largely exposed to English listening exercises in the EFL classrooms or while they were taking the language tests, during which they were usually provided with some written materials as contextual information; however, many Chinese students lacked experience in listening to and speaking with English speakers in real-life contexts (Holmes, 2004; Yang, 2017). Thus, there is no doubt that they find it difficult to use English fluently and naturally in real-life situations, especially in academic contexts when they are studying in English-speaking countries. For instance, they reported that they were unable to understand lecturers or seminars and found it difficult to verbally respond to their teachers or participate in class discussion (Shi, 2007; Wong, 2004).

In some research studies (Wong, 2004; Zhang and Zhou, 2010), the Chinese participants revealed that they had difficulty understanding the accents of their international peers who spoke with various accents instead of standard British or American accents. For example, in some studies (Shi, 2007;

Wong, 2004; Zhang and Zhou, 2010; Xue, 2013), students complained that their multicultural teachers and peers from different countries such as India, Spain, Italy, Poland and so forth spoke with various accents and they reported having difficulty understanding their accents. The reason is that a large number of Chinese students are used to being exposed to recorded models of the British or American English used in their English learning materials while studying in Chinese schools. Most of them lack exposure to a variety of English accents other than the model British and American versions (Sang, 2010; Yang, 2017).

Furthermore, as suggested by Gu and Schweisfurth (2006), most Chinese students, especially those studying subjects in humanities or social science, find academic writing particularly difficult for them. One significant reason is that English is very different from Chinese in terms of grammar and sentence structures. Shi (2007) points out that there are differences between students' first and second languages which may cause confusion in writing. For example, in Edwards et al.'s (2007) study, one participant in a UK university revealed that his supervisors found it hard to read his writing. The reason might have been that he wrote English with the Chinese sentence structure and his use of vocabulary might not have been accurate. However, Turner's study (2006) reports that when Chinese students learned English as a Foreign Language in China, they focused more on grammar and vocabulary instead of ideas. Thus, even though students might write English with correct grammar and accurate vocabulary, they might not have enough ideas to support the topic in essay writing, or their way of expressing opinions fails to enable the English tutors to understand their points. Therefore, expressing ideas using Western logic is more important than simply translating ideas using accurate words and grammar (Yang, 2007). In addition, the different methods of referencing between Chinese and English academic writings also contribute to the Chinese students' difficulty in academic writing in English. Chinese international students reported that they had difficulty using the standard writing requirements and citations, and they did not know how to use references as evidence or how to use quotations to support their views because they had never practised this sort of notation in China. They were not required to write citations or quotations in their school essays (Sun and Chen, 1999), and this then greatly hindered their attempts to meet the academic requirements. In Gu and Schweisfurth's (2006) study, one student also reported that he was struggling in his MA studies because he was not used to the writing style at UK Universities, where students were required to use references in their academic writing as evidence to support their views. For most Chinese academic writing during undergraduate study, students are not required to write essays with references; they only need to quote references in the final dissertation in the final year of the undergraduate course in the university. Therefore, they lack practice in including references and quotations while writing academic essays. As was mentioned by Xie (2013), a university student in China might only produce one report or a thesis in his or her four-year university life,

whereas a UK university student does much more writing. Citations, therefore, may be a problem for Chinese students in writing because there is no citation or quotation in their school essays.

Apart from the aforementioned linguistic challenges, some studies show that the lack of English vocabulary for specific terms and definitions is another linguistic difficulty that affects international students' understandings of key points in their academic studies while studying in an English medium instruction classroom (Huang, 2009; Chang, 2010; Tatzl, 2011). For example, Shi (2007) points out that Chinese students might have limited access to specialist vocabulary in their subject areas, making it more challenging when they study those subjects in English in a foreign country.

2.5.2 Factors for Language Difficulties

Linguistic difficulty alone is not the major reason for Chinese students' lower proficiency in English. There are pedagogical factors which have influenced how Chinese students have formed their habits of English learning. Influenced by behaviourism and cognitivism, the traditional approach of English language teaching in China has been a combination of grammar-translation and audiolingualism, which is characterised by a systematic and detailed study of grammar, extensive use of cross-linguistic comparison and translation, memorisation of structural patterns and efforts to form good verbal habits, etc. (Hu, 2002). These methods, which have taken root in Chinese classrooms and have drawn strong support from Chinese teachers and learners (ibid.), are still widely adopted in teaching English in China. The grammar translation method is characterised by systematic and detailed analysis of grammar, extensive use of translation in teaching and learning, rote learning of vocabulary, and emphasis on written language (Richard and Rogers, 2014). This method is widely applied in the English as a Foreign Language classrooms in mainland China, particularly in the secondary schools, which emphasise 'memorising rules and facts to understand and manipulate the morphology and syntax of the foreign language' (Stern, 1983: 455). The belief behind this method is that a second/foreign language can be most effectively learned by first mastering a full set of grammar rules and then applying this knowledge of grammar in exercises that require the manipulation of morphology and syntax of the target langue (ibid.). In the English classrooms in mainland China, most lessons are based on a focus text. Teachers spend a lot of time explaining the usage of words in detail, analysing the grammar structures, and drilling the structures through translation (Hu, 2002). This teaching method leads to a deeply rooted studying technique whereby students believe if they memorise sufficient words, they can master a language. Therefore, vocabulary and phrase books are necessary resources for each student, from which they simply memorise the English words and its Chinese translation, usually without context (ibid.).

Another approach widely adopted in Chinese English lessons is the audiolingual method. Unlike the grammar-translation method, this method - which originated in the United States for training oral proficiency in various languages in the 1950s - is an intensive oral-based approach to the learning of a foreign language, drawing on structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology for theories of language and learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Based on behaviourism, this method derives from the notion of language as verbal behaviour consisting of stimulus-response chains. Learning a second/foreign language is assumed to be basically a process of mechanical habit formation based on mastering the structural elements (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). In the Chinese English classroom, lesson practices advocated by the audiolingual method mostly emphasise speech and dialogue. Students are usually asked to read the dialogues in pairs during the lesson with Memorising dialogues and performing pattern drills forming the core of the instruction. Students are asked to recite the dialogue or the text in the book as homework and it will be checked in class or during the exam. Both grammar-translation and audiolingual methods, however, have failed to develop an adequate level of communicative competence (i.e., the ability to use the target language for authentic communication) in millions of Chinese learners of English (Hu, 2002).

Many schools especially those in developed cities in China have been trying to promote Communicative Language Teaching (CLT); for example, tremendous efforts and resources have been expended on revamping curricula for various levels of education, updating English syllabuses to include CLT principles, producing communicative-oriented English textbooks and so on (ibid.). However, CLT has not received widespread support and the traditional approach still dominates in many classrooms (ibid.). According to Yang (2000), there was limited use of the communicative approach because it requires not only native-like fluency in English but also native-like knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries. Few teachers had received such training. Another reason is that there are a host of constraints on the adoption of CLT in the Chinese context, including large class sizes, limited instructional time, examination pressures and cultural factors. Therefore, most overseas Chinese students who have been previously taught in English lessons where grammar-translation and audiolingual approaches dominate fail to communicate fluently with others while studying in the host country.

In addition to pedagogical reasons, another significant cause of the language barrier is that culture has been neglected or treated as a supplementary topic in foreign language classrooms, not only in China but also in many other countries. It is impossible to teach a language meaningfully without its culture as 'culture is the necessary context for language use' (Stern, 1992: 205). Street (1993: 25) emphasises

how the concept of culture worked on the perception of grammatical nominalisation which is 'an active process of meaning making and context over definition'. Learning a foreign language should go beyond the level of acquiring grammatical rules because international students need to understand how to use the target language in the situated context (Neuner, 1997).

One of the goals for learners in learning a foreign language is to communicate with the target language speakers (Pennycook, 1994; Clyne, 1994). Learning a new language involves learning about a new culture (Allwright and Bailey, 1991); teachers of a language are also teachers of culture (Byram, 1989). Foreign cultures play an important role in helping learners to be proficient in the target language (Nault, 2006) and communicate with people successfully in socio-cultural contexts because linguistic phenomena are related to their society and culture (Wierzbicka1985, 1986; Kaplan, 1966). As Tseng points out (2002: 13), 'Success in language learning is conditional upon the acquisition of cultural knowledge: language learners acquire cultural background knowledge in order to communicate, and to increase their comprehension in the target language.'.

A successful bilingual class should engage students in discussing the distinction between different languages and cultures at an early age. However, due to a lack of cultural knowledge, many Chinese students fail to communicate with local students, teachers or other people around them while studying in a foreign country, especially when they lack knowledge about the cultural topics. Language teachers must instruct their students on the cultural background of language usage, choosing culturally appropriate differences to promote understanding instead of misconceptions or prejudices. Language policy must be used to create awareness and greater understanding of cultural differences and written to incorporate the cultural values of those being taught.

In summary, students' previous experiences of learning English, their insufficient exposure to English in real-life contexts and lack of cultural knowledge have caused a large number of them to lack the ability to communicate satisfactorily in English, which greatly affects their successful adaptation to the English education system.

2.6 Related Studies on Academic Challenges

2.6.1 Academic Adjustment Issues

Academic adjustment refers to the specific demands of academic study, including teaching and learning styles in the host country: that is to say, the way classes are conducted, the relationships between

students and teachers, and assessment procedures (Ryan, 2005). Over the past few years, many researchers have focused on international students' experiences of studying and living in English-speaking environments and the problems that migrant students face (Khawaja, 2001; Gao, 2011). Moreover, many studies have explored the intercultural communication between Chinese students and their teachers and peers in the context of intercultural classrooms during their overseas study (Zhong, 1996; Jin and Cortazzi: 1997).

Zhong (1996) identifies that culture shock and academic shock, the relationships between teacher and students, the expectation of critical thinking, combined with teaching strategies in questioning, formed the challenges that students had to contend with in their adaptation to overseas study. Smith and Khawaja (2011) also point out that the language barrier, educational stress, sociocultural stress, discrimination and practical stress inhibited the successful acculturation of international students. Gao (2000) points out that Chinese culture and background affected Chinese students' way of life while studying in Australia which sometimes created challenges and miscommunications in their new cultural environment. In Liu's (2001) study, he discusses why Chinese students kept silent in the classroom and how it was related to Chinese traditional concept of 'saving face'. However, Chinese students' silence and saving face can lead to intercultural misunderstandings in the classroom, and it was considered as 'passive learning' by most teachers in foreign schools and universities.

A handful of studies focused specifically on the issue of academic acculturation. Academic stress has been found to be one of the most significant challenges that international students encounter when adjusting to the Western educational environment. This could be caused by the mismatch between their academic expectations and the reality of their new educational lives (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), such as different teaching and learning paradigms, unfamiliarity with discourse norms, etc. (Brown, 2009; Li, 2001). In particular, cultural misunderstandings among faculty and classmates affect Chinese students' cross-cultural academic adaptation. Just suggested by Bryan and Viete (2009), international students feel their own cultural values are neither recognised nor respected within the multicultural classroom. Therefore, it is important that education institutions are aware of these cultural differences and learning preferences, and that they understand the past educational experiences of Chinese students (Wang, 2006). To understand the linguistic and cultural learning experience of Chinese students in UK schools, it is essential to discuss the definition of the 'culture of learning', the influence of Chinese culture on learning and the relationship between culture and language.

2.6.2 Culture of Learning

Culture is defined by Hofstede (1991: 5) as 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another'. Each culture has its way of thinking, behaving, learning, and acting (Hofstede, et al., 2010). Thus, students from different cultural backgrounds have different learning behaviours shaped by cultural influences (Hofstede, 1997), which are particularly noticeable between countries separated by larger cultural distances (Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005). Cultural differences may account for international students' difficulties in adjusting from the educational methodologies and practices of their home country to those of their host country (Bennett, 1995). Research shows that the greater the distance between home and host cultures, the more difficulties international students tend to experience in their adjustment (Arthur, 2004). Culture and learning share a close connection. In educational institutions, culture has an impact on the rules, roles and shared assumptions on how to teach, how to learn and what is worth learning (Hofstede, 1991), while learning correlates to the cultural context in which it occurs (Charlesworth, 2008).

Jin and Cortazzi (1995) put forward the idea of a 'culture of learning' referring to a belief within a specific social and cultural context about the criteria of a good teacher, teacher-student relationship, teaching methods, classroom interaction and participation. A culture of learning provides the framework of expectations, interpretations and evaluation of learning (Jin and Cortazzi, 1997). In an effective intercultural classroom, both teachers and students of all cultural groups represented, need to learn about each other's cultures of learning, otherwise they may not fulfil their expectations. If both teachers and students have an awareness of the opposite learning culture, then interaction and transition between cultures should be smoother and more productive (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006: 9); if not misunderstandings will impede the effective learning progress. There are markedly different interpretations of learning between Chinese and British cultures of learning (Jin and Cortazzi, 1995). For example, Chinese teachers act as authoritative figures and role models that impart knowledge and demonstrate the code of behaviour in society. Knowledge weighs more than skills: a belief that represents a key difference between Chinese teachers and their British counterparts (Jin and Cortazzi, 1997: 40); therefore, memorising knowledge is an important learning process in China. However, British teachers emphasise that skills should be developed first and before they lead to knowledge later. They consider Chinese students' reciting as 'rote-learning' and 'uncreative' (Jin and Cortazzi, 1997). They stress group activities or tasks because they prefer a more 'constructivist' approach where there is more interaction and discussion which help learners to build up their own understanding through group work and activity. Furthermore, student-centred pedagogies, which are based on the notion that students learn best through discovery in a self-directed learning environment based on their real-life

experiences and situations (Gibbs, 1992), are widely adopted in Western classrooms which place a high priority on autonomy for the learners (Tang, Collier and Gibbs, 1995). On the other hand, in Chinese teacher-centred classrooms, group interaction is not considered an important way of learning, while the teacher is an example of mastery and authority and no one questions his/her teaching (Jin and Cortazzi, 1997: 39). This is because teachers who act as the source of all knowledge (Wang, 2006), are at the centre of the teaching and learning process transferring knowledge and they play an important role in the classroom, ensuring positive outcomes for students' academic performance (Guo, 1996; Ho, 2001; Lingbiao and Watkins, 2001; Wang, 2006). The different learning and teaching styles cause misunderstandings between Chinese students and the Western teachers. For example, British teachers expect students to ask questions during the learning process, whereas Chinese teachers prefer that students ask questions after they have learned independently from the teacher and reflected profoundly after class (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). Though Chinese students do not ask questions in class, this does not mean that they do not ask questions during the learning process. In Jin and Cortazzi's (1997) findings, Chinese students usually ask questions outside classrooms only after they have understood the course content because they are afraid of being considered foolish if they make any mistakes during the lesson.

Since students from different cultures have experienced different learning and teaching systems in their home countries (Hofstede, 1991), the transition from a teacher-centred to a student-centred classroom presents a challenge for Chinese students. Their way of learning is often considered as rote learning without meaningful understanding, which is often questioned by Western researchers (e.g., Jackson, 2002; Turner 2013). For example, many Western teachers considered Chinese students to be passive learners in foreign classrooms where they are often reticent, reluctant to view peers as facilitators of learning, rarely volunteer but wait to be addressed by the teacher, and lack critical-analytical skills, etc. (Dahlin and Watkins, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Shi, 2006; Wang, 2006; Cross and Hitchcock, 2007). However, there is a danger in such interpretations. Western teachers might misunderstand repetition for rote learning because in Chinese traditional learning cultures, 'memorising was what was understood and understanding was through memorising' (Marton, Dall'Alba and Tse, 1996: 77) which means that Chinese students memorise points with understanding. They consider memorisation and understanding as often taking place at the same time, believing that if they understand the topic, they will memorise it without much effort (ibid.). Many Chinese students do achieve academic success through studying in the Chinese traditional ways of learning (Biggs, 1996; Wu, 2015). Thus, Chinese students' learning approaches should be valued (Cheng et al., 2011: 826). However, Chinese students' abilities and ways of learning are being interpreted according to current Western notions of teaching, particularly in English language teaching. It could be argued that this is a

kind of linguistic or cultural imperialism (Phillipson, 1992) in which one culture of learning is being imposed on those who naturally follow another, and that the latter way is made to appear inadequate or second class. The adherence of native speakers of English to the first culture of learning strongly reinforces the viewing of the Chinese culture of learning in terms of a deficit; therefore, Chinese students are considered passive learners. However, this is a potentially damaging one-sided perspective because it does not take into account the Chinese culture of learning.

2.6.3 The Influence of Chinese Culture on Learning

Researchers have claimed many causes for Chinese learners' passivity, anxiety and reticence in the classroom, and the Chinese culture of learning has been widely considered the main concern. According to Cortazzi and Jin (op.cit.), and Jackson (2002), Chinese students' reluctance towards classroom participation relates to Chinese traditional values. As mentioned in the previous section, 'saving face' is an important element in Chinese traditional culture. Most Chinese learners are worried about losing face or being laughed at if they make any mistakes in the classroom, therefore, they would rather keep silent. Cortazzi and Jin (op.cit.) also point out that Chinese students are influenced by Confucian values of modesty, which means that if they volunteered to answer the questions in public, they would be considered to be 'showing off'. Thus, they wait for another student to set a precedent by speaking first. Zhang and Xu (2007) also point out that even if Chinese students know the answers to the questions, they prefer to be modest by not telling their classmates or teacher they know them. Moreover, remaining silent is one strategy used by Chinese students to avoid the awkwardness associated with disagreement and to maintain harmonious relationships with others (Jackson, 2002). Peng (2007) and Tan (2008) also mention that in Chinese cultures, students respect their elders and seniors by looking up to teachers as authority figures and, thus, they do not challenge or interrupt them with questions. Furthermore, other researchers such as Liu and Littlewood (1997) ascribe Chinese learners' non-participation to the teacher-centred format that students had been used to since beginning formal schooling, where they seldom initiated questions or challenged teachers; instead, they were required to wait to be called on, to listen to the teacher attentively, and not to make noise.

Jin and Cortazzi (2006: 12) traced the cultural root of these characteristics of learning further, finding that teacher-centred classroom and disciplined efforts of memorising knowledge are derived from the Confucian heritage. It is believed that by reciting the texts plenty of times students can internalise the knowledge and that this will lead to creative thinking. Therefore, the teacher's presentation is crucial, and their performance in the classroom should be prepared and demonstrated carefully to ensure there is a good model for students to learn from. It is a cycle of 'demonstration-mimesis-practice-

performance' (Jin and Cortazzi, 2006: 10). In this cycle, the teacher shall be an example of mastery and authority and no one will question his teaching (Jin and Cortazzi, 1997: 39). Even in the group discussion, peers' ideas will not be considered as an important way of learning.

2.7 Conclusion

There are many factors affecting students' ability to adapt to living and studying in a new country including failing to make friends with local students, experiencing feelings of loneliness and depression in their daily lives, experiencing linguistic difficulties, and encountering cultural and pedagogical issues in their academic studies, etc. From examing the literature, most studies have been conducted on international students' adaptation and adjustment issues while studying undergraduate or postgraduate courses in the university context, yet very few studies have been done on teenage students, particularly those studying GCSE/A-level courses in independent schools in the UK.

The literature review illustrates both linguistic and cultural factors which have affected international students' adaptation and adjustment when they study in the foreign countries. The linguistic barrier is a significant factor hindering international students' adaptation both in their daily lives and in their academic studies. Due to poor language proficiency, they not only find it hard to communicate with people in their lives but they also find it a challenge to understand lectures and meet academic requirements. Furthermore, cultural differences affect their efforts to adjust to the new country. For example, different cultures have different teaching and learning paradigms and this difference cuases Chinese students to experience challenges in the intercultural classroom.

Therefore, my research study looked at why teenage Chinese international students were challenged learners in relation to cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation and how intercultural communication could be improved to support them to meet the linguistic, cultural and academic challenges in their learning journey in the UK. Intercultural communication is concerned with how people from different cultural backgrounds interact with each other (Schartner and Young, 2020) with the notion of communicating with someone who is different from us lying at the heart of it. A wide range of research has been carried out on the impact of intercultural communication on language teaching (Fantini, 1995; Dogancay-Aktuna, 2005). Most of the literature stresses that failure to raise awareness of culture shock can lead to difficulties in communicative competence in the host country. Fantini (1995) highlights the importance for teachers to integrate cultural diversity into their classroom activities in order to help bilingual students better achieve language teaching aims. My research also looked at how teachers could become more aware of cultural differences, understand past educational experiences of Chinese

students, and the relationship between culture and learning. My study aimed to find ways to help international students develop successful and beneficial educational experiences in the UK.

The literature and research studies I have explored have focused on the sociocultural and intercultural adaptation issues facing international students studying in foreign countries. In the next chapter, I will discuss the literature and theories in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) to investigate how second or foreign languages are taught and understand the linguistic challenges for Chinese young learners in a UK school.

Chapter 3 Learning a Second and Additional Languages: Theories and Application

3.1 Introduction

For clarity, I will open this chapter by defining some important but easily getting confused terms in language learning. Literally, first language (L1) is known by different names such as native language, primary language and mother tongue, all referring to a language that a child is first exposed to at birth and that is acquired during early childhood starting before the age of three (Sinha et al., 2009). Second language (L2) means the language that is learnt after L1 in a situation where not only the school but also the society uses the language the student acquires. Foreign language (FL) means a language that is learned in a situation where the language is not generally spoken. From 1970s onwards, more and more linguistic research confirms that the child learns a first language only by being immersed in the language, but that second language learning, whilst sharing some aspects of L1 learning, is largely different. The difference between the two lies in the conditions under which they are taught and learned (Chen, 2004). These ideas will help to explain how my target students have learnt and improved their English across China and the UK. Although these types of claims about language learning are not as applicable for children growing up bilingually or multilingually (Baker, 2011), these terms are relevant to my research context as my research participants grew up in China, with Mandarin as their first language and English as a foreign language.

'Evidence about how the child learns a first language has to be interpreted with caution in L2 learning and seldom in itself provides a basis for language teaching' (Cook, 1996: 7). We may notice there are some differences between a foreign language and a second language. The term 'foreign language' refers to a target language which is not the environmental one (e.g., English is a foreign language in China), while the term 'second language' refers to a situation in which the whole environment, not only the school environment, uses the language a learner acquires. In theory, L2 and FL, are learned subsequent to the mother tongue. A second language has a social function within the community where it is learnt, whereas a foreign language is learnt primarily for contact outside one's own community (Littlewood, 1984:2). Therefore, for my target students, English was their foreign language while studying in China, but it has become their second language since they moved to England.

Over the past 30 years, second language acquisition (SLA) has been a focus of linguistic studies and investigation into how a second language is acquired across different stages of language development. This process differs for children growing up bilingually or multilingually (Baker, 2011). For example, a person may be bilingual by virtue of having grown up learning and using two languages

simultaneously which is called simultaneous bilingualism. Or they may become bilingual by learning a second language sometime after their first language. This is known as sequential bilingualism (Franson, 2011). For my target students, English is their second language while studying in a UK school; therefore, it is essential to discuss the main theories of SLA in order to understand how English is learned and how the theories influence the teaching in SLA classrooms because learning a first language is a very different experience from learning a second language, although there are similarities (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Harper and De Jong (2004), all children learn to speak their first language; however, we cannot expect them to follow the same route and rate when learning a second language, especially older children who are already literate and have a strong educational foundation in their first language. Instead, L2 involves a very different learning process from L1 and requires more conscious input and purposeful learning (Kranshen, 1982) because L1 and L2 differ greatly in conditions of learning (Spolsky, 1989). Therefore, English teachers need to understand the differences between learning L1 and L2, and they cannot expect L2 learners to follow the same learning path or timeline for English language development.

My target group is made of four Chinese teenagers who transferred from Chinese schools to study in an independent school in the UK learning all their subjects through the medium of English. I would like to investigate why they are challenged learners in terms of linguistic and cultural adaptation; therefore, this chapter approaches second language acquisition theories from an applied linguistics' perspective. This perspective brings in sociolinguistic and sociocultural ideas as a framework within which to understand the linguistic challenges for young Chinese learners in a UK school.

3.2 The Applied Linguistic Perspective

3.2.1 Behaviourism and Audio-lingual Model

From the behaviourist perspectives, imitation, practice and reinforcement play an important role in language development, particularly in the early stages. Skinner viewed babies as 'empty vessels'; therefore, language had to be 'put into' them. He pointed out that 'language is learnt by a process of habit-formation' (Skinner, 1957). For example, when young children acquire their first language, they imitate the language produced by the people around them. Children's attempts to reproduce what they have heard receive 'positive reinforcement'. In order to obtain more reinforcement, they will continue to imitate and practise these sounds and patterns until they form 'habits' of correct language use. Once these new elements become solidly grounded in their language system, they stop imitating others (Lightbown and Spada, 2013: 15).

The behaviourist learning theory contributed to the use of the audiolingual method in L2 teaching, and this approach was dominant in the 1950s and 1960s (Barohny and Hye-soon, 2009). Classroom activities emphasised mimicry, rote memorisation and language drills with students learning dialogues and sentence patterns by heart (Lighttbown and Spada, 2013). Based on behaviourism theory, students could be trained through a system of reinforcement. Thus, in the audio-lingual lessons, a student's correct use of a trait would receive positive feedback from the teacher before the instructor presented the correct model of a sentence so that the students would have to repeat it. The teacher would continue to present new words for the students to sample within that same structure. There was no explicit grammar instruction, and everything was simply memorised in form (Richards, 1986). The idea was for the students to practice the particular construct until they could use it spontaneously. The audio-lingual method also advises students should be taught directly in 'the target language (TL) only' without using the students' first language (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Behaviourism had a powerful influence on second language and foreign language teaching, and this led to the instructional approaches that emphasise the formation of habits through practice, memorisation and repetition of grammatical structures in isolation (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Though some features of language, such as pronunciation and collocations may successfully be acquired through repetition and memorisation, the audio-lingual method has come under severe criticism as being overly mechanical and theoretically unjustified (Zhang, 2005). Language cannot just be learned through imitation, practice and repetition, particularly when more complex sentences are being learnt. For example, many researchers revealed that behaviourism is not a satisfactory explanation for acquisition of the more complex language forms that children acquire. According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), while imitating someone else's utterance, children do not imitate all the language but imitate selectively depending on something new that they have just begun to understand and use. Moreover, learners can create new forms or new uses of words instead of repeating sentences that they have heard from adults in the process of language learning.

The target students in my research context were influenced by behaviourism as before moving to the UK school they had been learning English in China for many years where English teaching placed emphasis on rote learning, repetition and memorisation.

3.2.2 The Cognitive Perspective and Universal Grammar Model

The behaviourist view of language acquisition was challenged by cognitive theories of SLA which focus on the conceptualisation of students' learning processes and address the issues of how information is received. Chomsky is especially critical of the behaviourist theory, arguing that language acquisition is an innate structure or function of the human brain (Chomsky, 1959). Chomsky believed that there are structures of the brain that control the interpretation and production of speech. Children do not need any kind of formal teaching to learn to speak. As long as children are exposed in the language environment, they will work out how to produce their language on their own. Furthermore, it does not matter whether a child is corrected, he or she still grasps the language in the same manner and speaks in the same way (Lighttbown and Spada, 2013: 20). In addition, as pointed out by Jean Piaget (1951), children's language is built on their cognitive development. It means that children will only learn the language when they understand the concepts. For example, if a child says, 'This apple is bigger than that one', he or she must have the concept of size in his or her mind before commuting. Piaget believes that children construct an understanding of the world around them and experience discrepancies between what they already know and what they discover in their environment, and then adjust their ideas accordingly.

However, as suggested by Chomsky (1959), there is a critical learning period for language acquisition. Beyond this period, it is difficult for children to acquire a full command of language, especially grammatical systems (in Lighttbown and Spada, 2013: 22). Based on Chomsky's innatist theory, White (2003) and other linguists argue that Universal Grammar (UG) offers the best perspective through which to understand second language acquisition. It is assumed that each language has its grammatical system, and all grammar of a language is based on universal principles and structures (Cook, 2001). Therefore, the implications of cognitive learning theory for the L2 classroom are that students should be taught the rules and structures upon which they can further discover the underlying rules of the language. Furthermore, a grammar-translation approach is advised for the L2 classroom where the instruction of the language is in the students' first language. Grammar rules are learned deductively and students learn rules by rote, then practice the rules by performing grammar drills and translating sentences between first and target languages. More emphasis is put on the form of the sentences being translated than on their content. Despite that there are many criticisms of the grammar-translation approach: for example, students lack an active role in the classroom, often correcting their own work and strictly following the textbook. However, this method is still the most widely used all over the world in language teaching (Richard and Rodgers, 2014). In this education system, grammar-translation is a dominant approach in most schools where my target students were trained to memorise grammar rules and answer many multiple choices questions related to grammar.

3.3 The Sociolinguistic Perspective

3.3.1 Krashen's Natural Approach and Monitor Model

Influenced by Chomsky's theory of first language acquisition, Stephen Krashen (1982) proposes the monitor model in second language acquisition with the following hypotheses:

Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis

According to Krashen (1982), there are two independent ways in which we develop our linguistic skills: acquisition and learning. Acquisition 'takes place without conscious attention to the form of a language, while learning takes place through conscious attention to forms and rules of a language' (in Lightbown and Spada, 2013: 106). It means than acquisition of language is natural and individuals do not need to be aware of the process. The process is similar to the process that children undergo when learning their first language. In contrast, learning a language is viewed as a conscious process which involves formal instructions from which students acquire rules and knowledge of a language.

Monitor Hypothesis

Language learners draw on what they have acquired when they engage in spontaneous communication, using rules and patterns that they have learned as an editor in situations where they have enough time to edit, focus on form, and know the rules of grammar. This conscious editor is called the "monitor" (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

Natural Order Hypothesis

It is said that some structures in a given language are usually acquired earlier than others (equality to first language acquisition). However, language features such as the third person singular-s, that are easy to learn are not necessarily the first to be acquired (Krashen, 1982).

Comprehensive Input Hypothesis

This hypothesis states that a language acquirer who is at a certain level must receive comprehensive input that is one lever higher. This means someone acquires language only when they understand

language that contains a structure that is one small step beyond their current level (in Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

Affective Filter Hypothesis

As pointed out by Kranshen (1982), each learner has a metaphorical barrier which sometimes prevents them from acquiring language. The filter can be influenced by attitude, feelings, motives, needs, motivation, etc. Among these hypotheses, the Monitor Model had influenced SLA greatly during the period when second language teaching was in transition from structure-based approaches, which focused on learning rules or memorising dialogues, to approaches that emphasised using language with a focus on meaning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). The Natural Approach is a method of language teaching developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This method is often seen as an application to language teaching of Krashen's Monitor Model. The implication for the L2 classroom is that language learning is a reproduction of the way humans naturally acquire their native language. Unlike the audio-lingual method which prizes drilling and error correction, the natural approach adheres to a communicative approach to language teaching and places less importance on conscious grammar study and explicit correction of students' errors. In the natural approach, language output is not forced, but allowed to emerge spontaneously after students have been exposed to large amounts of comprehensive language input.

3.3.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. The goal of language teaching is to develop communicative competence. The CLT approach rose to prominence in the 1970s and early 1980s as a result of the increasing demand for learning English (Mitchell, 1994) and also criticism of Chomsky's theory, which could not explain the creativity and variety evident in real communication. Many linguists such as Christopher Candlin and Henry Widdowson found that a focus on structure was not helpful for language students. They saw the need to focus on language teaching in communicative proficiency rather than mere mastery of structures (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Long's interaction hypothesis provides a theoretical support for the emergence of the communicative approach in teaching. More emphasis should be placed on cognitive factors such as 'noticing' and corrective feedback during interaction. The aim of 'Noticing' is to raise students' awareness of forms, such as the linguistic elements namely, words, grammatical structures and patterns, etc. Feedback occurs in response to specific learner errors or concerns in meaning-focused communication (Long, 1989). He stresses the importance of the interactional

modifications that occur in negotiating meaning. He argues that modified interaction is the necessary mechanism for making language comprehensive which means that learners need opportunities to interact with other speakers, working together to reach mutual understanding through negotiation of meaning (Long, 1983). In other words, the processes include noticing of new forms, new form-meaning connections, gaps in interlanguage, and mismatch between input and output (Long, 1996). Through the interaction, interlocutors point out what they need to keep the conversation going and make the output understandable for the speaker, who has less proficiency in the language (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Thus, communication and interaction are the purpose of language teaching (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Classroom interactional tasks, which often contain learner participation, group work, teacher talk, role plays, etc., should be created to stimulate negotiation for meaning (Wang, 2010). This negotiation is seen as the opportunity for language development (Long, 1996). Interaction facilitates the learning of language functions as well as target language forms (Nunan, 1991).

It was the American linguist Dell Hymes who developed the concept of communicative competence, which was a reaction to Chomsky's concept of the linguistic competence of an ideal native speaker (Savignon, 2000). He pointed out that communicative competence means that language learners must have mastery over the structural elements of language and also be able to use those structural elements appropriately in different social situations.

The implication for the L2 classroom is that more emphasis should be put on teaching communicative functions rather than merely linguistic knowledge or the ability to manipulate structures (Brown, 2001). The objective of the curriculum is to engage learners in communication and acquire the use of such communicative processes as information sharing, negotiation of meaning and interaction. Classroom activities are often designed to focus on completing tasks that are mediated through language or involve negotiation of information and information sharing (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). The classroom activities used in communicative language teaching include role play, interviews, games, information gap activities, etc. (Savignon, 2000). The CLT also advocates the use of 'authentic', 'from-life' materials such as signs, magazines, ads, newspapers and so on in the classroom (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). In addition, CLT procedures often require less teacher-centred classroom management skills. The CLT teacher has the responsibility to organise the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

The adoption of communicative approaches raises important issues for teacher training, material development and so on (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). However, other questions include whether a communicative approach can be applied at all levels in a language programme, whether it is equally

suited to ESL and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings, whether it requires grammar-based syllabuses to be abandoned or merely revised, etc. (Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

3.3.3 Post Communicative Language Teaching

Language Learning and Immersion Programmes

The first early immersion classrooms in Canada, called the St. Lambert immersion program, offered all subject matter instruction in French as the students' L2 (Lambert and Tucker, 1972). In immersion, the learner is seen as 'progressing through a series of interlanguage stages toward full target language proficiency' (Genesee, 1991: 185). The main characteristic of the 'immersion method' is the integration of language and academic instruction (ibid). Widdowson (1978, cited in Ellis, 1984) argues that language learning is embedded in a discourse process, which is basically a social process that is negotiated and interactive and thus necessarily entails production or output as well as comprehension or input.

'The incentive for language learning in immersion is not just about getting the linguistic forms right, but rather understanding and being understood' (Genesee, 1991: 185). In this regard, Krashen (1985) argues that 'humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages, or by receiving comprehensible input' (1985: 2). According to his argument, it requires that the content of integrated second language instructional programs be taught using language that makes it comprehensible and meaningful (Genesee, 1991). Cloud et al. (2000) summarise the two immersion programs: one-way immersion and two-way immersion. One-way immersion programs are designed for native speakers of the country's dominant language. Students can learn language and content through curriculum and instruction in a foreign language. In a Two-way immersion program, the instructional languages can be two languages, but only one language is used at a time. Students learn languages through interacting with their peers and teachers. Baker (2001) groups two models together and describes them as 'strong forms of education for bilingualism and biliteracy' (2001: 194).

Based on this method, learners study school subjects, such as mathematics, science, and social studies, in their L2 (Baker, 1993); for example, a Chinese student might enter a primary school where the medium of instruction for all the content subjects is English. The main purpose of this method is to develop learners' communicative competence or language proficiency in their L2 and increase cultural awareness while researching a high level of academic achievement. Students can improve their proficiency in the second language through hearing and using it to learn all of their school subjects

rather than by studying the language itself. Moreover, an immersion program also aims to develop positive attitudes towards those who speak the foreign language and towards their culture, to improve their foreign language skills and gain knowledge in the content areas of the curriculum.

Content and Language Integrative Learning (CLIL)

Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is a term created in 1994 by David Marsh for a methodology similar to but distinct from language immersion and content-based instruction (CBI). It is an approach for learning content through an additional language (foreign or second), thus teaching both the subject and the language (Richard and Rodgers, 2014). The idea of its proponents was to create an 'umbrella term' which encompassed different forms of using language as the medium of instruction.

CLIL is fundamentally based on methodological principles established by research into 'language immersion'. This kind of approach has been identified as very important by the European Commission because it can provide effective opportunities for pupils to use their new language skills immediately rather than learn them for use later. It provides exposure to the language without requiring extra time in the curriculum, which can be of particular interest in vocational settings (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). It can also be very successful in enhancing the learning of languages and other subjects, and helping children develop a positive attitude towards themselves as language learners (ibid).

3.4 The Sociocultural Perspective

3.4.1 Vygotsky's Cultural Theory and The Zone of Proximal Development

The sociocultural theory of language development is based on the works of Lev Vygotsky who states that language is learned from social and cultural interaction (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 2010). From Vygotsky's (1978) perspective, children develop the ability to acquire meaningful speech through their interaction with others, and in a supportive interactive environment, children are able to advance to higher levels of knowledge and performance.

Another important concept in sociocultural theory is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). According to Vygotsky, the ZPD can be defined as denoting the distance between what a child actually knows and what the child can learn under supervision of an adult or peer. It includes all of the knowledge and skills that a child cannot yet understand on their own but is capable of learning with guidance. In other words, in order to become a competent speaker of a language, personal effort alone

would not result in mastery of the language unless the learner benefits from other people's participation to negotiate through the ZPD. As children are allowed to stretch their skills and knowledge, often by observing someone who is more advanced than they are, they are able to extend this zone of proximal development.

Krashen's input hypothesis is similar to Vygotsky's ZPD concept of zone of proximal development. According to the input hypothesis, language acquisition takes place during human interaction in a foreign-language environment when the learner receives language 'input' that is one step beyond his current stage of linguistic competence. For example, if a learner is at a stage 'i', then maximum acquisition takes place when he is exposed to 'Comprehensible Input' that belongs to level 'i + 1'. Vygotsky considers the ZPD as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given, thereby allowing the child to develop skills they will then use on their own developing higher mental functions. Vygotsky also views interaction with peers as an effective way to develop skills and strategies. He suggests that teachers use cooperative learning exercises which allow less competent children to learn from more competent peers within the zone of proximal development. The distinct concepts in Krashen's acquisition theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory are complementary in providing resources for language teaching methodology.

The sociocultural theories have great influence on second language learning. Vygotsky believes that teachers need to understand the historical and cultural contexts of students' background to be able to understand how their students' minds have developed. He says language plays an important role in human development and that we internalise language that we learn from our social context. Moreover, from the sociocultural theories, it is assumed that second language acquisition takes place through social interaction. The essence of language is to be able to communicate one's thoughts and feelings to another person, and this concept of communication is one of the foundations of sociocultural theories. Sociocultural theorists believe that language can be acquired easily by allowing students to socialise and interact with the speakers of the language they are learning. In the context of the classroom, the second language can be practiced through social activities that stimulate its cultural context. Learning occurs effectively when students interact with one another in the foreign language classroom.

3.4.2 Schumann's Acculturation Model

Schumann's acculturation is a typical attempt to explain the connection between social factors and second language learning. Acculturation was defined as the process of adapting to a new culture (Brown, 1994), which involves a new orientation of thinking and feeling on the part of a second

language learner. A second language is directly linked to the acculturation process. According to Brown (1994), the acquisition takes place in the natural contexts of the target language settings, and learners' success is determined by the extent to which they can orient themselves towards the target language culture.

Schumann based his acculturation model on social and psychological factors. He asserts that the degree to which second language learners acculturate themselves towards the culture of target-language group depends on social and psychological factors which will determine the level of social distance and psychological distance a second language learner experiences in the course of learning the target language (Schumann, 1978). According to Ellis (1994), social distance concerns the extent to which individual learners can identify themselves with members of target language groups and achieve contact with them. Psychological distance is the extent to which individual learners are at ease with their target language learning task. Both types of acculturation are sufficient to cause the acquisition of the target language. The main suggestion of the theory is that second language acquisition is directly linked to the acculturation process, and learners' success is determined by the extent to which they can orient themselves to the target language. However, there are many criticisms of the acculturation model. For example, some researchers point out that Schumann does not include important personal factors such as age, previous educational experiences, family values, etc. which are important factors that can determine how well a student performs in a new school environment while studying a second language (Freeman and Long, 1991; Coelho, 1998; Chizzo, 2002). As my target group is 14-to-18-year-old teenagers who had grown up and previously studied in China for about 10 years before coming to the UK, they may have constructed their identity and cultural values in their home country. They may not forget Chinese culture and values, which to some extent can affect the social and psychological distance of adapting to the target language community and the level of acquiring target language proficiency.

3.4.3 Gardner's Socio-Education Model

Similar to Schumann's acculturation model, Gardner's socio-educational model considers the relationship between the learner's L1 group and the target language group but with specific focus on the learner's motivation in acquiring a second language. According to Gardner (1972), there are two broad categories of motivation related to L2 learning: integrative and instrumental (Gardner and Lambert 1972). Integrative motivation refers to language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment through contact with speakers of other languages, while instrumental motivation means language learning is for immediate or practical goals (Gardner and Lamber, 1972). Both types of

motivation have been found to relate to success in second language learning (Lightbown and Spada, 2013).

Gardner's sociocultural-educational model (1985) is an attempt to show how social and cultural factors determine the motivational attitudes which learners have towards the target language. He states that second language acquisition takes places in many different contexts. The learners' cultural setting has an influence on acquiring another language and it can influence one's motivation for learning it. This means that motivation plays an important role in driving people to learn an L2 (Gardner, 1985). The model also explains that these motivational factors are connected to the sites where L2 learning occurs: the formal site (i.e. the educational context), and the informal site (i.e. the cultural context). Gardner argues that these two contexts play distinct roles in boosting the learner's L2 performance in that the educational context becomes a place where explicit instruction and correction occurs, whereas the cultural context is an area allowing learners to become immersed in the other culture without placing any specific rules or instructions (Gardner, 2011). Through both ways the learners become increasingly knowledgeable and more confident within the social and cultural settings of the L2, and this motivates them further to learn the L2.

The implication for the L2 classroom is that teachers have more influence on students' motivation to learn the language than on students' reasons for studying the second language or their attitudes toward the language and its speakers. Teachers can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn if classrooms are places where students enjoy coming because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability and where the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Thus, teachers must keep in mind that cultural and age differences will determine the most appropriate ways for them to motivate students. For example, my target students are from Chinese backgrounds. Are they interested in the classroom activities in the lessons in the UK school? What are their attitudes towards learning English through playing games in lessons?

3.5 Bilingual Approaches to SLA

Based on Vygotsky's meaning-based instruction theory, bilingual instruction plays an important role in second language acquisition. He states that the learning of a second language has its foundation in the knowledge of one's first language (Vygotsky, 1997). This means that learning an L2 ultimately depends on the developed semantic system of the L1. Providing the content in the students' first language would be a more productive instructional approach. Vygotsky's theory supports the use of

the students' L1 to help them understand the content matter of the subjects because this would enhance their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1987; Vygotsky, 1997). Furthermore, he states that learning or knowing two languages influences the developmental processes of each language, which means that by simultaneously being exposed to two languages, one gains a deeper and broader understanding of both languages (ibid). The implication for teaching is that bilingual approaches such as interlanguaging, code-switching and translanguaging should be adopted in second or foreign language classrooms. According to some researchers, bilingual approaches help students learn more effectively as bilingual teachers can be more sensitive to students' learning problems (**Lee and Lew, 2001**) and can anticipate students' learning difficulties, especially when sharing the same first language since they can use their first language to explain grammar rules and difficult English vocabulary (**Medgyes, 1994**), which can enhance their cognition of both language systems (Vygotsky, 1997) and therefore prevent language loss (**Mellen, 2002; Li, 2000**).

3.5.1 Interlanguaging

Interlanguage is a linguistic system used by second language learners who are in the process of learning a language. Larry Selinker (1972) coined the term 'interlanguage' as the separate linguistic system evidenced when adult second language learners spontaneously express meaning using a language they are in the process of learning. In other words, learners create this language when they attempt to communicate in the target language. Second language learning is seen to be moving in the direction of the target language, with the learner constructing successive systems of phonological, grammatical, and semantic usage rules. Interlanguage is affected by the learner's native language as they use native language knowledge to understand and organise the second language. However, interlanguage is different from both the learner's first language and the targeted second language. According to Selinker (1972), interlanguage is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the two.

One fundamental claim of interlanguage hypothesis is that language produced by the adult learner when he or she attempts meaningful communication in a foreign language is systematic at every level: phonology, morphology, syntax, semantic and pragmatics. The interlanguage system is a separate transitional linguistic system that can be described in terms of evolving linguistic patterns and rules and explained in terms of the cognitive and sociolinguistic processes that shape it (Selinker, 1972). Interlanguage has its own rule system, but it contains ungrammatical sentences and elements caused by borrowing patterns from the first language, extending patterns from the target language and so forth, which is unique from learner to leaner. Learners create rules and they are changed through input

(Richards, 1992). Another significant claim is that the processes of interlanguage acquisition and use are unconscious which means that the learner is not aware of the linguistic forms being used in interlanguage to be 'the same' as forms in both native language and target language. Learners are not able to give an accurate account of the rules when they are asked about interlanguage rules that they use in their own unrehearsed and meaningful communication (Tarone, 2000). However, there is a controversial claim that interlanguage could be fossilised (Selinker, 1972), which means that it stops developing at some point before it become identical with the target language system. Adult second language learners will never be able to produce the target language as accurately as someone who acquired it natively.

Despite the engrammatic rules and errors in the language, and the 'fosilisation' learners may encounter, interlanguage provides a complex, unique and rich linguistic environment where interlanguage functions through facilitating and supporting thinking and communication, no matter how the outward information may appear. It reminds us how we might approach such facilitation in the bilingual classroom (Duran, 1994). Interlanguage may be viewed as an adaptive strategy in which the speaker tries to speak the interlocutor's first language, although he/she has little proficiency in it. According to Selinker (1972), this strategy uses simplification, reduction, overgeneralisation, transfer, formulaic language, omissions, substitutions, and restructurings to facilitate communication and understanding.

3.5.2 Code-switching

Code-switching, which is a widespread phenomenon in bilingual speech, was defined as the process of going from one language to the other mid-speech when both speakers knew the same language. It is a bilingual-mode activity in which more than one language, typically the speakers' first and second languages, are used in the conversation (Cook, 2001). In other words, speakers frequently switch from one language to another to meet communication demands in the bilingual communities.

Although code-switching has not been welcomed in traditional L2 classrooms where students are not allowed to switch back and forth between the target language and the native language (Legenhausen, 1991), linguists claims that code-switching promotes effective learning of foreign or second languages because it assists in explaining grammatical and lexical materials in the classroom (Cook, 2001). The use of native language helps students understand difficult words and complicated grammar rules (Medgyes, 1994). It is also helpful for the teacher to describe difficult concepts, reduce the time required to explain tasks and demonstrate real second-language situations (Baker, 2006).

3.5.3 Translanguaging

Translanguaging is similar to code-switching in that it refers to multilingual speakers' shuttling between languages in a natural manner (Williams, 2002). As pointed out by Lewis et al. (2012), translanguaging was first used to describe a pedagogical practice in bilingual classrooms in which the input was in one language and the output in another. Today, it is considered as a meaningful and creative pedagogical approach in multilingual classrooms. For example, in a bilingual classroom, translanguaging means that first and second languages are often drawn upon by the students to understand the subjects taught in lessons, which enables bilingual students to have a deeper understanding of the subject matter when they are discussing the subject in their first language but writing their answer in a second language. Translanguaging can also be controlled by both students and the teacher during a lesson. For instance, a teacher can develop a lesson plan using English as the medium of instruction and another language as the medium of discussion. This allows students to use each language in different domains within the classroom.

Baker (2006) discusses a variety of potential advantages of translanguaging in bilingual classrooms in developing students' language skills in both languages. For example, through strategic classroom language planning that combines two or more languages in a systematic way within the same learning activity, translanguaging seeks to assist multilingual speakers in making meaning, shaping experiences, and gaining deeper understandings and knowledge of the languages in use and even of the content that is being taught (Lewis, Jones, and Baker, 2012; Williams, 2002). In other words, it brings together different dimensions of the multilingual speakers' linguistic, cognitive, and social skills, their knowledge and experience of the social world and their attitudes and beliefs (Wei, 2011). Williams (2012) also points out that translanguaging promotes a deeper understanding of subject matter, by discussing in one language and writing in another. Students will always reference what they already know from their first language when working with a second language (Lewis et al., 2012)). This helps students process the information and improve communication in the second language.

Although some researchers argue that translanguaging cannot help students achieve native-speaker competence in the target language (Seidlhofer, 2003), for students who have come to the UK at an older age, achieving native competence seems impossible for them, yet translanguaging helps them communicate with their Chinese classmates and teacher to understand the subjects they learn at school.

3.6 Conclusion

Second language acquisition theories were developed along the lines of first language acquisition theories. Since the 1990s, a larger number of theories of second language acquisition have formed which provide explanations for how language learning takes place in order to offer guidance to second language teachers. Each theory accounts for language acquisition from a different perspective. This chapter describes the different stages of language learning and the implications for second language teaching.

From an applied linguistic perspective, behaviourism emphasises imitation, practice and reinforcement in language development. An audiolingual approach is also widely adopted in second language lessons where classroom activities put emphasis on mimicry, rote learning and language drills. From a cognitive theoretical perspective, universal grammar offers the best way to understand second language learning and children will only learn a language when they understand the rules and structures. Thus, a grammar-translation approach is largely adopted in second language teaching. Influenced by behaviourism and cognitivism, most Chinese students have been taught in foreign language classrooms in which they were trained to learn languages by rote and memorisation.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model is one of the most influential theories of second language acquisition. Kranshen argues that humans can acquire a second language naturally in the way that they acquired their first language as long as students have been exposed to a large enough amount of language input. The implication for second language teaching is that the communicative approach is recommended for teaching.

From a sociocultural perspective, a second language can be learned through socialising and interacting with the speakers of the language which stimulates the language's cultural context of the language. Furthermore, understanding students' historical and cultural contexts is an important step in helping them learn a second language. Therefore, bilingual approaches such as interlanguage, code-switching, and translanguaging are recommended in second language teaching.

This chapter has discussed language learning theories from different perspectives to understand how students learn a second language through different stages. The next chapter will focus on educational provision and English as an Additional Language (EAL) policy in the UK to understand how international students are supported linguistically in UK schools.

Chapter 4 Educational Provision and EAL Students

4.1 Introduction

English as an Additional Language (EAL) programmes are an important linguistic support for the young overseas students in British schools whose first language is not English. This section will firstly provide a definition of EAL and its historical context and policies and then discuss the challenges that Chinese EAL students encounter within its policies. Developing an understanding of the research and policies connected with EAL will help to underpin my study into how EAL students are supported to meet the cultural, linguistic and academic challenges in their learning journey in the UK.

4.2 Historical Background of EAL Students

4.2.1 Definition of EAL

The terms, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are used frequently internationally. However, 'there has been criticism of the term ESL for the implication that English is primary and because of the fact that for many children it is actually the third or fourth language' (Clare, 2012). The reason for this is connected to increasing levels of immigration to England since the 1960s, especially from Commonwealth countries which has led to a rising number of immigrant children in Early Years settings and primary schools. Many children come from backgrounds with languages other than English. Other languages are used instead of English as the main form of communication at home. Thus, many of these bilingual and multilingual children are immersed in different languages in their home settings. In this context, English as an Additional Language (EAL) can be defined as those who speak English in addition to their home or first languages (DfE, 2018:10). Therefore, the term EAL has been adopted widely in literature to describe students whose first language is not English but who are living and attending school in the UK (Hawkins, 2005; Chen, 2007; Clare, 2012).

4.2.2 Historical Context of EAL Students

Cable (2009) defines EAL students as those who are exposed to other languages at home or in the community and speak English as an additional language. The category of EAL student is characterised as a 'pupil whose first language is known or believed to be other than English'. 'First language' is

defined as 'the language to which a child was initially exposed during early development and continues to be exposed to this language in the home or in the community' (DfE, 2013b: 7).

The United Kingdom (UK), 'as a nation state, has long experience of societal multilingualism within its borders because of the presence of Welsh, Scottish, and other indigenous languages' (Leung, 2005: 95). Since 1960s and 1970s, when a large number of new Commonwealth citizens whose first language was not English migrated to the UK, 'the nature of this societal multilingualism' has changed dramatically (Leung, 2005:95). The continuing need to meet the labour demands of the economy has also meant the recruitment of workers from other parts of the world (Bullock, 1975). Since Britain's migrant population began to significantly increase, classrooms were becoming home to a number of students for whom English was not their mother tongue (Department of Education and Science, 1971).

EAL learners are a diverse group who come from different countries with different cultural and educational backgrounds (EAL Nexus, 2019). In the UK, EAL children come from a variety of different backgrounds including asylum seekers, economic migrants, and international students as well as migration for other reasons. EAL students also include those who are born and raised in England with first languages other than English.

As for the immigrant Chinese, before the 1990s, Chinese immigrants came and settled in the UK for many reasons. One of the most popular reasons was for work, with a large number of Chinese working in the catering industry, and a small number employed in qualified or skilled jobs. Along with these adult Chinese migrants, a great number of children came with their parents and studied in state schools (Price, 2019). As China became wealthier during the 1990s, Chinese parents increasingly sent their children to study in the UK and elsewhere (Price, 2019; Lowe, 2007). About 80,000 students attended UK universities in 2004 (National Statistics, 2004). Since 2014 - 2015, according to Higher Education Statistics Agency (Jeffreys, 2020), the number of Chinese students studying in UK universities has grown from 89,540 to 120,385 in 2020. Citing information from the Chinese Embassy, the Global Times reported in May 2021 that there were about 216,000 Chinese international students studying in the UK despite the influence of pandemic. (Kang, 2021).

In recent years, the Chinese students coming to the UK for education are younger (Lowe, 2007). There is still a lack of statistics on younger Chinese students studying in UK schools. From the statistics above, we can estimate that there were about 90,000-100,000 younger Chinese learners studying in UK schools or Further Education colleges between 2020 and 2021. Furthermore, the Annual School Census shows a steady increase in the percentage of students studying in schools whose first language

is other than English. For example, as shown by the Department of Education (2013b), over one million students whose first language was not English were studying in primary and secondary education in England in 2013, representing 18.1% of primary pupils and 13.6% of secondary students. In 2019, there were more than 1.5 million EAL students in UK schools with the majority of them studying in independent schools, and about 17% studying in secondary schools in England. In most independent schools, Chinese students make up the highest percentage of international students with English as an additional language. Just as was reported by the 2019 Independent Schools Council (ISC) Census, 'China remains by far the leading sending market for the overseas students studying in the independent schools' (ISC Census, 2019, available at www.isc.co.uk).

The increasing number of people moving from other countries demonstrates that English as an Additional Language has become an important social and educational policy concern (Bullock, 1975; Department of Education and Science, 2001).

4.3 Language Policy for Immigrants

4.3.1The Plowden Report and Immigrant Children

With the increasing number of non-English-speaking immigrant children entering schools in the 1960s, the need for effective English language teaching was quickly recognised (Franson, 1999). Both the authorities and schools focused efforts on adopting policies that helped students to reach the linguistic needs of this group of pupils and the academic requirements of the UK educational context. Due to the growing number of immigrant children being assimilated to the UK, the Department of Education and Science (DES) commissioned what became the Plowden Report *Children and Their Primary Schools* in 1967. The Plowden Report (HMSO, 1967) represented a negative view of immigrant children who were considered to be lacking competence and fluency in the English language. The linguistic minority children were often placed within a pathological framework in which they were regarded as having a language 'problem'; they were considered lacking in English language knowledge and skills and required separation from the mainstream classroom (Edwards, 1992: 21). The Plowden Report (DES, 1967:71) emphasised that the use of different languages was the worst problem of all as speaking different languages could affect the improvement of the students' English and indicated that it was important to improve immigrant children's English and overcome the language barrier. The report also suggested that a planned intensive English course with modern language teaching methods should be developed to teach non-English-speaking children (DES, 1971a) because it was believed that leaning more English would help EAL children to cope with their educational problems. The dominant policy

during this period was to separate EAL learners from their English-speaking peers, sending them to another class to study language separately. In some schools with a larger number of immigrant children, special English services were funded by the Home Office to support the immigrant children aiming by helping them learn English as quickly and as effectively as possible (Local Government Act, 1966). Therefore, EAL students were often taught in separate language centres with little or no access to the mainstream curriculum for periods of up to 18 months (Townsend, 1971; Leung and Franson, 2001b)

4.3.2 The Bullock Report and EAL Children

In the early 1970s, schools were blamed for the ineffective response to immigrant children's linguistic and cultural diversity as there was more and more recognition that the learning needs of bilingual learners were far more complex than initially thought. They were withdrawn for specialist English language input because of their lack of proficiency and competency; however, separating bilingual learners from mainstream classes meant that teachers were not able to provide them with adequate or appropriate opportunities for social and cultural development and the language centres could not provide for the different linguistic demands of the curriculum (Edwards and Redfern, 1992). The Bullock Report (DES, 1975) has been regarded as the turning point in recognising the individual needs of immigrant children because it respected the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students (Edwards, 2013). According to the Bullock Report, children need more sustained tuition in English, and the language and culture of children should not be disregarded and left outside the school gates. Teaching English within the curriculum is important and EAL children needed to integrate into the setting as fully as possible. From the Bullock Report, the special English lessons which were taught through separate provision outside the mainstream still remained and students were regarded as English as a second language (ESL) children. However, schools should adopt a positive attitude to their pupils' bilingualism and if possible, maintain their knowledge of their first language because immigrant children's attainment in school is related not only to their language but also to their cultural identity and cultural knowledge. (DES, 1975).

4.3.3 The Swann Report and EAL Children

The previous provision and the segregation of EAL children was criticised as it had led to concerns around racism and exclusion because immigrant bilingual or multilingual children were excluded from entering the mainstream classes until they improved their English to join their peers in subject learning (Bourn, 1989). In 1985, the Swann Report was announced which emphasised the importance of Education For All (DES, 1985), including a push towards a good command of English. This approach

criticised the discourse of withdrawal that took place during the Plowden Report years and aimed to better integrate all children, especially those from diverse backgrounds. EAL students needed to be better integrated learning as much as possible to enable them to build positive relationships and friendships with their peers (DfE, 2017).

In the mid-1980s, in order to ensure equal opportunities for students, a 'mainstreaming policy was designed and put into practice (Leung, 2005:97). The policy indicated that EAL students should not be denied access to the mainstream curriculum, and they should be educated in the mainstream classrooms alongside their peers in order to avoid segregated provision and to guarantee equal access to curriculum. Following that, EAL children were no longer taught separately in the English support lessons. Instead, they were learning in the mainstream class with their English peers. By the end of 1980s, the role of language support teachers included displaying knowledge of other languages and cultures, applying theoretical knowledge of second language acquisition and supporting English development in various subject areas (Edwards and Redfern, 1992). ESL teachers were sent to support the classroom teacher in order to develop EAL students' skills to promote multicultural and anti-racist ideas throughout the school curriculum and organisation (Bourne, 1989).

4.3.4 EAL Provision and National Curriculum

EAL provision in England started in 1966 when Section 11 of the local government Act made funds available to meet the special needs of a significant number of people of commonwealth origin who spoke English as an additional language. This was known as 'Section 11 funding' which was first used to help the education of EAL learners in separate language centres or through withdrawal of EAL learners from mainstream classes (NALDIC, 2015; The Bell Foundation, 2021). Then since the mid-1980s, due to criticism of the segregation of EAL students and the emphasis on equality and diversity, a 'mainstreaming policy' was proposed and put into practice (Leung, 2005: 97). Funding for language support was given to provide additional specialist staff to work in mainstream classrooms (The Bell Foundation, 2021).

However, in 1999, the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) replaced the Home Office Section 11 Funding, and the grants were provided to local authorities based on numbers of children within underachieving ethnic minority groups and pupils with EAL (Jones and Wallace, 2001). The EMAG funding ended in April 2011, and since then there has been no national policy regarding use of funding to support pupils with English as an additional language, although local authorities are still able to

retain some funding to support some schools in reducing the achievement gaps for underperforming ethnic groups and meet the specific needs of EAL learners (Adcock and Bate, 2015).

In addition to the EAL funding, most schools have a number of policies which have relevance to the teaching, learning and well-being of EAL learners. The National Curriculum is a very particular conceptual and pedagogic model in which all students are considered to have the same language learning needs. The curriculum, learning objectives, assessment schemes and criteria (for national examinations) are the same for all students (Leung, 2001). Foremost of these must be the equality and diversity policy, which means that all students, including EAL pupils, should have equal opportunity to study in mainstream classes and that EAL learners are a diverse and multifaceted group of pupils who bring many rich and varied experiences to mainstream classrooms. According to Chen (2007), since the 1980s, the term 'equality of opportunity' has been a major theme in the National Curriculum. Mainstreaming and EAL have been claimed to represent the best way since the 1990s to ensure equal opportunity for children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Clare (2012) also pointed out that bilingual children have been expected by the government to be taught in a whole-class teaching environment within a mainstream school for the entire day so that they are no longer withdrawn from their ordinary classes for language support lessons and the support teachers have moved into the mainstream classes to support the general school teaching and learning, rather than providing extra English lessons (Chen, 2007). In other words, EAL students are expected to learn English while engaged in curriculum subject work (Leung, 2005).

4.4 Key Debates

4.4.1 Mainstreaming: Problematic Inclusion

Schools in the UK have a statutory obligation under the Equality Act (2010) to promote equality of opportunity for pupils whatever their race, religion or beliefs as well as other protected characteristics. However, many studies have shown that the policy that states EAL students should be taught in mainstream lessons has failed to recognise the importance of addressing EAL, bilingualism and race equality issues (Chen, 2007). Mainstreaming is claimed to offer EAL students equal access to the national curriculum and learning with their peers; however, they are often left out and disadvantaged in mainstream classes (Chen, 2007, 2009). Many studies have questioned whether this strategy ensures all EAL students, particularly those new arrivals receive the language support they need. As pointed out by Vygotsky (1986), 'language learning cannot be seen as a general phenomenon but rather as dependent on the social and cultural contexts in which it occurs, meaning that the process may well be

different for each child'. Thus, 'a one-size-fits-all strategy' for the development and inclusion of children who have EAL is unlikely to be effective (Clare, 2012).

According to the government policy for EAL learners (DfE, 2012a), the current UK government states that 'the Government's policy for children learning English as an additional language is to promote rapid language acquisition and to include them within mainstream education as soon as possible', and that class teachers 'have responsibility for ensuring that pupils can participate in lessons'. However, as English is not the new arrivals' first language, it is a big challenge for them particularly for the emergent overseas students. According to Vygotsky (1935), first-language and second-language learning involves very different processes as a child learns a first language only by being immersed in the language. As was discussed in Chapter 3, in terms of SLA theories, children usually learn their first language unconsciously and unintentionally. However, it is very different when they are in the later stages of learning a second language, although it shares some aspects of learning the first. Unlike the experience of learning L1, children learn a foreign/second language with 'conscious realisation and intention' (Vygotsky, 1935). Krashen (1983) also points out that children learning L1 knowledge by a natural means in informal situations which consist rules, principles, and so forth that are not available to conscious attention. However, it is different while learning L2 knowledge, which is learnt by conscious understanding of rules in formal classroom situations. Although being immersed in the English environment while studying in mainstreaming classroom, it takes time for children to get along in the new environment and to catch up with the target language. It is impossible for them to gain from the classroom setting the same quality, quantity and density of learning from these interactions as they did in their first language environment (Chen, 2004). In fact, it is very difficult for students especially those who arrive in later stages to achieve English proficiency like the first language speakers, particularly English competency for academic purpose. As revealed in Cushing-Leubner and King's (2015) study, most students between 12 and 18 years old who speak a language other than English have attended schools in the US for five years or more. Most of them can achieve social English speaking and listening comprehensive skills similar to their English-speaking peers, but they perform far below grade-level in academic tasks that demand high proficiency in reading, writing and literacy skills. The reason is that second-language learners already have their first language in their minds; they learn a second language at a different cognitive and conceptual level from their knowledge of using their first language (Cook, 1996). Therefore, it has been claimed that the 'mainstreaming policy' has failed to promote EAL learners' rapid language acquisition (Chen, 2004).

In addition, many researchers have shown that new EAL arrivals feel isolated and bewildered by school. In Chen's study (2007), when emergent bilingual students are placed in the mainstream class

where everyone is given the same instruction and does the same class work, they are physically included in their own form class, but they experienced deep feelings of isolation, misunderstanding and frustration. She pointed out in her studies that Chinese EAL learners found they were unable to participate in the classroom activities or communicate with their teachers and classmates due to their low proficiency of English; however, they were treated in the same way as English monolinguals in the mainstream lessons. Many bilingual students might feel themselves very much left out in class activities because of both their language related difficulties and their particular linguistic needs. English would not be the language through which they have been growing cognitively. They have developed their way of thinking for so many years in their first language context before they arrived in the UK schools; they have to make up this gap as soon as possible otherwise they may be considered disadvantaged. This not only inhibits their language learning but also affects their confidence and self-esteem (Gibbons, 1993). However, their basic linguistic needs are difficult to recognise in mainstream classrooms, and they gradually lose their self-esteem and confidence at school (Chen, 2007).

Other researchers also mentioned the challenges faced by EAL students in UK schools. For example, Cameron (2003) showed that the mainstream classroom would have routines that are unfamiliar to the new arrivals. The teaching and learning approaches in the new school may differ substantially from those in the child's home country. Take Chinese learners for example: as discussed in Chapter 2, they have been used to the teacher-controlled and non-participation teaching method in China, thus, activities in the UK requiring open-ended problems-solving and discussion will be unfamiliar to them. Studying in mainstream classes with the local students, they can easily feel anxious, and thus unwilling to participate in class activities, particularly the speaking activities during the English lesson (Cortazzi and Jin, 1996; Jackson, 2002).

Migration results in enormous stress for children and that can be even more intense for adolescents because of the pressure to balance different worlds, ethnic cultures and languages and the need to move fluidly between them (McCarthy, 2003:3). The challenges faced by those who arrive at the latter stages of secondary school are more obvious, especially with low levels of English, as this stage of education is examination-orientated and a high level of English proficiency is required. This may result in pupils pursuing a course of study not suited to their academic ability (Arnot et al., 2014).

4.4.2 EAL Pedagogies

However, in the mid-1990s, since section 11 was replaced by EMAG, and funding went from Home Office to the DfE, support for EAL learners has become fragmented (Jones and Wallace, 2001). These

changes in educational provision and practice, including the reduction in the grant for EAL teaching, the emphasis on raising standards of achievement, the erosion of mixed ability teaching, etc. have impacted on EAL provision (Edwards and Redfern, 1992). A key concern for EAL learners in schools in Britain is that there is still no specific EAL curriculum that builds on research in second language acquisition and language learning processes. In the UK, within mainstream schools, the emergent bilingual pupils are still without any entitlement to a national bilingual pedagogy and EAL has no recognition as a subject discipline (Macleroy and Anderson, 2015). The National Curriculum is a standard level of attainment in all key subjects such as English, Science and Mathematics (DES, 1989); however, EAL does not have a subject status in the National Curriculum. Thus, there is still no defined EAL curriculum for teachers and learners in the UK setting and this leads to difficulty for teachers trying to conceptualise what an EAL curriculum might look like (Monaghan, 2010). Leung (2005) also points out that in England, at the moment, there is no consensus on an appropriate EAL pedagogical framework, nor are there programmes of work that a class teacher can access, nor is there an agreed framework of EAL development that will help teachers to monitor and evaluate the progress of their EAL learners, although Leung (1990) reports that students' personalities and their curcumstances at home are factors that might account for their progress in language development. There is no nationally recognised EAL specialist teaching qualification that would help bring consensus to the knowledge and expertise of EAL teachers working in the field.

Talented and knowledgeable teachers and able students can produce remarkable outcomes. However, the lack of systematic attention to EAL as a language teaching and learning issue has over time served to reduce the expertise base within the school system. In terms of teacher preparation, there is a lack of EAL specialists in schools because EAL is not a main subject specialism in initial teacher training and there is no mandatory specialist qualification. EAL is seen as a supra-subject phenomenon and regarded as a general teaching and learning issue rather than a specific language teaching and learning issue. The mainstreaming of EAL is more about participation in a common curriculum and much less about integrating the specialist pedagogic concerns of EAL-minded language teaching into a mainstream curriculum (Leung, 2005). Although many studies highlight the importance and ongoing demand for professional development opportunities for teachers of the less widely taught languages in mainstream sectors, there is a lack of awareness amongst both teachers and educational managers of important language issues in mainstream classrooms. Teachers in the UK still feel underprepared for teaching EAL learners and this has become a pressing concern now that most mainstream teachers encounter emergent bilingual students within their classes (Anderson and Macleroy, 2015).

Therefore, legitimate and important EAL-minded language teaching and learning issues have rarely been addressed; for example, the need for a differentiated curriculum and pedagogy for the teaching and learning of lexical grammar, pragmatic conventions and academic genres in the context of the National Curriculum for EAL students with different educational backgrounds, at different ages and at different stages of EAL development (Schleppegrell and Colombi, 2002).

In addition, EAL in independent schools is very different from that in the mainstream schools. Almost all independent schools provide some English language teaching for international students, and this provision varies greatly from school to school. For teenage international students who arrive to study GCSE/A-level courses, EAL teaching in most independent schools is not for academic study in particular subjects. Instead, the EAL lessons are usually either in general English or preparing students to take public exams such as Cambridge ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) exams, and IGCSE in English as a Second Language and the IELTS English test. These exam-oriented EAL lessons may be helpful in preparing students to pass the test to reach their future university language requirement. However, it might not be helpful for improving their grasp of the academic subjects. As pointed out in Read and Hays' study (2003), most university students who have gained the minimum brand score in IELTS for tertiary admission were likely to struggle to meet the demands of English-medium study in a New Zealand university.

4.5 Related Studies on EAL Learning

Suggestions have been proposed to the policy makers in terms of dealing with young bilingual students in the UK in order to support and facilitate their academic progress. The most popular suggestions are encouraging of the use of L1 and bilingual teaching as well as recognising their bilingual identity and helping them to fit in.

4.5.1 The Use of L1 Resources

Collier (1992) emphasises the importance of application of L1 in a class where the majority of the class is from the same country, especially in Early Years and Key Stage 1 classes. L1 can be used as an effective element for improving students' learning of the second language in a way which helps convey meaning (Cook, 2001) and the use of first language can motivate students and scaffold learning (Turnbull and Arnett, 2002). Day (2002) showed that teachers have good faith in using L1 to aid students' learning in the classroom to enhance their cognition of both language systems and therefore prevent language loss. Positive responses from teachers to children's linguistic needs and children's

first language and culture are important in developing their confidence. A child's success can run parallel with recognition of their home language and culture and with being treated as an 'important learner' (Gregory, 1994: 153-152). Therefore, the teaching of the mother tongues and cultures from their countries of origin was recommended (Hall, 2018). The learner's first language plays an important role in their learning of additional languages because it is believed that once children have developed cognitive and academic languages, they can transfer much of this learning to additional languages (Franson, 2011). Children benefit greatly if they are given opportunities to continue to develop their first language alongside English (DfE, 2012: 5) Therefore, the teacher should provide a comfortable learning environment characterised by the teacher's positive attitude towards the children's first language and their culture because it can prevent children from suffering low self-esteem caused by frustrations and language related difficulties in school (Gibbons, 1993). The use of a child's first language in school allows him/her to draw on their total language experience and so continue their conceptual development because skills developed in a first language can be transferred to other languages (Leung, 2001). It also helps to provide a socio-emotional environment in which the basic conditions for learning can occur. Second language learning runs parallel with first language competence and that acquisition of a second language is dependent upon the level of development of the first language (John-Steiner, 1995). Therefore, it is suggested that pupils need to be given the opportunity to develop their first language alongside learning English. Students with low English proficiency are advised to use bilingual dictionaries and apps in class, and it is also advised that bilingual classroom assistants and teachers should be provided to support new arrival EAL students (Hall, 2018).

Despite using the first language being widely suggested in theory and research, in practice there was little evidence of L1 use in classrooms. For example, in Mehmedbegovic's (2008: 4) study, she points out that L1s are given very little or no space within the teaching and learning of bilingual children in some of the London schools. Some EAL students do not wish to be called EAL and thereby single themselves out, though they do use their first language to think to themselves while learning literacy (Anderson, et al., 2016).

4.5.2 Settling in and Fitting in at School

Studying within a whole-school context where pupils are educated with their monolingual peers, many EAL students especially new arrivals not only face linguistic difficulty but also emotional challenge. EAL students with limited English proficiency can experience a sense of confusion and anxiety during their first time in a new school because they are unfamiliar with UK school norms and some of them

may have a sense of being in some way different to non-EAL students (Hall, 2018). As discussed previously, some EAL students feel isolated while studying in the mainstream classroom with their English peers; they feel scared to speak in lessons. Thus, it is suggested that EAL students need to develop not only knowledge of English but also the confidence to speak. EAL teachers should ensure that EAL students should feel a sense of connection with their peers. They need to be regarded as a positive identity for being different with their peers. Children and young people learn best when they feel secure and valued. Thus, schools should focus on the positive contributions made by new arrivals and mobile pupils (Overington, 2012). To help EAL students to fit in the mainstreaming classes, it is important for the school to create a supportive and interactive environment. A body of research has suggested that a major factor in the academic success of linguistic minority groups is the degree to which learning takes place in an interactive rather than a passive environment (Skutnabb-Kangas and Cummins, 1998). A supportive classroom should be a classroom in which many opportunities are provided for classroom interaction, such as frequent dialogues and communication between both teachers and peers, and in which there is room for special attention and extra help for the individual child. Many studies highly recommended bilingual support in the classroom because if the children's identities are recognised through their language, culture, history and religion in the classroom, they feel safe and comfortable to interact with the teacher (Parker-Jenkins et al., 2007) and the use of a first language facilitates communication features in group learning and improves interaction in the classroom (Ghorhahi, 2011).

4.5.3 Peer Support

Newly arrived EAL students would feel supported and fit in with the school more easily if a peer buddy who shares the same language is allocated to help them when they first start in a new school environment. Peers who speak the same language can act as interpreters or translators, which is a very important role for learners with low English proficiency. Bilingual peers can give support to EAL students both inside and outside the classroom in many ways. For example, they can explain school routines, facilities, etc. to new EAL students in their own language. In addition, peers who speak the same language also act as skilled facilitators of classroom learning as they participate together in collaborative learning (Driver and Pim, 2018). It would be very helpful for EAL students when they are studying in a cooperative classroom where peers work together on academic tasks and provide one another with motivation, guidance and feedback (Salvin, 1987 in Chen, 2004). They can help EAL learners clarify tasks, translate special terms, and so on. Chen (2004: 161), in her study 'Emergent Bilingual Children in the English Mainstream Class', points out that 'Peers play an important role in a

newcomer's English support by engaging in reading, pronouncing words, paraphrasing expressions, translating meanings in the mother tongue'.

However, although peer support is recommended for classrooms in many schools where senior students are helping the new arrivals particularly among those who speak the same language (Arnot et al., 2014), peer support has been underestimated in practice by researchers and school teachers, and very few studies have been done on supporting EAL Chinese learners in independent schools.

4.5.4 Research Initiatives on EAL Learning

In addition to the aforementioned suggestions for EAL learning, there are many other suggestions; for example, Brisk (1998) points out that to meet the demands of young bilingual learners and help them to achieve success in the host country, an integrated learning method combining culture and language is essential. In terms of the schools with large numbers of multi-lingual students, McEachron and Bhatti (2005) advocate a training faculty with comprehensive knowledge and skills to handle issues with both students' academic performance and their mental wellbeing. In addition, provision needs to be based on a meaningful assessment of pupils' prior knowledge and experience as well as language skills (Overington, 2012). The assessment helps teachers to understand students' levels of English and give them the relevant support. To help schools address the needs of EAL learners, a range of materials have been provided to schools and local authorities in recent years (Bell Foundation, 2016). Many of these materials are provided on the website of the Education Department. Advice, guidance and examples of good practice covering all stages of compulsory education from the Early Years Foundation Stage right through to secondary education are provided. In addition, Mehmedbegovic (2008: 16) suggests that 'requirements in terms of understanding bilingualism and its implication in education should be built into the recruitment process'. In addition, to help EAL students to learn the language as quickly as possible, Overington (2012) points out that EAL teachers must understand students' backgrounds and respond to their disadvantages as well as their strengths. They must 'have a clear understanding of the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs; those of high ability; those with English as an additional language; those with disabilities. Thus, it is essential for schools to keep a close link with the community and parents for achieving a better understanding of students' background, the education system and giving them appropriate support (Driver and Pim, 2018).

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed EAL provision in its historical context as well as addressing its limitations and pedagogical issues. Before the Swann Report, when mainstreaming policy was put into practice, EAL students were taught separately in language centres with little or no access to the mainstream curriculum until their English became fluent. Since the mid-1980s, due to the increasing awareness of diversity, bilingualism and multilingualism as well as policies of anti-racism, a mainstreaming policy was applied which allowed all students in state schools to integrate with their peers and follow the statutory National Curriculum. EAL students were expected to learn English while engaged in curriculum subject work (Leung, 2001). The limitation of the mainstreaming was that students were given equal opportunity to access the classroom to learn with their peers, while their individual linguistic needs could not be satisfied due to insufficient attention to the development of EAL as a language pedagogy within the mainstream curriculum. Moreover, there has been little systematic or sustained teacher training and professional development for EAL specialists.

A lot of research has been done on EAL learning and teaching in the context of state schools in the UK; however, little has been done to research Chinese EAL learners in independent schools. My research will address this gap in the field in relation to how Chinese EAL students are supported in their language development within the independent school context.

PART THREE METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

In this part, I will discuss the distinctive forms of this study in terms of methodology. I will firstly deal with the general features and rationale of the research approach adopted in this study before justifying the details about the particular methods that I employed for collecting data.

Chapter 5 Methodology and Design of the Study

5.1 Introduction

My investigation started with questions about the difficulties that teenage Chinese students aged 14-18 might encounter while they were transferring from the Chinese education context to that in the UK, and studying to pass the UK GCSE or A-level courses in independent schools. Questions arose about why they came to UK schools at younger ages than before; why were they challenged learners in terms of cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation; how they learned to cope with their new environment and found their way to succeed; what would be considered good practice in developing support for this group or what might have contributed to their successful adaptation; and what should be done by institutions in response to policies of educational inclusion and internationalisation? These questions arose from my time as an EAL teacher in South London, and they were based on my interest in particular aspects of the linguistic and cultural adaptation by teenage Chinese students in the UK. These questions have been addressed and explored reflexively through the narratives of the Chinese teenagers with an emphasis on generating rather than testing hypotheses. Thus, the study was carried out through a qualitative methodological approach in order to better interpret the issues in the natural and lived settings of the participants combined with various research methods including observations, interviews and reflective journals to give a descriptive and comprehensive account of the participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 2). This is because in my research context both linguistic and cultural or possible psychological factors would be involved in the whole process of classroom learning and interaction. Individuals' unique cognitive aspects cannot be generalised from pure statistics. An in-depth explanation and interpretation are required in this study.

Therefore, I particularly choose ethnography, with its emphasis on generating rather than testing hypotheses, as the most appropriate framework for my research because I aimed to look at teenage Chinese students' adaptation as a sociocultural process. Qualitative research methods using an ethnographic approach are now an important component of educational programmes in a range of

social studies. Ethnography is an ideal educational tool to enable learners to describe aspects of their own cultural lives, feelings, beliefs, needs and acts (Mansur and Gidron, 2003). I aim to uncover and describe the beliefs, values and attitudes that structure the behaviour of a group. The purpose of the study is to understand in depth the issues of cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation faced by the teenage Chinese students studying at a UK independent school. The ethnographic approach allows for both description and analysis which makes it possible to answer the investigator's research questions (Taylor and Bogdan, 1984).

5.2 Ethnography - Rationale and Ground Rules

Ethnography is the study of social interactions, behaviour and perceptions that occur within groups, teams, organisations, and communities (Reeves, Kuper and Hodgers, 2008). Its roots can be traced back to anthropological studies of small, rural societies that were undertaken in the early 1900s, when researchers such as Bronislaw and Malinowski and Alfred Badclife-Brown participated in these societies over long periods and documented their social arrangements and belief systems. This approach was later adopted by members of the Chicago School of Sociology and applied to various urban settings in their studies and social lives (Walford, 2008). The central aim of ethnography is to understand people's actions and their experiences of the world, to provide rich, holistic insights into people's views and actions as well as the nature of the locations they inhabit through the collection of detailed observations and interviews (Reeves, Kuper and Hodgers, 2008).

Ethnography is a research strategy especially well-suited to the study of many learning, teaching and educational issues. In recent years, the ethnographic approach has had a strong presence in education. Walford (2008) points out that due to many educationalists wishing to look inside the 'black box' of schools and investigate the micro cultures to be found inside, there is a growing interest in the use of ethnography in educational research. It can answer a range of questions where we are concerned to document and understand learning and teaching processes (ibid.). The aim of ethnography in education is to speak up for those whose voice would otherwise remain silent. Unlike questionnaire-based survey studies, the strength of ethnography as a research approach lies in identifying the real circumstances of people, particularly those who might be disadvantaged and marginalised (Gregory et al., 2005).

Ethnography is now widely recognised as a 'qualitative' method or set of methods (Walford, 2008). In fact, in recent decades it has become a popular approach to social research, and in many aspects, ethnography is currently the fundamental form of social research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Although there is no single agreed definition of ethnography, a definition like that of Atkinson and

Hammersley (1998:110) would be broadly acceptable to many. They describe ethnography as having the following features:

- a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena rather than setting out to test hypotheses about them
- a tendency to work primarily with 'unstructured' data, that is, data that have not been coded at the point of data collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories
- investigating a small number of cases, perhaps just one case, in detail
- analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which often takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations, with quantification and statistical analysis in a subordinate role at most

Because ethnographic methodology differs significantly from the research approaches more commonly used in education (Wilson, 1977), it is important to clarify its rationale and ground rules.

5.2.1 Natural Settings

One of the most common rationales for adoption of an ethnographic approach is that by entering into close and relatively long-term contact with people in their everyday lives we can come to understand their beliefs and behaviour more accurately in a way that would not be possible by means of any other approach (Hammersley, 1992: 44). The rationale underlying this method is based on human behaviour in its natural settings.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 1), 'ethnography requires the ethnographers to participate overtly or covertly, in people's lives for extended periods of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions-in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research'. In other words, ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the ordinary activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out ethnography's connection to naturalism, a way of doing social research developed by ethnographers in response to difficulties they found with positivism. Unlike other approaches, in naturalistic research, the social world is studied as far as possible in its natural state, undisturbed by the researcher. The primary aim of ethnography is to describe what

happens in the setting, and how the people involved see their own actions, others' actions and the context using methods that are sensitive to the nature of the setting (Punch, 2009).

5.2.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a research technique that requires the researcher to be a participant among members of the group he/she is studying. As ethnographic observers, we pay attention to the cultural context of the behaviour we are engaging in or observing, and when we look for those mutually understood sets of expectations and explanations that enable us to interpret what is occurring and what meanings are probably being attributed by others present (Wolcott, 1997).

The core of naturalism is a commitment to capture the nature of social phenomena on their own terms. Ethnography shares the view with descriptive naturalists that research must be carried out in ways that are sensitive to the natural setting and remain true to the nature of the study (Punch, 2009). The goal of ethnographic research is to discover and represent faithfully the true nature of social phenomena (Hammersley, 1992). A true ethnography involves the researcher becoming part of the natural setting (Fielding, 1996b: 157). The importance of ethnography is based precisely on the grounds that it is able to get closer to social reality than other methods. This explains why participant observation is a favoured method in ethnographic research.

Ethnography requires that, as a participant observer, it is necessary to eradicate the influence of values and preconceptions and observe what is there rather than substitute our prior notions for the thing we should be observing. Ethnography brings various kinds of techniques of enquiry into a prolonged and repetitive observation involving attempts to observe things that happen, listens to what people say and question people in the setting under investigation over an extended period. The 'natural' state should not be disturbed by the researcher. It is not an 'artificial setting, such as experiments or formal interviews' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 6). Theories and explanations must emerge from the work as it goes on (McNeill, 2000:70).

5.2.3 Researcher's Role

It is also important that while beginning ethnographic studies, the researcher should be aware of the observer's position. According to Punch (2008: 157), participant observation is the central data collection technique in ethnography. It is different from direct or non-participant observation in that the role of the researcher changes from detached observer of the situation, to both participant in and

observer of the situation. This raises a general question about the role of the researcher in the observation research: how far distant or removed will the researcher be from the behaviour being studied? How can an attitude of objectivity be created? The ethnographic researcher should be well aware of their role and position while getting access to the field and observing the participants. The ethnographer should carefully establish a role that facilitates the collection of information. He/she must make decisions about how involved he/she will become in community activities (Gold, 1958) because he/she knows his/her activities will influence the ways in which people react to him/her. In Gold's (1958) study, he pointed out that we have to consider how a participant observer might have gone about cultivating his role in the study of student aggression. The researcher should be careful about the way he/she enters the situation and is perceived and work to avoid being identified as a member of any group. In other words, it is important for an ethnographer to consider whether the participant students see him/her as an ingrouper or an outgrouper. The group identity of the observer is important not only because the participants might consciously withhold information from someone with the wrong identification but also because the participants might consciously colour what they say and do (Wilson, 1977).

Therefore, a series of potential roles are open to the ethnographer who can be the complete participant, the complete observer, the participant as observer or the observer as participant (Adler and Adler, 1994). The decision depends on the researcher's choice of whether to take an overt or covert role in the setting. Being a complete observer would put the researcher in danger of seriously misunderstanding the behaviour and perspectives of participants observed and being completely immersed would risk 'going native'. 'Going native' may sometimes lead to abandoning some important data and tasks of analysis in favour of the joys of participation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995:112). The best observational position for doing ethnographic research is to go 'marginal native' which combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintaining a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data (Walsh, 1999).

5.2.4 Unstructured or Semi-Structured Interviews

The interview has a particular character in ethnography. The ethnographic interview is aimed more at the gaining of insight about the human condition than it is at hypothesis, a reality that reflects the unique gift ethnographic research offers to the social science (Leech, 2002: 665). Generally, there are various types of interviews used by anthropologists: key information interviews, life history interviews, structured, semi-structured or formal interviews, informal interviews, etc. (Wolcott, 1967). Each interviewing approach has a role to play in soliciting information. In what ways should ethnographic

interviews be conducted? As ethnographic research pursues holism and depth, it is useful to think about the ways in which interviews can be conducted with an ethnographic sensibility that aims to reveal the cultural context of individual lives through an engaged exploration of the beliefs, values, material conditions and structural forces undermining the socially patterned behaviour of any individual (Walford, 2008).

Ethnographers are less likely to put too much faith in any one instrument, set of answers, or techniques. They are more likely to be concerned with the suitability of the technique in a particular setting than with the standardisation of the technique across different populations (Wolcott, 1967). Ethnographers are less likely to use a questionnaire already constructed before they have experienced the setting. Thus, informal interviewing - that is, interviewing that does not make use of a fixed sequence of predetermined questions (Wolcott, 1967) - is the most common form in ethnographic work because the ethnographer is the research instrument. Ranging as it does from casual conversation to direct questioning, informal interviewing usually proves more important than structured interviewing in an extended study (Agar, 1980) because many participants are reluctant to participate in a structured interview but are willing to talk casually to a neutral but interested listener. They often grant a lengthy face-to-face interview, even though they may insist they are too busy to fill out a questionnaire (Wolcott, 1967). The educational ethnographer John Devine (1996) also suggests that formal or structured interviews should not be used in ethnographic study, particularly when working among adolescents because it will kill warmth and stifle spontaneity. He even advocates using ordinary conversation rather than interviews in ethnography to keep a greater level of authenticity.

My research concentrates on studies of relatively small groups. I focused on four teenage Chinese students at an independent school. Their educational experiences at school led me to questions about their cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation issues as well as their voice for school supports. As mentioned earlier, these questions were addressed and explored through narrative accounts with emphasis on generating rather than testing hypotheses. They could not be explored through a structured interview or questionnaire. Thus, informal, unstructured interviews or semi-structured interviews were more appropriate for my ethnographic study because using informal or conversational interviews allowed me to discuss the subject, probe emerging issues, or ask questions about unusual events in a naturalistic manner. The 'casual' nature of this type of interview technique can be useful in eliciting highly candid accounts from individuals (Reeves, Kuper and Hodges, 2008)

5.2.5 Small Scale but In-Depth Discovery

Ethnographers usually study one or a few small-scale cases (settings, groups or people) over periods that range from a few days to several years. This may raise the issue of generalisation (Hammersley, 1992). For example, an ethnographer might claim that a comprehensive secondary school he or she has studied is typical in the relevant respects of most comprehensive schools during a specific time period (Ball, 1981:20). The implication follows that what is said of the particular setting is true of all or most of the settings in the aggregate and, therefore, the account should be of interest to anyone who is interested in the aggregate or any of its members. Ethnographic studies involve a multiple form of empirical generalisation. Part of a setting may be studied and the results generalised to the whole; then, in order to provide for the general relevance of the study, the setting may itself be treated as typical of a larger population of settings (Hammersley, 1992: 87).

However, ethnographic research is sometimes concerned with a case that has intrinsic interest; therefore, the generalisation is not the primary concern (Hamersley and Atkinson, 1995). The primary concern of the ethnographic study is to focus on a small-scale case and enable detailed and in-depth discovery. One cannot confidently generalise from a single case to a target population since single members often represent whole populations poorly. However, one can take the findings from one study and apply them to understand another similar situation (Stake, 1978). The researcher should supply full information about the entity studied and the setting in which that entity was found. Clear and detailed description can decide the extent to which findings from one study are applicable to other situations. The findings should be sufficiently well described and defined so that other researchers can use the results of the study as a basis for comparison (Coetz and LeCompte, 1984). The gold of qualitative research is not to produce a standardised set of results that other researchers can produce, but rather a coherent and illuminating description of a situation that is based on detailed study. Qualitative researchers believe that human thoughts and actions are not idiosyncratic (Bogdan and Biklen, 2006). It is the job of the qualitative researcher to provide enough detailed description of the study's context, methods and findings so that the reader can compare it to their own situation and decide whether or not there are any useful parallels. As Walford (2008) points out, if the authors give full and detailed descriptions of the particular context studied, readers can make informed decisions about the applicability of the findings to their own or other situations.

My ethnographic study focused on a small size group of four participants in an independent school in London; it might not be generalisable for the overall experiences of Chinese students studying in the UK independent schools. The participants' opinions did not represent the views of all Chinese EAL

students studying A-levels in the UK school. Instead, my study only aims to investigate the experiences of individual EAL Chinese teenagers studying GCSE/A-levels in a particular independent school in England because, as mentioned above, generalisation is not the primary concern in an ethnographic study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995), but its aim is to focus on a small-scale case and provide detailed and in-depth discovery. Studying one case can help us to understand another similar situation.

5.3 Design of the Study

My study concentrates on Chinese teenagers' educational experiences while studying GCSE/A-levels in a UK independent school. In this section, I will illustrate the details of the particular methods I adopted in collecting data and discuss the problems and difficulties encountered in the process.

5.3.1 Access

It is often suggested that access is fraught with difficulties and one of the most problematic aspects of conducting ethnography (Troman, 1996). Access is not simply a matter of physical presence or absence. It is far more than the gaining or withholding of permission for research to be conducted, as whether to take an overt or convert role in the setting affects the accuracy of ethnographic study because it determines how and where fieldwork can be organised (Seale, 1999).

Observation, enquiry and data collection depend on the observer gaining access to the field and establishing good working relations with people in it. If the ethnographer has connection with the headmaster of a school, the chances of gaining initial access are enhanced. If the researcher works in an educational organisation, access to that organisation is assured (Walford, 2008). Therefore, much ethnographic research is conducted in sites which have been selected for convenience. However, to do ethnographic research, access is a continuous process. Even after those within a school or educational organisation have been persuaded to give access, the researcher has continually to negotiate further access to observe classrooms and to interview teachers and students (ibid.). It can be seen as a process of building relationships with people in order to win the trust of the teachers and students so that they will allow the researcher to observe them with few restrictions and be open about their perceptions and beliefs (ibid.). Central to this issue is how to gain the trust of the people involved and, at the same time, how to avoid the danger of 'going native' (McNeill, 1990).

Access to different settings is particularly important in ethnography. Therefore, I have read theoretical understanding in ethnography in order to gain an academic access to the school as 'the discovery of

obstacles, and perhaps of effective means of overcoming them, itself provides insights into social organisation of settings' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 54). It is important to decide where to observe and when, who to talk to and what to ask, what to record and how (ibid.). As I previously had been working as an IELTS teacher in one independent school in London for five years where there were a great number of Chinese students and also, I had been running an overseas education agency in China, sending many students to UK independent schools every year since 2012, it was not difficult for me to find my sample. I firstly used my interpersonal resources and strategies to gain the initial access to the field. My first access to MM School was in November 2016 when I was accompanying one of my students to attend the entry test and interview for the A-level course. The director of international admissions showed us around the campus and spoke about the history, culture, academic performance, accommodation, activities, etc. of the school. I was impressed by the beautiful campus and its fantastic courses and activities. After that, I sent more than 15 students to attend the school's GCSE and A-level entry test in early 2017 and most of them were admitted to the programme. From this beginning, I built the first connection with the school through the international admissions team. I had further access to the school in September 2017 when I accompanied six students and their parents to register on the first day of the school. The director of international admissions showed me around the school again. Since I have built further connection with the school, I explained to the admission team that I am currently doing my PhD. I introduced my research topic and asked if I could conduct my fieldwork at MM school, which was an ideal place for my research because of the great number of Chinese students doing GCSE/A level courses. I was delighted when the director introduced me to the headmaster of the school, and they agreed for me to conduct the research after I had explained my research topic and the methodology that I would use.

5.3.2 Settings

The setting for this research is MM School which is a co-educational independent school in the south of London, recruiting students from the age of 3 to 18, and offering education from nursery to sixth form. As an independent school, MM School mainly serves local and international students from more privileged and affluent backgrounds. Most of the international students are Chinese, who have to pay much higher fees than the local students to study at the school.

MM School has day students from nursery to Year 13 and boarders from Year 7 to Year 13. Almost all the international students live in the boarding houses at school during term time. As a representative of my overseas educational agency, the school has shown me around their boarding houses more than five times while I accompanied parents and applicants visiting the school. I found that most boarding

students were Chinese with a small number of students from other countries such as France, Japan, Malaysia and so on. For younger students (Year 7 to 11), two to four people shared a room depending on its size because the school considered it important for them to make more friends at this stage. For Sixth-form students, they lived in a single room because the school thought senior students need more time for self-study. In each boarding house, there were many spacious common rooms for boarders to spend their time with each other. During the daytime, day students who were mostly local English pupils could spend their free time in the common room with the boarding students. In addition, the accommodation teams often organised a variety of activities for the international students to socialise with the locals.

In terms of admission and assessment, the entry criteria and process of assessments are different depending on the age of the pupil. For Sixth-form entry, students need to obtain Grade 5 or above in 6 GCSE/IGCSE subjects in order to join A-level courses in MM school. As for international students who do not study GCSE/IGCSE, alternative qualifications are considered on a case-by-case basis. For example, Chinese applicants often provide a transcript from their previous secondary school in China, which the admission will check to see whether they have the potential to succeed in at least three subjects. Moreover, international students all need to pass the entry tests (English and mathematics) as well as the interview to get a place in MM School. Once students are accepted to study A-level courses, they will still need to obtain a minimum of a C in Year 12 internal exams which are held in the summer term in order to continue studying on that course into Year 13.

5.3.3 Participants

The school recruits around 30 students from mainland China each year. Four students aged 16 to 17 from the Chinese group were invited to participate in the study. I got to know these students as their IELTS teacher. Two students had previously studied IELTS with me while they were doing a two-year GCSE course in an independent school where I used to teach, and I got to know the other two students while they attended my overseas education preparation lessons in China before coming to the UK. I kept in close contact with these students and their parents as I was their education agent helping them apply to MM School and now maintain close contact between the school, parents and students. This guaranteed that I could carry out the research with them over a long time period because they were taking A-level courses at MM School and later would pursue their higher education in Britain. This guaranteed their long-term future of studying and living in the international environment and it was a critical time for those teenagers to adjust to and develop their attitudes and values for the new lives. Therefore, it is really worthwhile tracking their changes diachronically. Two students were around the

pre-intermediate level in English proficiency with total score of 5-5.5 in IELTS, while another two students had achieved a higher level of English at around 6 or 7 in IELTS. Choosing participants with different levels of English proficiency helped me to see how their linguistic levels affected their adaptations to the English academic and social environment.

I also had conversations and conducted interviews with selected school teachers: the head of EAL, the director of international admissions, the physics teacher and chemistry teacher, and the head of mathematics as well as an economics teacher. My aim was to get data about students' academic study, EAL and other core curriculum subjects, how lessons were taught, and so forth in order to gain a better understanding of the context of the school and the students' experiences. As an education agent for my target students, I kept in close contact with their teachers through email, talking about the students' lives and studies in school. I also attended the parents' meeting on behalf of my students' parents twice a year, whereby I had opportunity to talk to each subject teacher about the students' academic progress in their chosen subjects, which allowed me to collect rich data about the difficulties and challenges students met while studying all their subjects through the medium of English.

Besides collecting data from students and teachers, I also collected data from parents because it was important to get in-depth information on why my target students chose to study in the UK at such a young age; it was also important to understand the parents' expectations regarding their children's academic study and the university they expected their child to attend in the future. As an IELTS teacher, meeting and communicating with parents was very easy for me, particularly when they knew that I had been teaching in the UK independent schools for years, and that I had obtained a Master's degree in English language teaching and was doing a PhD in Educational Studies in the UK. All the parents were living in China while their children were studying in the UK, and as most of them were illiterate in English, they enjoyed talking with me to get information about their children's progress in study rather than communicating with the school by themselves. My good intentions in offering concern and assistance won the parents' trust and I became very popular with them because both the parents and the students at this stage were desperately seeking support to adapt to study at a UK school. Therefore, I kept in close contact with parents through WeChat, the most popular Chinese messaging and social media app. Through communicating with the parents, I collected useful data based on my research questions and I also understood their worries about the difficulties faced by students and their desire to get the academic support from the school or elsewhere to help their child to succeed.

Details of the focus group

- Students

Vivi Wei

Vivi was 17 years old in Year 12 and her English level was upper intermediate (with a band score of 7.0 in IELTS). She was studying A-level pure mathematics, further mathematics, physics, and economics at MM School. I got to know Vivi and her mother during the summer in 2017 when Vivi attended my IELTS preparation lessons in Hangzhou, a city located in the east of China, before she went to the UK in September 2017. I kept in close contact with both Vivi and her parents while she was studying in the UK, and she visited me almost every weekend and during half-term holidays in London. In addition, she studied IELTS with me every week in order to improve her score until it reached 7.5, with each unit scoring at least 7.0. This guaranteed my close and long-term observation with her, which would help me understand her experiences in the UK in depth.

Kitty Lai

Kitty was a 17-year-old girl from mainland China, who also arrived in September 2017 to study for her A-levels (pure mathematics, further mathematics, and economics) at MM School. Before she arrived the UK, she spent two years studying for her IGCSEs at an independent school in Guangzhou, China. I knew her because she applied for MM School through my overseas education agency in China. She studied IELTS with me every Saturday for one term and achieved 7.5 to meet her university entry language requirement. Besides this, as I was her guardian in the UK, I had the opportunity to attend her parents meetings in school as well as communicating with her teachers through regular emails, which enabled me to develop an in-depth understanding of her learning experiences in MM school.

Bob Zhang

Bob was a 17-year-old boy from mainland China, who first arrived in the UK when he was 15 years old to study his GCSEs at MM School. After finishing the two years of his GCSE course, he continued with studying for A-levels at MM School in September 2017. At the start of the study, he was studying four subjects, Chinese, mathematics, business and geography in Year 12 and his English level was 5.5. I got to know him as an agent and also as a friend of his parents. I kept close contact with him and his parents while he was studying at MM School.

James Li

James was a16-year-old boy from Guangzhou, China with an English level of 6. He had been in the UK for more than one year. He first arrived to do one-year IGCSE programme at another independent school in London before then he transferred to the A-levels programme at MM School. He was studying physics, pure mathematics, economics and art. I had known him since 2016 as we are from the same city and he used to study for his IGCSEs in the school that I previously worked in. He visited me most weekends while studying in the UK and I also have a close relationship with his mother, who enjoined talking about her son's studies with me.

Table1

Name	Kitty	Bob	James	Vivi
Age	17	17	16	17
Course	A-levels	A-levels	A-levels	A-levels
Subjects	Pure Maths, Further Maths, Economics	Pure Maths, Business, Geography, Chinese	Pure Maths, Physics, Economics and Art	Pure Maths, Further Maths, Economics, Physics
When arrived	2017	2015	2016	2017

- Teachers

Director of International Admissions

Mr Cook, the head of international admissions, had been working at MM School for more than 30 years. His main job in the school was recruiting overseas students. Because of his position, he knew Chinese students well compared with other teachers in the school as he interviewed all international students and also communicated with them when they were living and studying at the school. Besides this, he also had a great connection with agents from different parts of the world and he was particularly close to Chinese agents as Chinese students formed the largest percentage of the international students in MM school. I got to know him as an agent while I was helping students applying and visiting the school. From him, I collected useful information about the school education policies, international students, admission criteria, etc.

Head of EAL

Mr William, the head of the EAL department, had been working at MM School for about seven years. He was an English native speaker and mainly taught English as an Additional Language to international students from Year 10 to Year 13. He was introduced to me by the director of international admissions because all my target students were learning EAL with him to improve their English proficiency. From him, I had the opportunity to observe some EAL lessons, and interview other EAL teachers, which helped me gather useful information about the EAL curriculum.

Economics Teacher

Miss Zhong, had a Hong Kong background, but she had been living in the UK since she was born. She did not speak Mandarin or Cantonese and English was her mother tongue. As economics is a very popular A-level subject for Chinese students, I talked to the school to arrange for me to observe some economic lessons during my pilot study. Miss Zhong had been teaching A-level economics in the school for five years. I was lucky to observe many of her lessons and witness Chinese students' participation in lessons and investigate the challenges they met.

Mathematics and Science Teachers

I mainly talked to the mathematics and science teachers during parents meetings from which I collected useful information about their students' academic performance in school.

- Parents

The four mothers of my target students kept in close contact with me during their children's studies in the UK. They did not speak any English and they depended on me for communication with the school. Although all of them came from different parts of China, they shared a common background as full-time housewives while their husbands were earning money to support the families. While their children were studying in China, their main responsibilities included picking up or dropping off their children, supervising their children's studies (such as making sure they finished all their school work, arranging private tuitions for them at weekends, and so forth). However, since their children were in the UK, they relied on the agent to support their children because they did not understand English. Although they were in China far from the UK, they kept in close contact with me through WeChat every week in order to get the latest information about their children's lives and studies in the UK.

5.4 Research Methods for Data Collection

In order to answer my research questions, I will use different methods for data collection: such as participant observation, unstructured/semi-structured interviews, field notes as well as reflective journal.

My main research question: How can teenage Chinese EAL students be best supported to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically?
Sub-questions:
1. What has motivated Chinese teenagers to come and study for GCSEs/A-levels in UK independent schools at such great expense?
2. Why are they particularly challenged learners in relation to cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation?
3. How are these students supported to meet the cultural, linguistic and academic challenges in their learning journey?

5.4.1 Participant Observation

In my research, observation of the focus group members was carried out based on their ordinary curriculum to provide a complete learning cycle of their classroom interactions and academic performance. I observed some lessons to see what language barriers my target students encountered and what language support was provided in the mainstream class. First, I observed science lessons (e.g., physics and chemistry) as all the Chinese students chose science because most of them thought that they had advantage having already learned these subjects previously in China and also because these subjects do not require as high a command of English compared with subjects, like drama, art or business. I also observed some economics and business lessons as most Chinese students dreamt of career in economics or business; however, it seemed that they had many difficulties due to language barriers. In addition, I observed EAL lessons taught by different EAL teachers to see how Chinese students were supported in order to meet their linguistic needs. As an insider, sharing the same cultural background with the focus group can help me understand their problems and better derive their thoughts from their experiences. However, the potential drawbacks was 'too close to the participants and thereby not attaining the distance and objectivity necessary for valid research' (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

5.4.2 Unstructured/Semi-Structured Interviews

In my interview, firstly, four Chinese students at MM School were interviewed based on the research questions, and these were explored further by building on their responses. The rationale of using this approach was to understand the participants' point of view rather than make generalisations about behaviour. The interviews with the students were mostly conducted in the form of conversations, from which the questions emerged automatically with an open-ended character in order to maintain a sense of a natural situation. In response to some sensitive questions or around personal issues, the participants might not share their real thoughts. For example, when I asked them about their study performance, some might not tell me their real academic level because they perhaps felt embarrassed to tell me the truth. Therefore, my interviews with the participants took place in school settings including playgrounds, dining hall, student accommodation, classrooms, the football field and so forth in order to create a natural setting where participants felt free to share their opinions. Furthermore, as students' perspectives were also changing, I maintained long-term communication with them to check and compare the collected data at different times.

Both group and individual interviews were adopted in my study. The four students were invited to have a discussion about the difficulties they encountered while studying at the school and expressed their opinions towards the EAL support they received from school. The purpose of the group interview was to get the general ideas from the target students based on the research questions.

In addition, individual interviews were carried out to avoid group thinking, as Chinese students may think alike due to the culture of not challenging others to maintain highest discipline and consistency in the group (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). Individual interviews could avoid the preconceived ideas of others dominating and thus reveal more of the students' personal feelings and beliefs regarding their learning experiences in the UK.

In addition, teachers from the schools were asked to take part in the interviews because it was necessary to find out whether teachers were consciously aware of the culture of learning among the students and what measures were taken to facilitate their lives and studies at school.

5.4.3 Field notes

Qualitative filed notes are an essential component of rigorous qualitative research. The majority of qualitative research methods encourage researchers to take field notes to enhance data and provide rich context for analysis (Creswell, 2013) because field notes aid in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounters, interviews, focus groups, and can document valuable contextual data (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2017).

In my research, while collecting the data in school, I kept writing field notes in each section, such as classroom observation, interviews, etc. Pen and paper were the common tool that I used as they were easy to use and unobtrusive (Fetterman, 1998). During the natural conversation with participants, I used audio or video recording because writing notes would be disruptive to the 'natural' participation. I would stop recording if the topic was too sensitive to anyone who did not feel like being recorded. Because field notes for interviews and focus groups are best recorded immediately (Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2017), I recorded or wrote down my field notes immediately after leaving the site to avoid forgetting important details. The notes were expanded and developed as soon as possible. Descriptive field notes can reflect a researcher's personal account of what he/she is learning, his/her speculations, feelings, problems, ideas, prejudices, analyses and plans for future enquiry. furthermore, the reflective notes may help readers better understand the descriptions, analyses and conclusions of my study (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 2011).

5.4.4 Reflective Journal

Reflective journals: diaries and journals can provide additional data about personal and affective variables in language learning (Allwright, 1983; Bailey, 1983). To get an insider view of student anxiety and reticence in a foreign language classroom, my target students were asked to write reflective journals on a weekly basis. Prompts were written in both English and Chinese to stimulate reflection on such topics as their level of anxiety, reticence and participation during their academic English lessons and their reasons for their behaviour during class activities. In addition to the topics suggested, students were allowed to write whatever related to their English language leaning, their academic studies or the culture shocks they encountered during their experience in the UK. They could also use Chinese if they had any difficulty in expressing ideas in English.

5.5 Ways of Data Analysis

5.5.1 Thematic Analysis

Data analysis of this study was an ongoing process that occurred in natural settings simultaneously with data collection and continued to be entwined throughout the process of data collection and report writing (Creswell, 2007). The data from this ethnographic study mainly came from participant observation, participants' stories gathered in the interviews and students' reflective journals.

A good qualitative analysis depends on understanding the data. Researchers usually gather larger amounts of data during the data collection process, but sometimes the data collected are worthless in their original form. Therefore, it is important to summarise the data and identify the important features and patterns. Thematic analysis was applied in this qualitative study because it allows flexibility when choosing theoretical frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is flexible, clear and detailed enough to interpret various aspects of the research topic and it includes specific guidelines for 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within the data and describing data in rich detail' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 79). Therefore, in this study, thematic analysis was used to search for the themes that emerged from the class observation and the participants' narratives in the interviews in order to generate insights and interpretations from what was observed and what was told in their stories.

The analysis began by getting familiar with the data collected from the interviews. Firstly, I read all the field notes and went through all the recordings. After listening to the audio recording many times, I completed all the transcriptions and translated them into English. I re-read the data several

times and checked the transcriptions back against the original audio recording for accuracy in order to capture any exta subtle information in the recording. This process was very time-consuming indeed but rewarding as it allowed me to become immersed within the entire data set to develop a better understanding of the thematic data for further analysis. This phase not only helped me become familiar with the content of the data set but also helped me notice things that might be relevant to my research questions.

In phase 2, coding was used to identify themes. Codes are the building blocks of analysis. As pointed out by Braun and Clarke (2012: 61), 'if your analysis is a brick-built house with a tile roof, your themes are the walls and roof, and your codes are the individual bricks and tiles'. This means that codes identify and provide a label for a feature of the data that is potentially relevant to the research question. During the coding process, I read through the entire data collected, and every time I identified something that was potentially relevant to the research questions, I coded it and marked the text in different colours on my computer. All initial codes relevant to the research questions and literature were incorporated into themes. Through coding, the codes and themes became more refined and helped explain thematic relationships and in-depth analysis within and across the topics (Maxwell, 2005). I also reviewed and refined the themes several times to ensure validity, accuracy and consistency of themes and I kept working on data re-coding and themes verification until the themes could better represent my research questions.

5.5.2 Reliability, Validity and Triangulation

All methods aim to produce reliable and valid knowledge. Each research study, whether quantitative or qualitative, can be assessed as to its reliability and validity by careful attention to the study's conceptualisation, the manner in which the data were collected, analysed and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented (McKee, 2011). There are differences between the criteria to determine if a study is valid and reliable in either a quantitative or qualitative research, because the goals of the research are different. In a quantitative study, testing a hypothesis is usually the purpose, whereas the goal of qualitative study is to acquire new knowledge through deeper understanding of the context, phenomena, and people (Punch, 2009).

Validity is a technical term with specific meanings. Measurement validity means the extent to which an instrument measures what it is claimed it measures (Punch, 2009: 246). According to Hammersley (1992), an account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is

intended to describe, explain or theorise. Whatever evidence is offered to support a claim, the validity of that evidence may always be challenged.

Qualitative researchers need to consider seriously the internal validity of their work (Schofield, 1993). One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing (Creswell, 2007). In qualitative research, what is being determined is the participant's view of reality because the participant's view of reality is accessed directly through the researcher's interviews and observations. The internal validity is a strength of qualitative research because the researcher hears the informant's viewpoints and records for him-or herself the 'truth' of various statements made by the informant.

In ethnography, the internal reliability and validity is usually achieved through triangulation which is one of the best-known ethnographic techniques for ensuring the validity of data collection and analysis. The term originates from land surveying where it is used to locate one's position on a map using two landmarks (Webb et al, 1966). In this context, it means using different methods such as interviewing, observation, official document review, etc. in data collection and analysis in order to insure the internal validity of the ethnographic study. Generally, there are two main techniques such as data triangulation and methodological triangulation. In data triangulation, the information may be collected from different sources, whereas methodological triangulation refers to different methods of data collection. Data triangulation involves the comparison of data relating to the same phenomenon but deriving from different phases of the fieldwork, different points in temporal cycles in setting, or, as in respondent validation, the accounts of different participants differentially located in the setting.

5.5.3 Data Transcription and Translation

Translation plays an important role in checking validity and reliability in ethnographic study. While using an ethnographic approach to collect data through participant observation and interviews, it is important to use translation when presenting data in order to understand another cultural perspective especially when participants and the researcher share the same non-English native language and the non-English data needs to be share in translation. The processes involved in the comprehension of text can be better understood through translation and interpretation. The message communicated in the source language has to be interpreted by the translator (often the researcher him or herself) and transferred into the target language in such a way that the receiver of the message understands what was meant. Challenges in the interpretation and representation of meaning may be experienced in any communicative action, but they are more complicated when cultural contexts differ and interlingual

translation is required (Van Nes et al., 2010) because concepts in one language may be understood differently in another language.

As Chinese and English are two very different languages particularly in terms of sentence structures, I did not follow a word-for-word translation pattern. For example, 'a word in Chinese may require a phrase in English, a clause in English may require only a phrase in Chinese' (Chen, 2004:116). Chinese may be more concise than English and other European languages; therefore, one page of Chinese text requires two pages of English when translated. Thus, while translating the collected data, I spent a lot of time on syntactic and lexical restructuring to make the original Chinese data translated into English as accurate as possible.

5.5.4 Ethical Consideration

We have to consider the ethical issues. Ethnical behaviour in research is not only desirable but an essential part of obtaining permission from university and research institutions to be able to conduct research (Walford, 2008). There are some elements of ethnographic research that can cause particular problems in gaining ethical approval and more importantly ensuring the researchers actually behave ethically when undertaking the research. It is important that all participants should give informed consent before they become part of any research. It means that the potential participants should be told exactly what the research seeks to investigate and what will be done with any of the information that they give to the researcher (ibid.). As ethnographers must attempt to give us as full and accurate a description as possible, participants have to accept that other aspects may be written about. This demands a high degree of trust on the part of participants.

Whilst the researcher seeks information from his participants to achieve the research goals, certain responsibilities are required to avoid any harm that might be done to them. Sensitivity and moral concerns are important qualities for qualitative researchers, especially when investigating people's experiences (Mason, 1996).

Another ethnical concern in education research is how to protect those who might be offended. These include the particular educational establishments involved, the immediate departments and the academic community as well as the intended audience. Careful consideration has to be made to protect their confidentiality. However, in ethnography, it is often actually impossible to offer confidentiality and anonymity (den Hoonard, 2002). The fundamental difficulty is that there are very many people involved with any organisation that is the site of an ethnographic study who know the identity of the

researcher because the researcher is present in the organisation over an extended period. With so many people knowing about the research, it is difficult to hide the identity of the school or individuals involved if any of the reports have local or national exposure. In my case, this issue becomes less acute as I am working for different schools and I have been recruiting students to study GCSEs/A-levels in various independent boarding schools in the UK. The identity of the schools and the participants will be kept secure since it is not possible for other people to identify which school I refer to because the independent schools I have been involved in share similar contexts in terms of campus, boarding condition, international students and curriculum. During my research, I read the 'Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004)' and 'Good Practice in Educational Research Writing (2000)' published by British Educational Research Association (RERA). I also discussed the ethical aspects of my research with my supervisors and my research complies with all these guidelines. I followed all the guidelines during my research, for example, I first got permission from my university to conduct my research signing the Ethical Practice in Research Form provided by Goldsmiths, University of London (see Appendix C), and then I obtained the consent from the head of MM school to start my field work. After explaining to the participants what my PhD was about and how their identify and personal information would be kept confidential, they gave me consent to collect data from them for my PhD study.

5.6 Conclusion

My study was carried out through an ethnographic approach in order to better interpret the issues in the natural and dynamic settings of the participants. An ethnographic approach was well suited as I was able to carry out the research over a long period of time while building strong relationships with the research participants and a solid understanding of the research context. In my study, both cultural and linguistic factors were involved in the whole process of classroom learning and interaction. Ethnography enabled me to describe the culture and people's daily lives and experiences as faithfully as possible. Furthermore, the participant's narrative stories in my ethnographic study served as a powerful instrument to construct a rich and in-depth description of the experiences of Chinese EAL students in the UK.

In my research, I adopted various research methods including participant observation, interviews, reflective journals, field notes and so forth with the aim of giving a descriptive and comprehensive account of the participants. All of the research methods worked well during conducting my research study. For example, as I built a close connection with the EAL department, I was lucky to be able to observe lessons taught by different EAL teachers over a long period time (about six months).

Participant observation enabled me to understand how the lessons were taught and what challenges my target students encountered while studying at MM School. Conducting interviews with teachers and students allowed me to get detailed, rich data about the misunderstandings and mismatches between them. Due to the close relationship with the students, the interviews were mostly conducted in the form of conversation in different settings such as in the school-dining hall, in the garden, and the school football field to maintain a sense of a natural situation, where participants felt free to share their experiences. Moreover, as I was teaching my target students IELTS at weekends, my participants were happy to keep writing reflective journals every month, from which I collected useful information about their English learning experiences in the school. In addition to the aforementioned methods, I also kept writing field notes during all the processes of my research, which allowed me to create rich descriptions of the study context of my participants.

In terms of data analysis, thematic analysis was applied in this study because it is flexible, clear and detailed to interpret various aspects of the research topic. As I share the same language, culture and ethnic identify as the participants, it was easy for me to understand the participants' views and their challenges, but in the meantime, it was not easy to set aside personal bias and judgment during the data collection and analysis process. The researcher's own subjectivities may influence both data collection and analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, in this ethnographic study, I tried to interpret the data as faithfully as possible avoiding using any personal comments. Furthermore, triangulation which is one of the best-known ethnographic techniques was adopted to ensure the accuracy of data collection and analysis.

PART FOUR DATA ANALYSIS

The following three chapters will analyse the collected data in the field that relate to cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation in terms of the research questions.

Chapter 6 Teenage Chinese EAL Students and Cultural Adaptation

6.1 Introduction

My research aims to investigate how teenage Chinese EAL students can be best supported to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically while studying for GCSEs/A-levels in a UK independent school. In this chapter, I first focus on the reasons why Chinese teenagers come to study in the UK at such a young younger age and at such a high cost; then I discuss the reasons why they are challenged as learners in relation to their cultural adaptation both in their daily lives and academic studies.

In the past, those Chinese students from affluent families chose to study their Master's degree abroad rather than their Bachelor's degree. However, recent years have witnessed the tendency for more and more of Chinese students wanting to do their undergraduate studies in the foreign countries, and in order to get adapted more smoothly and overcome the gap in transferring from one school system to another, they are sent to study abroad at a younger age (14-17) when they have finished their lower secondary or upper secondary schooling in China. According to the statistics published by the UK Council for International Affairs (UKCIA, 2017), there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Chinese students coming to the UK to do GCSEs/A-levels in independent schools or private six-form colleges. In the literature, most studies have focused on those undergraduate or postgraduate students who make their decisions to study abroad mainly by themselves (Wang, 2001; Chen, 2016; Yang, 2007); however, it is normally parents who initiate and make the decisions in the case of teenage students. In light of this, both the participants' parents and the target students in my study were all informants who shared with me their thinking behind in this costly decision to study in this country at such a young age. However, the data indicated that in switching from the Chinese to the UK education system, they encountered significant challenges and dilemmas during their cross-cultural academic experiences. Their narratives revealed many little-known stories that were worth further research.

6.2 Illusions about the UK Education System

6.2.1 Less Examination-Oriented Schooling

From the data collected, we learnt one of the most important reasons for choosing to study in the UK was that they considered education in the UK less examination-oriented and less pressured in comparison with the situation in China. Some parents realised that their children suffered huge pressures from the highly competitive exam-oriented education in Chinese secondary schools. Sending children aboard to study GCSEs/A-levels in order to avoid the stress is becoming a popular option among parents.

The extract below is what I learnt from one of my participants. After finishing her three years of lower secondary school (known as middle school in China), Kitty Lai did not go on to study in a Chinese upper secondary state school (known as high school in China). Instead, she was first sent by her parents to an international school in Guangzhou, in the south of China, where she completed her two-year IGCSE courses, and then to a UK independent school for her A-level courses. Her parents believed that their daughter would have a better and more relaxed learning experience in the English medium education system then and afterwards.

> *I suffered too much stress from study while I was studying in the lower secondary school in China. It was very tough. We had to attend school from morning till evening, spending about 11 hours per day including class hours and self-study. We got countless homework to do and we had endless mock exams because the academic goal of the school was to train us to get high mark. I did not have enough time to sleep. As I was not physically healthy then because I was weak and sometimes got ill because of the heavy study load, my parents did not want me to suffer too much from study anymore. Therefore, they decided to send me to the international school to do to a two-year IGCSE course in Guangzhou, China and then I came to the UK to do A-levels. I think the education has been more relaxing since then. For my A-level study in the UK, we do not need to study many subjects and we do not have much homework to do, compared with the Chinese state secondary school. Instead, we have plenty of time to develop our interests based on what we really like.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, April 2018*)*

Vivi Wei also reflected that education in China was very stressful as she had to spend more than 10 hours on study every day, and she did not have any free time to do things she liked. Therefore, she did

not want to continue to her studies in upper secondary school in China but decided to study for A-levels in the UK.

I had to get up at 5 in the morning and get prepared for the school every day. I had morning reading at 6am at school. Then, we had to spend the whole day at school attending many main subject lessons and also self-study lessons. The school finished at 9:30 pm. I got to sleep at around 11 pm, so I felt very tired and sleepy during my secondary school in China.

But, in MM School, it is very relaxing. School begins at around 8 am and finishes early in the afternoon. I have plenty of time to plan the things that I would like to do, such as going to the library, doing some sports with my classmates, gossiping with some girls or just staying in my boarding house studying or playing some online games…well, the best thing about studying in the UK is that I can make a good balance between studying and relaxing.
(Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

James Li was studying in a top five secondary school in his hometown. He dropped out of school when he was in Year 9 because he had been unhappy with the stressful studying in China and decided to transfer to study in a UK independent school.

I did not attend Zhongkao and left school while I was in Year 9. Study was very tough in my secondary school in China because we had to arrive at school by 7am from Monday to Saturday. I got up very early in the morning to avoid being later for school. Our lessons finished at 5: 30 pm, and then after dinner, we still needed to spend another three hours in school doing all the homework or tests. Every night, when I went back home, it was late, at 10 pm or 11 pm. When we were in the final year of lower secondary school, students were required to be boarders and spend most of the time studying. Because my school was one of the top five schools in the city, our school paid great attention to the results of the Zhongkao. In order to train us to get high mark in the final exams, we did lots of exams every day and we did not have any time for sports or doing things we liked such as listening to music, watching TV, or playing games. Our cellphones were kept by the head teacher for the whole week until Saturday afternoon when our parents came to pick us up for the weekend…I had been fed up with the life in school. I kept asking myself what is the meaning of studying like a machine every day? I decided to drop out of school before the Zhongkao after discussion with my parents and transferred to study in a UK school… (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang revealed in his interview that his first interest in studying abroad was influenced by his friend who was studying in the UK. His friend told him the UK school life was very relaxing and different from that in China. Bob also mentioned in the interview that a large group of their classmates in his Chinese secondary school transferred to study abroad because of the less examination-oriented schooling in the Western countries.

> *I am the only child in my family, growing up in one of the biggest cities in China. My original interest in studying abroad was influenced by my best friend who went to study in an independent school in the UK when he was in Year 7. I was fascinated with his description of his foreign life - living in an English host family where he could learn English cultures and improve his English. He posted many pictures on WeChat, one of the most popular social apps in China, showing his life in the UK. I was attracted by the beautiful environment at the school, the traditional architecture, school uniforms, as well as all the kinds of school activities he posted online. It seems that studying abroad was a totally different experience…Actually, more and more of my classmates dropped out of school in Year 8 or Year 9 and transferred to study in foreign countries such as the UK, US, and Australia.* (Bob Zhang, Interview Data, 2018)

Bob Zhang went on to reveal that he would like to leave the exam-oriented education in Chinese secondary school, and transfer to a UK independent school where he could learn more useful and practical skills.

> *Influenced by my peers, I made my decision to study in the UK. One important reason was that I did not like the exam-oriented education in Chinese secondary schools where we spent lots of our time practising exam papers. Both my parents and I thought that it would be beneficial for me to study in the UK which emphasises student's personal development and practical skills instead of exam grades. I think learning in a less exam-oriented educational environment, I would learn more useful knowledge and have a better experience.* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

The above data reveals that students were under great pressure in China, so they had to invest all their time in study and there was no time left for any other things they liked to do and develop their interest. What might be worse was that they might be deprived of their health, happiness, creativity, curiosity and so forth. As revealed by Yuebing Zang, who conducted surveys with 43

Chinese high school students in a state school in mainland China, Chinese exam-oriented education can 'stifle a student's imagination, creativity, and sense of self, qualities crucial for a child's ultimate success in and out of the classroom' (Zang, 2011: 36). Yuebing Zang points out that most Chinese students have to spend long hours at school attending many lessons and doing a high volume of daily homework assignments; therefore, they do not have any time for extracurricular activities or hobbies (ibid.). Other researchers also showed that the exam-oriented education system has consumed Chinese students' lives and led to an imbalance in the overall development of students (Mori, 2000; Tuner and Acker, 2002; Yao, 2004; Wang, 2006; Zheng, 2008). Driven by this situation, studying abroad became an ideal alternative or easier way for a different and better experience.

6.2.2 More Subject Options Available at GCSE and A-level

From the interview data, we can see that participants were given options in the UK to do any 3 A-level subjects. However, in China, upper secondary school students are required to study three core subjects, namely, Chinese, English and mathematics, and three optional subjects from either science, such as physics, chemistry and biology, or humanities, such as history, geography, and politics (Yang, 2014). Most of the subjects are not necessarily related with the course that students would like to study in the university, not to mention if it is relevant to what they intend to do for their career. For example, if a student would like to study drama, business, or media in their future university for their career, due to limited subjects, Chinese students are not able to study those subjects in Chinese state secondary schools. This is not the case in UK independent schools where there are more subjects available concerning different areas.

James Li: I can choose the subjects that I like, and I do not need to study the subjects that are not relevant to my future career. In the Chinese secondary school, if I choose science, biology is compulsory. I do not like biology and in the future, I would like to study architecture or engineering in the university, and I do not see any relationship between biology and architecture or engineering. (James Li, Interview data, February 2018)

Bob Zhang: We have to study many subjects that are not useful or relevant to the job that we want to do in the future. We cannot choose the subjects related to our future career during secondary school in China. And we pay too much attention to the paper examination instead of practical skills and experiments which is unhelpful for our future career. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Kitty Lai: I would like to study economics in the future because I was born and grew up in a family with business background. In Chinese lower and upper secondary schools, students do not study economics. Well…if I study GCSEs or A-levels, then we can study this subject. I think it is good to study the subjects related to your career during secondary school. But in China, most students only have the chance to choose their subjects of interest at university. (Kitty Lai, Interview Data, 2018)

Vivi Wei: In Chinese high school, physics, chemistry and biology are compulsory subjects if we want to choose a science pathway. We have to study these three subjects together. However, doing A-levels in the UK, we are free to choose any subject. We can combine any subjects we like no matter whether it is science or humanity. (Vivi Wei, Interview Data, 2018)

From the above data, we can easily see that the greater range of subject options for A-level is a very important reason for students to study in the UK independent schools. Most of the subjects are compulsory in Chinese upper secondary school education and there are limited choices (only nine subjects), but in most UK independent schools, there are about 20 to 30 optional subjects, such as economics, business, drama, science, art and so on. Students are free to choose any three or four subjects according to their interests and their future career plan. However, little is known about the breadth and depth that each chosen subject requires of the students. They may still encounter many difficulties due to the language barrier. For example, do they recognise that they have to study fewer subjects but in greater depth? Take music as an example, students are not just learning singing or playing musical instruments but also learning about composition in UK schools. Moreover, the exam style might be different, such as question responses; for example, while answering physics questions in the Chinese education system, students focus more on the final result of the question, while in the UK schools, the steps to the answer are more important because it is essential to show how you work out the answer and how much you understand the question. Moreover, more subject option does not mean that students can definitely choose the subjects that they are interested in because there are potential language difficulties. What they have learned in Chinese secondary schools might not be relevant to what they are learning in the UK; therefore, most students only choose those subjects more closely related to what they have already learnt in China and less challenging in terms of language.

6.2.3 Less Competitive University Admission Requirements

In this study, the data shows that both parents and students were under the illusion that university admission requirements in the UK were less competitive in comparison with China. From the parents' perspectives, they were influenced by the popular trend of sending children for overseas education at a younger age. Parents had the illusion that switching to the UK for education increases the chances of being admitted to a top university. From my target students' perspectives, to escape from the competition of *Gaokao* was a significant reason for choosing to study in the UK. Nowadays, due to the fast-rising personal wealth in China, there are a growing number of affluent families. More and more Chinese parents have the financial ability to send their child overseas for education at a younger age (Wang, 2001; Chen, 2016; Yang, 2007). As all my participants were the only child in their family, their parents had high expectations for them as an only child, wishing them to have high-quality education, enrich their knowledge, and broaden their horizons, and more importantly expecting them to attend a top university in a Western country. However, entering a good university in China is highly competitive due to the large number of candidates and the limited number of top universities. Thus, the parents considered studying A-levels in the UK as an alternative route to success, and they were willing to devote every effort possible to their only child's education and success.

For example, Kitty Lai was the only child in her family. Her parents were property developers who made a good fortune from building and selling property in one of the most prosperous cities in mainland China. Thus, they did not have any financial difficulties in supporting their daughter studying in the UK for many years. They decided to send Kitty to the UK because they did not want their child to suffer too much stress from studying in the Chinese education system. They wanted Kitty to receive better-quality education and develop an international perspective while studying abroad. As they have a business background in China, they made the decision for Kitty to choose economics at A-levels and hoped she could continue to study economics or business in one of the G5 universities in the UK.

> *Well, both my husband and I consider sending Kitty to the UK for study at such a younger age is a good decision. The secondary education in China is too tough…Our wish is that Kitty could learn something useful and meaningful abroad… It is important that she makes friends from different countries and she will have an international view which will be beneficial for her in her future career…We would like her to study economics or business management in the UK… Since we will invest a large sum of money into her education in the UK for at least five years until she finishes her first or second degree, we hope that she could graduate from a top university. London School of Economics and Politics or*

University College London are our aims for her. These two universities have been ranked top 20 in the world…I heard that going to the UK to study at a younger age will increase the chances of being admitted to a better university…The university entry requirements in the UK are lower than that of the Chinese universities. My friend's child was considered a low achiever in Chinese lower secondary school, but she was admitted to study at University College London after doing A-levels in an independent school in London. (Interview data from Kitty Lai's parents, 2018)

Vivi Wei's parents also played an important role in making the decision for their daughter to study A-levels in the UK, considering it much easier for their daughter to apply to a top university in the UK education system. Vivi's father runs a private school for both primary and secondary education in the south of China, which enjoys a good reputation in the local city. Vivi's parents created a well-designed education plan and prepared their daughter adequately to study abroad. They arranged Vivi to attend overseas preparation courses to improve her English proficiency during the weekend and summer holidays before going to the UK. Their aim was that Vivi could receive a higher standard of education in the UK which can provide a good opportunity for their daughter to experience a multicultural environment and meet people across the world. Moreover, Vivi's parents also had high expectation that their child could study in a top university such as University of Cambridge or Oxford, after doing A-levels in an independent school in England.

When Vivi was still in Year 7, we started to prepare her to study abroad. We wanted her to finish Zhongkao first because we thought that it was important for her to finish her Chinese secondary education. We knew that when studying abroad, English is very important; so, while she was studying in secondary school in China, we also booked weekend and summer English courses to prepare her for the overseas education…We chose the UK because it is considered a multicultural country where students can mix with people from around the world and learn so much more than just what they are studying in school…Some of my friends suggested that Vivi could study abroad when she is much older; for example, they suggested that she could go to the UK to study a master's degree after finishing a university degree in China. However, we believe that studying broad from a younger age, Vivi will have more chances to apply a top university, like the University of Cambridge…as she will have longer time to improve her English and get prepared for her future university. I do think that the competition in the UK is less competitive. Applying to the University of Oxford or Cambridge in the UK education system would be much easier than applying to

Tsinghua University or Beijing University in the Chinese education system. (Vivi Wei's parents, Interview data)

From the students' perspectives, they were also under the illusion that the UK education system provided them with much easier access to a good university. For example, in their interviews, all participants expressed that they could not compete with the other students in the *Gaokao*. Choosing to study abroad was an alternative for them to pursue a better quality higher education without competing in the extremely demanding National University Entrance exam in China.

For example, James Li and Bob Zhang state that they did not have any advantages in the Chinese education system to help them to succeed; therefore, they transferred to the UK school.

I did not have any advantage in China. My studies were satisfactory but still not good enough to compete with the other students to pass the university entrance examination. Studying in the UK will make it easier for me to go to a good university. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

I was considered a low achiever in my lower secondary school in China since it was the best school in my hometown with many outstanding students. I mean I was not actually bad at my studies, but I was not as good as other students in the key school…In my school, it was the trend that those students who were considered lower performer in school and had less chance to attend the more prestigious universities in China, their parents would arrange for them to study in the secondary school and pursue higher education later on in the Western countries. Influenced by this overseas study climate, my parents decided to send me abroad. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Both parents and students considered it much easier to be admitted to good UK universities compared with the experience in China due to their misunderstandings of the UK university admission system. According to the Ministry of Education (MOE) in China, there are about nine million high school graduates taking the National Entrance Examination for Colleges and Universities (*Gaokao*) each year, but the admission rate for good universities is very low. In addition, the *Gaokao* result is the only deciding factor determining whether a student can be admitted to the university (Mori, 2000; Wang, 2016; Yang, 2014). For example, according to statistics on the Chinese education official website called Education Online (EOL, 2017), there were 9.4 million candidates taking the exams in 2017 and 7 million of them were admitted to study in a college or a university. The percentages of admissions at

the key universities, known as the Yiben universities in China, varied from 9.48% to 30.5% (EOL, 2017). The best universities in China are Beijing University, Tsinghua University, Nanjing University and Zhejiang University which are defined as the top universities in China. Admission to these universities is said to be the most difficult. Dimmock and Leong (2010) points out that fewer than 10% of students are admitted to study at the top universities in China each year. Take Guangdong Province for example, a place where I studied for 12 years and took my *Gaokao*, 758,000 students sat the *Gaokao* in 2018, while about 180,000 candidates were admitted to degree courses in the universities. In addition, only about 200 students were admitted to top Chinese universities (edu.sina.cn, 2018); however, this is not the case in the UK system as candidates are more likely to be admitted to good universities. Knowing that they do not have the academic ability to compete with the other candidates in the Chinese *Gaokao,* most students decided to study abroad.

Kitty Lai: *There are many ways for us to go to the university in the UK. They accept many qualifications such as A-levels, Foundations, IB and so on, unlike in China, where Gaokao is the only chance. The final result is not the only criterion here. Universities will look at our personal statement, previous experience, references from teachers and so on. I have to say there are more opportunities here.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, February 2018)

Bob Zhang: *I think it is much easier to go to a good university here. However, in China, the competition is fierce. Most students work very hard, but they cannot go to the top universities, particularly for the best universities, like* Tsinghua *University and Beijing University. It is very difficult for them to be admitted to study there even though they study hard or they are very good in their school performance. However, in the UK, there are more good universities, and it is less competitive*. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, February 2018)

James LI: The Chinese Gaokao is very competitive. Even the Zhongkao is highly competitive in my city. Only 50% of the students could be admitted to a good upper secondary school based on the Zhongkao results. Failing to attend a good secondary school, we won't have much chance to succeed in the Gaokao and go to a good university…Many people around me said that it is much easier to apply to a good university in the UK compared with China. For example, my friends said mathematics is very easy in UK schools. Students only need three subjects at A-level to apply for university. There are fewer university applicants in the UK compared with the candidates taking the Chinese Gaokao competing with each other to be admitted to a good-ranking university. Therefore,

knowing that I have less chance to attend a good upper secondary school and I did not have any advantages in the Gaokao, my parents decided to allow me to leave Chinese high school and study A-levels in the UK as an alternative, hoping that I will attend a top university in the UK after finishing the A-level courses at MM School. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Many studies have summarised the factors that drive Chinese students to study abroad which include a higher quality of education, improving their English, gaining Western experience and international exposure, becoming better prepared for future career and so forth (Chen, 2006; Yang, 2007; Bodycott, 2009). Besides these factors, most students that chose to study abroad were influenced by the positive attitude in China regarding studying abroad. Parents played a significant role in making the decision to send their children abroad for education. They had high expectations for their children because education is highly valued in China and, influenced by Confucian ideology, is considered a route to fame and success (Zhang, 1995; Wang, 2006). In this study, the data shows that transferring to study for GCSEs/A-levels in the UK has become increasingly popular among teenage Chinese students. Most parents have high expectations for their only child, wishing their daughter or son to attend a top university in the foreign country. Besides, all student participants have had more or less similar illusions and incentives to study in the UK. They have all had their very stressful school experiences in China; therefore, they would like to study in a less pressured environment. Furthermore, studying in the UK means to them less examination-oriented schooling for them, more course options, and less competitive university admission requirements. Just pointed out by Yang (2014), the annual national college entrance examination known as the *Gaokao,* is considered one of the most competitive exams in the world, with millions of candidates taking this exam in June every year. The preparation is quite stressful, and students have to give up many hobbies and a lot of free time to get ready for the *Gaokao.* Thus, having the illusion that university admission was less competitive in the UK, the participants chose to transfer to studying in the UK at an early age.

6.3 Shock and Surprise on Arrival

Upon arrival in the host country, students went into the stage with a combination of excitement and crisis according to Oberg's (1960) culture shock model. Arriving in a new place, exploring the new environment, and meeting people from different cultures, students would feel excited, but the unfamiliar surroundings and the break from family and friends may cause them to have feelings of loneliness and anxiety as well. For example, many studies have showed that when students go abroad to enter a new cultural environment which is different from their home culture, they arrive with

excitement but in the meantime experience culture shock because their daily routine and culture, and the attitudes of people around them are no longer familiar (Gao, 2000; Liu, 2001; Smith and Khawaja, 2011). My study also revealed that all participants experienced some form of culture shocks when they newly arrived at the UK school.

6.3.1 Food and Shelter

Upon arrival, my participants came with great excitement as everything seemed new to them. They were particularly satisfied with the school campus and the boarding house where there were green trees and flowers around. The school's traditional Victorian buildings were exactly what they imagined and had watched in many famous English movies before arrival. For example, James, Bob and Vivi expressed their great excitement and satisfaction with the school accommodation in the interview:

Well, when I first came to the school for registration, I was deeply in love with the beautiful campus…I especially liked the boarding houses which were the typical Victorian buildings that I watched on films and TV. As the school is located in the forest, the environment is fantastic. From my bedroom window, I can see many tall trees and flowers. Sometimes, we could see some lovely animals such as foxes, deer and even badgers which I only see in zoos in China. (James Li, Interview data,2018)

I was so excited to move into the school boarding house the first day when I arrived. It looks like the architecture that I saw in the film Harry Portter. It is so amazing that I only share a room with one student. In the Chinese school, there were six roommates…I am so glad that the house mistress does the laundry for us twice a week, and the cleaner cleans our room every day. In China, we needed to do all of these by ourselves... (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Wow, I like the boarding house in MM School. It has good facilities. There is a big common room in the house where we can meet other students, watch TV, and play some games such as table tennis, snookers, and so on…and the school sport centre is just opposite the house. Thus, it is convenient for us to do different kinds of sports such as swimming, playing basketball, etc. during free time… (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

From the above data, it seems students arrived with excitement; however, in reality, the unfamiliar cultures and surroundings brought them challenges. The first thing they mentioned was that they could not get used to English food and eating habits. Finkelstein (1999) notes that food habits are inseparable from the culture that a person inhabits and that these habits vary from culture to culture. Some degree of food shock is inevitable upon moving to a country with a different culture. Food is the first matter mentioned by all four participants who pointed out that they had a hard time getting used to British dietary habits during the first few months after arriving in the UK. They indicated that English food is very different from Chinese food in terms of cooking methods, ingredients and flavours, as well as eating style which troubled them for a long time in their early arrival days.

For example, Kitty Lai explained her difficulty adapting to the food when she arrived at the school:

> *The eating style surprised me in the first couple of months when I arrived in the UK. In China, people always eat hot food such as rice, noodles, and different kinds of dishes for lunch or dinner, but I ate hamburgers, sandwiches, chips and pizzas for the first month after I arrived in the school. It was ok during the first few days, but later I felt sick of the fast food and I really missed Chinese food, especially my favourite noodles and rice.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data,2018)

Similar difficulty was also pointed out by James Li:

> *Food in the UK is very different. For example, in the UK school, the common foods are potatoes, fish and chips, pizza, chicken wings, chicken breast, pasta, salads, etc. In China, people often eat rice, noodles and all kinds of dishes. We prefer hot food during the main meals but people here like cold food such as sandwiches and salads.* (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Students were also surprised that English food was cooked or eaten in a different way. For example, Bob Zhang revealed in the interview that he liked cooked vegetables rather than salads and complained that some vegetables in the UK are tasteless. This complaint was reflected in other studies which revealed that local English food was widely deemed to be tasteless, bland and boring (Brown, 2009; Brown et al., 2010).

When I first came, I was surprised to see that most vegetable dishes are made as salad dishes. I really don't like eating uncooked vegetables. The only cooked vegetables available in the school dining hall are broccolis. However, they taste very weird as no salt or oil is added to cook broccolis here. The taste is…how to say… too plain…I mean there is no flavor at all. In China, people often fry vegetables with many other ingredients such as oil, soy sauce, garlic and so on… There are also other ways of cooking vegetables such as steaming, boiling and so on. The important thing is that we like eating hot vegetables, and they should have flavour… (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Vivi Wei felt shocked at the cooking methods and sauces used with English food. For example, she was very surprised that milk and cheese were widely used in different kinds of dishes.

The cooking sauce surprised me most when I first came. For example, English people prefer using milk or cheese to cook food, while in China, soy sauce, oyster sauce, pepper are more common. I found it very difficult to accept food cooked with cheese or milk… In particular, I can't accept putting cheese or milk into chicken or meat dishes. The taste is so weird… However, sadly, in my school canteen, it seems that cheese and milk are the main ingredients in the majority of the dishes such as pasta sources, chicken breast, beef and so on. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

In addition to different kinds of food, cooking methods and ingredients, participants were not used to the eating habits in the UK. They complained that lunch time was too short. For example, Kitty Lai told me in the interview:

The lunch break is very short in the UK. Our morning lessons finish at 12:50 and the afternoon lessons start from 13:50. There are about 800 students eating lunch in school. We have to wait for a long queue to get our lunch. Thus, normally we only have about 10 minutes left for finishing our lunch. However, in China, our lunch time is very long. In most schools, the morning lessons finish by 11:30 am. Then, students have more than 2 hours for lunch before the first afternoon lesson begins. I found it very difficult to accept it when I first arrived in the UK, because eating a good lunch is important for most Chinese people. However, in England, during lunch time, it seems that we just grab some food and finish it quickly and then rush back to lessons. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

From Kitty Lai's data, the lunch break is too short compared with that in Chinese schools. A similar finding was revealed by Xie (2013) who pointed out that during her studies in the UK, the lunch break was only enough time for students to have a sandwich. Thus, they could not have a full lunch and went back to their lessons quickly; sometimes, this made students lose concentration in lessons when they did not feel full.

Due to the differences between Chinese and English food, the participants felt it difficult to get used to it; as a result, they depended on eating out in Chinese restaurants or ordering take-away Chinese food.

> *I was not used to the food during the first few months when I arrived in the UK. The food in the school dining hall is so different… I missed Chinese food so much. I went to China town to eat Chinese dishes almost every week. Sometimes, I ordered Chinese take-away food online…Now, I have become used to the food in school although I don't like it…* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

> *I missed Chinese food so much. Luckily, we are allowed to use the kitchen in the school boarding house. Sometimes, I cook noodles with other Chinese students in the kitchen during after school time. We are so happy to eat something with a familiar taste. During weekends, we often take the train and underground to central London in order to taste some Chinese traditional dishes such as dumplings, spicy chicken, hot pot, roast duck and so forth.* (James Li, Interview data, 2018).

From the above data, despite students feeling excited on their arrival, they experienced food shock while living and studying in the UK school. They were not used to English food and missed their home food very much. Different cultural backgrounds have powerful influences on eating behaviour, and moving to a new culture, food habits are the slowest to change (Gosden, 1999; Finkelstein, 1999). Chinese culture is food- centred (Simmons, 1991). Emotional attachment to home food is a result of the positive association between familiar taste and nostalgic thoughts of home and belonging (Locher et al., 2005) because home food is associated with family unity, maternal love and cultural belonging. Therefore, when students transferred from the Chinese education system to study in an English school where the cultural background is totally different, it is very likely that they encounter food shock. Although, as time went by, they got used to English food and they were willing to embrace diversity in food habits, home food still played an important role in their lives while studying in the UK. As reported by Li et al. (2011) when Chinese tourists travel outside Asia, they prefer to have Chinese food at least once a day, either a lunch or dinner option. Brown at al. (2010) also pointed out in the study

that although international postgraduate Chinese students were keen to be open to new food cultures and they had access to a wide range of cuisines such as Italian food, Spanish food, French food, and so forth while studying in the UK, Chinese food was their favourite. Therefore, they cooked Chinese dishes by themselves or ate out in Chinese restaurant every week.

6.3.2 Rules and Conducts

In addition to food shock, the participants found it difficult to become accustomed to the school rules and routines during the first few months of their arrival in the UK. They mentioned that they were not familiar with the school rules and did not consider it important to obey them at the beginning, but after getting detention from teachers, they realised the importance of following the rules.

For example, Bob Zhang said he did not consider tutor meetings important and he often escaped tutorial time to get more sleep or do homework until he received detentions at school.

> *The school routines in the UK are different from those in Chinese schools. School starts at 8:15 am and finishes early at 3:50 pm. We do not have any lessons in the evening. I really love the short study time in the UK schools; however, when I first came, I was not used to it. Firstly, I did not understand why we should have a tutor meeting every morning. During tutor time, we meet my tutor in the boarding house who usually registers us and announces some school events of the week, and somethings he will have a conversation with an individual if we meet some problems or difficulties either in our life or studies. During the first few months, I did not take it seriously particularly when I did not have anything I needed to discuss with him; so I skipped tutor meetings in order to save more time for sleeping or finishing homework before my first lesson began. I was given detentions, and even my guardian and my parents were informed of my absence from tutor meetings. This experience made me aware how important it is to join tutor meetings in the UK school education system.* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018).

James Li was not used to registering and self-studying in the library during free period. He thought he could take a rest in the boarding house when he did not have any lessons. However, after getting detentions, he realised that it was compulsory for all students to register in the library and study there during their free time within school hours.

During school time, when we did not have lesson in one period, we were not allowed go back to boarding house. Instead, we had to register in the library and study there. Once, I went back to my dorm for a rest when I did not have lesson during that period, I was caught by the housemistress and given a detention. Sometimes, I made an excuse that I was ill, and I needed to take a rest in the dorm. To my surprise, instead of allowing me to stay in the dormitory, my housemistress sent me to the medical centre…Since then, I learned that self-studying in the library during free period is an important rule in MM School. Actually, now I quite enjoy spending my free period in the library reading some books and doing some work. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Besides, Kitty Lai found it hard after her arrival to get used to wearing different types of school uniform depending on attending the different lessons and activities.

There are different kinds of school uniforms in MM School. We have to wear formal suits every day during lessons, and then we need to change our suits to school sports kits during game time. It was difficult for me to adjust to it at the beginning, because we had to carry a large bag with different kinds of clothes in it every day. Different sport lessons require us to wear different clothes…Sometimes, I have different sports in one day. Can you imagine how many times I change my clothes on that day? For example, on Friday, I have to wear a formal suit to attend the economics lesson. Then, I changed into a swimsuit for my swimming lesson…in the afternoon, there is PE, and all students were required to wear the PE kit to do sports in the field. After PE, we need to change back to our suits and attend the school assembly in the great hall…Anyway, I have adapted to it now… (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

The above data show that many students encountered difficulties with familiarizing themselves with and following the school rules upon arrival as these rules were totally different from those that they encountered previously in the Chinese education system. However, they were able to adapt to the rules after studying in the host country for a few months.

6.3.3 Feeling Discomfort and Comfort

Studying abroad, it is inevitable for overseas students to experience psychological and sociocultural adjustment issues. They particularly feel the need to seek friendship and emotional support. However,

it is widely documented that most overseas students suffer loneliness and isolation due to fewer social interactions with local students (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000). Social interaction is important for international students' adaptation and adjustment while studying abroad. However, according to the interview data, most of my participants perceived social interaction as one of the most difficult aspects of sociocultural adjustment. They commented that they felt discomfort making friends with local English students due to their low-level English-speaking ability, limited opportunities to mix with the British students in lessons, and different cultural values.

For example, James Li revealed that his poor spoken English made him anxious while communicating with his English peers:

> *I did not have any English friends. One important reason is that I am not confident with my English speaking. I feel anxious about communicating with English peers. Therefore, I think the biggest barrier to making friends with them is language difficulty. I did not understand what they were saying sometimes.* (James Li, Interview data, 2018*).*

Bob Zhang also found it hard to understand the native students' intonation and pronunciation. It was more difficult for him to understand them while they were speaking some slangs. Thus, he felt uncomfortable about socialising with the British students.

> *I felt anxious to talk to the native English students in school. Firstly, my speaking is not very fluent. Besides, their pure English intonation and pronunciation are difficult for me to understand because in China, I used to learn American English. The most difficult part is when they are using some slangs in speaking, I cannot understand a single word.* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

For James Li and Bob Zhang, language difficulty, especially poor spoken English affected their ability to socialise with their English peers.

However, from the data collected, the school environment was their main concern because there were too many Chinese students in the lessons, particular in maths classes, which meant, they had fewer opportunities to meet students from other cultures.

Vivi Wei reflected in her journal:

All of my friends are Chinese except one girl from Kim Haakstad. I think the main reason is that there are too many students from China. It is not surprising that we would like to make friends with people from the same country. However, students from Japan, Korea and Thailand are more willing to make friends with their European peers as they have fewer classmates from the same country. Another reason is that we do not have enough opportunities to communicate with English peers because I choose most courses where there are only Chinese students. Besides, boarding students make friends with those who stay in the school, while day students make friends with day students. Most native students are day students who go home every day. (Data from student reflective journal, October 2017)

James Li and Kathy Lai also complained that the larger number of Chinese students was the main reason affecting their socialising with students from other cultures.

Although I am studying in the UK, it seems that I am still in China. There are too many Chinese. But of course it is because I am studying math, economics and physics which are popular subjects for Chinese students. In my class, there are only Chinese peers. (James LI, Interview data, 2018)

I have more Chinese friends because in the mathematics and further maths lessons, the majority of my classmates are Chinese. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

Different cultural backgrounds and values were another important factor that hindered students interacting with their English peers.

For example, Bob Zhang was the only participant who had more opportunities to meet English peers as he studied geography, a class in which he was the only Chinese student. Therefore, luckily, he made more friends with the local students. However, he said that due to different cultural backgrounds and the English language barrier, there was a gap between him and his English friends.

I have both Chinese and English friends because I am studying geography. Few Chinese study this subject. I am the only Chinese student in the class. There are many local students,

so, I have to make friends with the locals. However, we are not that close. I mean we often have some chats when we meet, but you can't take the initiative to get into their lives. The interaction is relatively superficial, not deep…The reason is we have different cultural backgrounds and values. We behave differently. For example, sometimes I think they are too crazy. Well, I mean they are too active, and they play crazily. How can I put it? I find it hard to explain them. They love listening to pop music. They love to listen to very loud music in the library. We have different interests and different tastes." (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

The findings show that most Chinese students find it hard to move outside culture boundaries. Language was a major barrier that hindered their socialising with English peers. This is in line with many studies; for example, various researchers point out that language barriers can impede international students' attempts to make friends and interact with locals (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000; Barratt and Huba, 1994), causing them to experience feelings of isolation and loneliness. Cultural difference was another significant cause; for example, the participant Bob revealed that due to different cultural backgrounds and the difficulty of finding mutual interests, he found it hard to make close friends with his English peers in the Geography class. According to Hong Ding (2008), finding mutually interesting topics was a struggle for Chinese students while they were communicating with their English counterparts, and their social interaction with their English peers remained at the superficial level of daily greetings. However, the most serious reason is that as the majority of international students are Chinese, their studies and living environments do not provide them with enough opportunities to mix with students from other cultures. As pointed out by Hong Ding (2008), students have a narrow 'contact zone', which means that their circle of friends was made up of Chinese classmates.

6.4 Academic Challenges and Dilemmas

Although most students displayed positive attitudes towards their transition to UK schooling and considered it easier for them to succeed, they encountered a certain level of challenges and difficulties in the new learning environment. According to each participant's story, in comparing and contrasting their previous and current educational experiences, the data revealed that the participants experienced a dramatic shift in adjusting to differences in the UK system. For example, they transferred from a teacher-centred to a student-centred teaching approach, from a dependent learning style to an independent learning approach, from being in passive listening classrooms to active interaction classrooms. In addition, due to language difficulties and different exam styles, the participants

encountered challenges in studying their core subjects. The transition from a Chinese to an English education system is not an easy journey considering the great differences in the teaching and learning systems.

6.4.1 Experiencing a Different Learning Environment

All participants shared their cross-cultural academic experiences at the UK independent school during the interview. They expressed that they had encountered significant changes in terms of classroom nature, teaching styles, learning preferences, etc. According to the data, after entering MM School, the students in this study experienced a totally different classroom culture where the size of the class was small, the atmosphere was casual and relaxed, as well as the classroom being more student-centred than teacher-centred.

- *Class Size and Layout*

For example, James Li mentioned that the English school had much smaller class size than in Chinese school.

> *The classroom culture in the UK is very different from that in China. For example, the British class size is much smaller compared to a classroom in China. There are 2-15 students in one lesson depending on which subject you are studying. For example, if you are studying less popular subjects such as computer science, psychology, politics, etc., there are only 2-6 students in a class. However, if you are choosing popular subjects such as mathematics, physics, economics, business, and so on, there are about 15 students in one classroom. This figure is much smaller compared to a Chinese classroom of 50-60 regardless of what subjects you are learning.* (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

James Li also pointed out that the classroom layouts of British and Chinese schools were different. Students did not have a fixed classroom or fixed seats in the UK school; instead, they changed classroom from lesson to lesson and they were allowed to sit anywhere in the classroom. This was a totally different picture than in the Chinese schools.

> *In the UK, students do not have lessons in the same classroom. We move from one classroom to another depending on what subjects we learn. Students can choose to sit anywhere they want. The chairs and desks are movable which is convenient for the teacher*

and students to arrange different activities during the lesson. Conversely, in China, no matter what subjects students study, they stay in the same classroom in which all the chairs and desks are arranged in rows and each student has his/her fixed seat. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

- *Relaxing and Student-Centred Classroom*

In addition to classroom size and layout, the participants also felt shocked when they initially found the British classroom too informal and student-centred. They expressed that their English and European peers were allowed to interrupt the teacher in the classroom any time they wanted to share different views or ask questions, which in Chinese classroom would be considered as being rude to the teacher. In China, the classroom was more teacher-centred with strict rules whereby students were not allowed to interrupt the teacher unless they were asked to answer questions. Normally, students needed to sit quietly, listen to the teacher attentively and take down important notes.

> *It seems that the classroom in the UK school does not have a structure or rule. I mean, the atmosphere in the classroom is too flexible and relaxed. Students are allowed to talk with each other. We can ask questions anytime we want even sometimes when what we asked was not relevant to the subject that the teacher was teaching...I felt it was very relaxed the first few weeks after arriving at MM School, but I began to doubt the quality of teaching. I thought it was a bit waste of time when my English classmates asked too many questions, especially when what they asked was outside the topic. I began to expect the teacher to teach more knowledge instead of allowing us to ask more questions.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

Vivi Wei also shared a similar opinion. She considered it less stressful studying in a student-centred classroom in the UK, but she was worried that students interrupting teachers so often affected her concentration in the lesson as well as her understanding of the subject.

> *Wow, sometimes it is too free in the classroom where students are allowed to move from one seat to another, and they interrupt teachers quite often... I agree that I feel less stressful compared with the strict classroom atmosphere in China. However, sometimes I wish that my teacher could control the classroom more. I mean, students shouldn't be allowed to move around during the lesson, and they should only ask questions after the teacher*

finishes explaining the points... It is annoying that when I am listening carefully to the teacher so that I can understand the questions, suddenly, a student interrupts the teacher by asking a question or expressing a different opinion...It distracts me sometimes and it also hinders my understanding of the subject. I have a better understanding through listening to the teacher's explanation than from students' views. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018).

Bob Zhang noted the differences between asking questions and arguing with teachers in the classroom as experienced in Chinese and English education systems, respectively. He expressed that asking questions was encouraged in lessons and students were free to argue with their teacher in the UK school, while in China students were encouraged to ask questions after class as they were required to listen to the teacher attentively during lessons. Any argument with teachers in a classroom was considered disrespectful in China.

In the UK, it is very common for students to ask questions in lessons. A lot of English students prefer arguing with the teacher. For example, most of my English peers often ask questions even when they have already known the answers. Some students enjoy arguing with the teacher during the lessons even though they do not have a good answer. In China, we were not permitted to talk to each other in the classroom. We had to listen to the teacher attentively and take notes. Students were not allowed to ask questions freely, not to mention criticising or arguing with teachers like the English and European students in the classroom which was regarded as being disrespectful to the teacher in Chinese culture. Instead, the teacher would ask students questions to check if we understand the points. We were encouraged to ask questions individually after class or during the self-study period. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018).

From the above data, the participants encountered great changes in the British education environment with smaller class sizes, flexible class layouts, less stress and informal classes in which students were allowed to move around and interrupt the teacher freely. Similar findings were discovered in some studies which emphasised that international students encountered significant changes while doing undergraduate or postgraduate studies in Western countries such as the UK and US (Hengze and Zhu, 2012; Zhang, 2013; Wang, 2018).

6.4.2 Gaps in Modes of Learning

- *Passive Participation in the Classroom*

Many studies have considered Chinese students as passive learners where they are often reticent in foreign classrooms, reluctant to view peers as facilitators of learning, rarely volunteer but wait to be addressed by the teacher, display an apparent lack of critical-analytical skills, etc. (Jackson, 2002; Wang, 2006; Cross and Hitchcock, 2007). Classroom participation was another academic challenge facing the teenage Chinese students in the UK school.

I had attended parents meetings twice at MM School on behalf of my participants' parents, and I got the data from each subject teacher concerning students' school performance. Most teachers revealed that students were not active in lessons. For example, here are the extracts from my field notes

> *While talking to Vivi Wei's chemistry teacher, he said, 'Vivi has a good understanding of the topics. She picks up things quickly. However, she does not get involved during discussion time. She does not like asking questions. Although she explains to me that she knows the answer, it is important for her to speak more. Well, she can make a statement, or correct other students or express her opinion towards others' answers…but just not keep quiet.'* (Data from parents meeting, December 2017)

> *James Li's physics teacher also revealed that, 'He looks tired in my lesson…well, he should speak louder and ask more questions…he is just not participating in discussion…he enjoys learning on his own.'* (Data from parents meeting, December 2017)

In order to get more information about the students' classroom participation, I observed many lessons. From these observations, I found that most Chinese students were reticent, unwilling to ask the teacher questions, or reluctant to interact with the English peers during lessons.

From the field notes of my observation, in one economic lesson that I attended in January 2018, there were 17 students in the class, comprising five Chinese and 12 local students. The Chinese students all sat together and communicated with each other in Chinese; they rarely interacted with their English peers.

The economic teacher had a Hong Kong background, but she has been living in the UK since she was born. She does not speak Mandarin or Cantonese. English is her mother tongue. In the lesson, she used Power Point and explained the definitions of the key terms. Most local students asked questions when they did not understand. However, the Chinese students remained silent most of the time. They kept taking notes and wrote down every single word shown on Power Point.

While students were given tasks to work on, the Chinese students communicated in Chinese to finish the task. When one student encountered some questions that he/she did not understand, he/she would turn to their Chinese peer for help, who would explain the questions using their first language. Few of them asked the teacher, unlike their English peers who were actively asking the economics teacher whenever they met any puzzles or problems.

According to the data collected from the observation, we learn Chinese students are not used to the western classroom where students actively ask questions and participate in discussion. This could be related to Chinese traditional values. According to Cortazzi and Jin (1997) and Jackson (2002), Chinese students' reluctance in classroom participation relates to Chinese traditional cultures, as 'saving face' is an important element in Chinese traditional values. Most Chinese learners are worried about losing face or being laughed at if they make any mistakes in the classroom. They seldom volunteer to speak but wait for the teacher to ask them to do so. Wang (2018) also points out that Chinese students' cultural values and traditions, such as harmony, influenc their ways of learning and interaction. Many students tried to control their emotions, avoid conflict, and maintain inner harmony with their teachers and peers. Although my target students are young teenagers, they have been influenced by traditional values as their identity was constructed before they arrived in the UK. From the data, potentially, 'losing face' was one reason why students did not like asking questions in lessons; however, the language barrier and different teaching methods were two important factors affecting their interactions with the teachers and their English peers in the classrooms.

James Li told me

Mrs. S often chats with us in the lesson in order to help us practice speaking. But I seldom take the initiative to speak unless I was asked to express my ideas because if I volunteer to speak, if I make mistakes, I would feel embarrassed. Mrs S seldom named anyone to speak

in the class. Therefore, most of the time, I just listened instead of speaking. (Data from students' reflective journal, October 2017)

However, most participants revealed that their speaking was not competent enough for them to discuss any topics with their English peers. They did not have the confidence to address the teacher in class due to their low-level English proficiency. Another significant cause is the difference in teaching methods; they complained that they did not like asking the teacher questions because after asking the questions and getting explanations from the teacher, they still did not understand the points. Therefore, they rarely asked questions, whether in class or after class. Instead, they preferred asking their Chinese peers for help as they speak the same language and they share the same cultural background.

According to Kitty,

We have some support lessons which are called 'clinic'. We can go to 'clinic' when we have some questions. But I have never been there, and I believe most of my Chinese peers have never been to the clinic for help. Actually, I want to mention that if I cannot understand the subject in lessons taught by this teacher, I won't be able to understand it when the same teacher teaches me again during the clinic. I think it is because of his/her the teaching method or style. We don't understand the knowledge in class sometimes is because the way that the teacher delivers the knowledge is not helpful for us to understand. If it is the vocabulary problem, we can check the dictionaries, but if it is the teacher's way of teaching, then we should find another teacher or other ways to solve the problem. For example, I found it more effective to ask my Chinese peers for help. They can explain the subject more clearly. It is not only because they speak the same language with me but also because we have the same way of thinking. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, April 2018)

Students do not like asking questions in the lessons or after the class due to different teaching methods or styles. As revealed by the participant Kitty Lai who said she did not like asking questions either in class or after school as she did not like the teaching methods. This could be caused by the mismatch in their academic expectations to the reality of their new educational life (Smith and Khawaja, 2011), such as different teaching and learning paradigms, unfamiliarity with discourse norms, etc. In particular, cultural misunderstandings from faculty and classmates affect Chinese students' cross-cultural academic adaptation. As highlighted by Bryan and Viete (2009), international students can feel their own cultural values are not recognised or respected in the intercultural classroom. Therefore, it is

important that education institutions should be aware of the cultural differences and learning preferences, and understand the past educational experiences of the Chinese students (Wang, 2006).

- *Independent Learning Style*

In this study, the participants also mentioned the significant change from dependent learning in China to the independent learning approach in the UK classroom. They pointed out that independent learning is an important learning style in the UK; however, they preferred the teacher teaching them more knowledge about the subject instead of asking them to study alone or with other students in order to work out the questions.

For example, Kitty Lai pointed out that the teachers in the UK did not teach much in the lessons. Instead, they often gave time for students to work in a group.

> *It seems that our teachers in the UK don't teach us much during lessons. The teacher's role seems to act as a facilitator who organises activities in the classroom where students are encouraged to discuss the topics in pairs or in a group. The teacher is sitting there ready to answer any questions. It was different when I was studying in China. My teachers spent the whole lesson explaining the important points and questions to help us understand the subject. To be honest, I was more used to a dependent learning style. I preferred the teacher spending more time explaining the subject rather than letting us learn it by ourselves or with other classmates.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

James Li shared a similar opinion who complained that her physics teacher gave them work to do in the lesson and instructed them to check the answers themselves.

> *Sometimes, my physics teacher just gave us paper to do in lessons. The questions in the paper were brand new to the students; he had never taught them before. At the end of the lesson, he gave us the answers to check on our own. We could ask him questions if we did not understand. We could also discuss the questions with classmates to work them out. The teacher just wants us to learn the knowledge for ourselves. I found it challenging as I had so many questions I did not know how to work out. I felt embarrassed to ask him so many questions because I did not want to be considered a low leaner. Why can't he teach us the topic first and then give us work to do to check our understanding, just like my teachers did in China?* (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Vivi Wei was not accustomed to the independent learning approach and she was disappointed that Chinese students were considered as rote learners who preferred following the teachers rather than being critical. She complained that there was a misunderstanding about the Chinese students' learning style in that following the teacher does not mean that they lack critical thinking skills.

I am really not used to the independent learning approach in the UK. Our teachers spent less time teaching us. Most of the time, the lesson was led by students who were asked to work alone or in a group to work out the questions. We complained about it to the school but most teachers in the UK consider Chinese students' learning habit as rote learning and memorising which affects their independent and critical thinking. One of my teachers said that students in the UK are encouraged to challenge the teacher and express their own views; however, Chinese students are used to believing the teacher's answers or often follow the model answers. I was very upset to hear that. I believe a teacher's role is first to teach knowledge and then we could have our own opinion based on the subject he or she taught. When a student has nothing in his mind, how is he going to be critical? When I was in Chinese school, every subject teacher explained the knowledge to the students from chapter to chapter. I learned it quickly. We also expressed our own views when we had different opinions, and students pointed out a mistake when the teacher made one mostly after class or during study periods. We were not the so-called rote learners. We just prefer to learn knowledge from the teacher first and then become critical; if we find anything, we shared our view. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

From the above data, the participants experienced significant challenges in the British modes of learning after switching from the Chinese to the UK education system. They were not used to asking questions in lessons due to both language and cultural factors and they were considered rote learners when they expected the teachers to teach them more knowledge in the classroom rather than learning it for themselves or from other students.

6.4.3 Challenges in Studying Core Subjects

The participants not only experienced significant cultural differences in the academic study environment, but also encountered challenges and dilemmas in studying their core subjects due to language barriers, different teaching and learning approaches and the different exam styles in the UK education system. For example, in my study, the data show that the participants had difficulties in

studying certain subjects such as economics, further mathematics, and physics. Vocabulary was a significant factor affecting their understanding of the terms and definitions in the subjects. They had difficulty in writing essays and reports. The data also showed that different exam structures and requirements hindered their ability to get good results in the academic subjects.

Because of the language barrier, most Chinese students had problems studying certain subjects. One area where there were relatively fewer problems was pure mathematics because their mathematical understanding was usually quite strong, and they did not need much vocabulary in this subject. However, in all other subjects, students found it difficult to meet the academic requirements particularly when studying economics, and vocabulary was the main problem. For example, due to the lack of vocabulary, participants found it a challenge to understand most definitions and concepts particularly in terms of the study of economics. Besides this, it was a big challenge when they wrote essays, due to their lack of English proficiency, different writing styles and scant knowledge of the economics topics.

I think economics is the most difficult subject as it requires a higher level of English proficiency. We have to write a lot of essays on this subject. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, February 2018)

I normally get a B, and sometimes C in business. I think it is much easier to get higher marks in pure mathematics, when I normally get A. Although I like writing, I cannot get a higher mark in business or geography. I think it is because of the structure of writing. It is different from the Chinese way of writing. And the way of thinking is different; for example, you have to know how to use examples, or a case study to support your main point in the essay. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, February 2018)

Economics is the most difficult subject. I guess it is because that I do not understand a lot of the concepts and definitions. I have to memorise many definitions but I actually do not quite understand them. I never learned this subject before I came to study in the UK. When I first learned economics here, it was brand new for me. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Although Kitty Lai was the only one who revealed she had fewer language problems, she still considered economics as the most difficult subject of her A-level studies.

I think economics must be the most challenging subject. In fact, I have learned three subjects, maths, further maths and economics during my IGCSE studies. I have fewer difficulties than those who never learned them before. But yes, I find A-level course is much harder than the IGCSE. There are more new and complicated vocabularies, which takes me a long time to understand some concepts of the subject. I sometimes find it hard to understand the questions because of the lack of vocabulary. Responding to questions is difficult as well; we have to get a deep understanding of the definitions, the concepts, and apply a lot of cases to explain and show how you understand them. It requires me accumulating a lot of knowledge in this area which takes time. And the knowledge that we are taught in school is limited. We should spend a lot of time to read books, newspapers, and journals to enrich our knowledge in this field. However, I don't really like reading extra materials independently. In China, my teachers would teach all the topics in class. So, I think economics is the most difficult subject for me to get a good mark in at the moment. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, April 2018).

In addition to economics, which was the most difficult subject for the participants, they also found it a challenge in other subjects such as further mathematics, physics and chemistry particularly when they studied the subjects further and there were more new vocabularies. For example, Kitty Lai shared,

Well, when I was in Year 12, I thought mathematics will never be a challenge for me as I always get scores of more than 90% of the scores in all the exams at school. However, when I moved on to Year 13, I began to study further mathematics, and I found it is not as easy as I expected. Statistics and mechanics are becoming more and more difficult as I study further because there are more definitions which requires a higher command of English." (Kitty Lai, Interview data, January 2019)

James Li also considered physics and chemistry difficult especially when he had to write reports on experiments or when he had to deal with some exam questions that required him to explain how he understood the concepts.

Chemistry and physics are not as easy as Chinese students always thought before studying in the UK. Actually, they are difficult. For example, in physics, my weakest area is waves and electricity. There are many definitions and experiments. I think it is hard to get good results in this paper. I always lose many points on some questions which require us to explain some concepts or to describe a feature ...Chemistry is more difficult. I chose

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Chemistry at the first term of Year 12 as I thought it would be interesting and easy, but the fact is that I could not understand a word in lessons. I dropped it quickly after learning it for a few weeks. (James Li, Interview data, January 2019)

Although Vivi Wei is very strong in mathematics, further mathematics and physics, and she always achieved over 90% in exams in each subject, she considered it difficult to get high mark in chemistry due to the different exam styles and question responses.

Well, although I understand what the teacher says in lessons, the thing is that I never get A in chemistry. I don't know why I lose a lot of marks in the exam. I guess different exam structures and requirements may be the factor. For example, in the chemistry paper, we were required to explain why the [Cr (H2O)6]3+ ion is coloured. I thought I gave the correct answers. But I still did not get good mark as I did not answer all the key points and my teacher said the structure of my answering the question is not good. My teacher said I needed to improve my exam skills which is how you actually answer the questions. It is different in the UK. You have to show how you understand the question, the steps, process, not just the final answer…Anyway, I did not have confidence to improve it and achieve an A. So, I decided to drop it and focus on mathematics, further mathematics and physics. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018).

A geography teacher at the school, whilst we were both attending a parents evening, reflected on what he perceived as one of the hardest challenges for Chinese students:

Exam style like question responses is also a big challenge. Mathematics is quite straightforward. Some physics is straightforward but not all of physics. But if you are doing geography, or you are doing biology or you are doing economics, you will get essays to write. Writing an essay in a style with the appropriate structure can be a challenge as well. (Interview data from teacher, 2018).

The data show most participants faced challenges in studying certain subjects such as economics, further mathematics (statistics and mechanics), physics (waves and electricity) and chemistry. Vocabulary is the biggest problem because there are many special terms and definitions. It takes time to build up vocabulary in a language, especially the technical vocabulary in academic subjects. Vocabulary difficulties hinder students' understanding of their academic subject studies. This happens when students' current range of vocabulary and grasp of complex sentence structures are not at the

level of competency required to understand the meanings. New words and unfamiliar expressions generate difficulty for them in the lesson. This finding was in line with many studies. For example, in Wan's (2011) study, many Chinese students felt confused by unfamiliar words used in lectures or seminars and they found that they were unable to come up with appropriate words when they tried to answer questions or participate in discussion. Shi (2007) also points out that Chinese students might have limited access to specialist vocabulary in their subject areas, which makes it more challenging while studying their subjects in English in a foreign country.

In addition to the language barrier, different exam styles and question responses and previous learning experience are also important factors affecting students getting good marks in their academic study. Since students from different cultures have different experiences of learning and teaching systems in their home countries (Hofstede, 1991), it would be a big challenge for them when they have to study a subject in a new way with new requirements, especially learning it in a foreign language. Most Chinese students said that they faced a challenge when using the standard writing requirements and citations in essay writing because the requirements and structure in Chinese education were so different (Chen, 1999). Therefore, it is not surprising that most of my participants complained that they lost many points in their responses in some subjects because they failed to follow the requirements and the structures of the exams.

6.5 Conclusion

From the data collected, most teenage Chinese students transferred to the UK secondary school to experience a different education. They assumed that education in the UK would be less stressful; more subject options would be available, and it would be a better opportunity for them to succeed due to less-competitive university admissions. However, although the participants had positive expectations of UK education and considered it an alternative route to success before transferring to the UK, they all encountered significant challenges and dilemmas both in their daily lives and academic studies. In their daily lives, for example, students found it hard to get used to English food and eating habits upon their arrival; they felt discomfort after moving out of the Chinese community; and they encountered difficulties engaging more fully with local students or students from other nationalities in the school, mainly due to cultural and linguistic factors.

In addition, the data also reflected that students experienced many difficulties in their academic studies as they encountered dramatic differences in the academic environment in the UK. For example, they were not familiar with the new learning environment in which the classrooms were more student-

centred than teacher-centred, and they encountered gaps in modes of learning as they were not used to studying in an active dialogic classroom, and they found it difficult to adapt to the independent learning approach in the UK school. This could be the results of different teaching and learning paradigms, unfamiliarity with discourse norms, cultural misunderstandings from faculty and classmates and so forth. In addition, most students found it hard to understand lessons and communicate with their teachers or peers which affected them studying certain subjects with many specific terms and definitions, such as economics, chemistry, physics, etc. Moreover, different exam styles and question responses and previous learning experiences were also important factors affecting students' ability to get good marks in their academic studies. Thus, the data in this study show that the transition from a Chinese to an English education system is not an easy journey, considering the great differences in the teaching and learning systems.

In this chapter, I have investigated the reasons why teenage Chinese students chose to study in the UK at such a young age. In addition to investigating the reasons, I have also analysed the challenges Chinese young learners faced in cultural adaptation in their daily lives and academic studies while studying in a UK independent school. The next chapter will focus on discussing Chinese EAL students' linguistic challenges.

Chapter 7 Teenage Chinese EAL Students and Linguistic Challenges

7.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research question concerning the reasons Chinese students are challenged learners in relation to linguistic adaptation while studying in the UK. The language challenge is seen as a major concern in terms of class participation and subject learning and academic attainments in the UK education system alongside socio-cultural adaptation in mainstream UK society. Many studies share that most Chinese students obtain a good level of English proficiency as shown by their IELTS (International English Language Testing System) scores and that satisfy the language requirements for the UK border and educational institutions. However, they feel it is hard to remain confident once they set foot in the UK. They are then found to be incompetent in communication, left out in class, and disadvantaged in their attempts to earn good academic credentials. They have difficulty in listening, understanding the lectures, and communicating with their teachers or peers, and they become frustrated when doing assignments such as writing essays, doing coursework, etc. (Edwards, Ran and Li, 2007). This study indicats that the participants encountered great challenges in communicating with their teachers and peers, and they found it difficult to understand the core A-level subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms. This was mainly due to their previous English learning experiences, as the audiolingual and grammar-translation methods did not provide them with adequate opportunities to practise English speaking and listening skills for real life communication; moreover, they lacked English proficiency in specialised vocabulary, which hindered their academic study.

7.2 Foreign Language Learning in China

7.2.1 Audiolingual Classrooms

In this study, my participants were taught in the audiolingual classrooms during their time in primary schools in China. For example, Vivi Wei shared her previous English learning experience and the language barrier she encountered when she first arrived in the UK. The extract below is what I learnt from her experience. Audiolingualism was a popular approach in English language teaching in primary schools in China where students were given opportunities to repeatedly listen, imitate, read and write English sentence patterns. She considered it a good way to learn vocabulary and grammar systematically, but she expressed her disappointment with the English textbooks because the content failed to suit her linguistic needs for real-life communication.

English became a compulsory subject for me since primary Year 1. Our English teachers just followed the national curriculum using English textbooks to teach us from unit to unit. The English books were published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press which were the compulsory textbooks in all primary schools in my province. I remember that during lessons we were listening to a recoded dialogue in the textbook twice, then, the teacher read the dialogue from sentence to sentence, and we imitated what she read. After reading, she taught us the key English words and expressions, requiring us to read after her again and again. At the end of the lessons, we were required to copy all the English words taught into our homework book at home, with each word written at least 100 times. In the next lesson, we were asked to do the role play of the dialogue. We worked in pairs or in a group depending on how many characters were included in the dialogues. After finishing teaching one unit, students were required to recite the dialogues and the teacher would ask some students to recite it in the class to check if we had learned it by heart. (Vivi Wei, Reflective journal, 2018).*

She continued to share her experience in the reflective journal, revealing that she had been taught in audiolingual classes for about six years during which she had many opportunities to imitate and role-play the English dialogues. However, the outdated contents of the textbook failed to improve her English speaking skills for real life conversations.

We had been taught in this way from Year 1 to Year 6 in primary school, learning language points from unit to unit concerning different topics about greetings, colours, animals, dates, sports, weathers, as well as grammatical language points such as tense, comparison, plural forms etc. The characteristic of English learning during this stage was imitating, reading loudly, role playing, and memorising. I admit that I built a solid foundation for vocabulary and grammar learning in this way, yet my English-speaking ability was not improved. The reason was that although we had many opportunities to read English through reading and role-playing the dialogues, it was not enough for us to improve our speaking as the contents in the English textbooks were too outdated and boring which did not suit our needs in daily communication. As a result, I could read English fluently with beautiful pronunciation, but I could not put what I had learned into practice. When I first arrived in the UK, I could barely talk to the British people although I understood what they were talking about. I could not express myself freely using the vocabulary I learned previously. (Vivi Wei, Reflective journal, 2018)

Language is considered to be a system of phonemes, morphemes, words, structures and sentences, but the primary element is oral speech (Yang, 2018). Audiolingual method, the primary focus of which is listening and speaking, is still widely adopted in the teaching of English in classrooms in China, especially in state primary schools (Jin and Cortarzzi, 2006; Yang, 2017). A large number of teachers believe the audiolingual method can give students opportunities to practice English because this method emphasises the importance of sentence patterns which requires students to repeatedly imitate, read, recite and even learn it by rote; in this way students can systematically input what they have learned (Yu, 2016; Yang, 2018). The ultimate goal of imitation and memorisation in audiolingualism is to enable the students to use the sentence patterns contained in dialogues they commit to memory in a creative manner. There is an assumption that substantial memorisation of language examples might contribute to the eventual creative use of that language, as reflected by a well-known Chinese saying, 'When one memorises 300 Tang poems, one is able to compose poems of one's own.' (Gu, 2003). Therefore, in this study, the data indicated that my participants were taught in the audiolingual English classrooms during primary school where they learned the language systematically through intensive oral drilling of sentence patterns and memorisation. Learning English in this way helped students learn basic vocabulary and grammar rules, yet it failed to improve their speaking skills for communication in real-life situations.

7.2.2 Grammar-Translation Classrooms

In addition to the audiolingual approach, grammar-translation was another popular method in English teaching in Chinese schools, especially in secondary schools. The data from this study indicated that the teaching of vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension took up most of the class hours, as vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehensions were an important part of the *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao*. The participants revealed that during the lesson, the English teacher spent most of the time explaining the text, going through the key words, phrases and grammatical points listed in the textbook. For example, both Vivi Wei and James Li reflected that grammar-translation was the most widely adopted approach in English classrooms in Chinese secondary school. They considered grammar-translation a good method to help them learn grammar and vocabulary systematically because learners must first master the basics and only when this is accomplished, are they in a position to use what they have mastered in a creative manner (Brick, 1991: 154).

The most widely used English teaching method in Chinese state schools was the grammar-translation approach. My English teacher spent most of the time in a lesson using Chinese

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to explain and analyse patterns of grammar and linguistic structures. Meanwhile, students were listening attentively and taking notes for later memorisation. We were given a load of multiple-choice exercises to do after class in order to train us to have a high level of accuracy in grammatic-related questions in the English exams. Therefore, during secondary school, I spent a lot of time learning new vocabulary, reciting texts, and doing grammar exercises without having any opportunities to practice speaking in the school lessons. Thanks to this kind of English teaching, I built a solid foundation for vocabulary and grammar which was basic but important for the mastery of language. However, my English speaking was neglected in school. I guess that is why I am not confident in speaking to native English speakers. When I first arrived in the UK, speaking was a great barrier for me. I felt discomfort communicating with English peers and my teachers. Although I had a large vocabulary and understand all the grammatical rules and sentence structures, I could not speak English naturally and fluently. (Vivi Wei, Reflective journal, 2018)

James Li also showed that his English teacher mainly focused on teaching grammar and reading in lessons aiming to prepare them to get high marks in the important exams *Zhongkao* and *Gaokao.*

As grammar and reading comprehension were the dominant parts in the Zhongkao and Gaokao exams, my English teacher mainly focused on teaching grammar and reading in lessons. In order to ensure we obtained high marks in the exams, the teacher taught us grammatical rules and structures in each lesson. Even while teaching reading, our English teacher mainly analysed the sentence structures and grammar points from sentence to sentence in the reading text. For example, the English teacher started the lesson by explaining the new words listed at the front page of each unit. Then, she asked students to take turns to read the reading passage loudly in class. After that, she began to explain the difficult points in the reading text. We were also asked to translate some sentences in the reading text to show if we understood it or not. Students were asked to make new sentences using the given words or phrases in the text. All English lessons were delivered in this way at my secondary school in China. The aim of teaching was to make students familiar with the grammar points and test formats so that they could give as many correct answers as possible and achieve a high score. Leaning English in this way, I think I am good at grammar and reading comprehension because I achieved full marks in English in the Zhongkao. I also obtained 7.5 in reading in IELTS which is considered as a good score. However, this is not enough for me to meet the language needs in my academic studies. I

still found it hard to understand the teachers in lessons. I had difficulty in writing experimental reports in chemistry lessons. (James Li, Reflective journal, 2018)

This above data indicated that during secondary school in China, the participants were mainly taught in grammar-translation classroom in which the teacher spent the majority of class hours explaining grammar rules and analysing language points from the text. It seemed to be a good method to help students learn vocabulary and grammar rules systematically and achieve good grades in exams. However, one disadvantage of the grammar-translation approach is that it does not create enough opportunities for students to practice English speaking and apply what is taught in real life communication. In addition, when learning English in Chinese secondary schools, students were loaded with grammar lessons, and developed a strong awareness of this aspect. In this case, they considered grammar the most important aspect in English language learning. They were very focused on avoiding grammatical mistakes. However, this concern about grammar seems directly to inhibit speaking skills. Bob Zhang and James LI revealed that they worried too much about the grammatical mistakes while speaking English which greatly affected their fluency and communication while having conversations with their English peers or teachers.

I am afraid of making grammar mistakes in speaking. Before speaking, I often conceive the words in correct sentences with correct grammar. When I made a mistake in speaking, I tried to correct it to make my speaking better. That is why I could not speak fluently and naturally while talking to my classmates or teachers in the UK school. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Before I speak in English, I need to think in my own language first and then transfer it to English using the correct grammar. I sometimes care too much about grammar and try to avoid making mistakes. However, this greatly affects my fluency in speaking. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

7.2.3 Extra Classrooms Outside School

All my participants were highly motivated to improve their English speaking skills since they made their decision to study abroad. Knowing that the English lessons in school were not enough to prepare them to study in the UK, they attended extra English lessons in English training schools during weekends and summer holidays.

From the extract below, Vivi Wei attended these extra English lessons during weekend and holidays in order to improve her English for overseas study. From her narrative, she was satisfied with the English lessons taught in a communicative approach which provided her with great opportunities to practise listening and speaking English. In addition, there were a wide range of audio and visual English materials which were more interesting than those taught in the secondary school. However, due to her heavy study schedule in the school, she had limited time to attend the extra English lessons before transferring to study in the UK.

I was taught by a Chinese teacher who graduated from a good university in the UK with a Master's degree in education. In her lessons, we listened to different kinds of English materials and watched various English videos, which made up for the limited audio materials in our school textbooks. The teacher played the recording or video in class for students to watch for about 5-10 minutes. Then, we were asked to discuss the topics with the classmates. The teacher would select some of us to answer questions and retell the story. Sometimes, we were encouraged to imitate the conversations in the video and then made up our own plots in our spare time and acted out the plots in the next lesson. I remembered that once we watched a short video from a famous American TV series called Friends, and then we created our plots based on the video and acted out our plots in the lessons. I think the lessons in the training school were more interesting and innovative than those in my lower secondary school. I developed my interests in speaking greatly and improved a lot. However, there was limited time for me to attend the extra lessons due to the heavy study load in my lower secondary school; therefore, I did not have enough time to improve my English proficiency for academic study in the UK school. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang and James Li also attended extra English lessons outside school during weekends and holidays. Unlike Vivi Wei, they had a different learning experience. They joined the intensive IELTS training lessons in an English training institute. They were taught by four different Chinese teachers who graduated in Chinese universities with Bachelor's degrees in English. The teaching was similar to that in their secondary school: exam-oriented. The teachers gave them a list of English words and vocabulary to memorise. In addition, they were trained to become familiar with the test formats in listening, speaking, writing and reading in order to get high marks in IELTS.

For example, Bob Zhang shared that,

My mum arranged for me to study IELTS in an English training institute as she thought I would need IELTS for my future university application and she also considered that studying IELTS would improve my English proficiency for overseas study. I was studying listening, speaking, reading and writing through practicing the past papers. There were four teachers teaching us different areas. They were English majors who had graduated in Chinese universities. I studied six hours a day every Sunday. We were given thousands of words to memorise every week as our teachers considered those vocabularies were important to help us understand and answer the exam questions. The teaching method was similar to that in the school, but we did more intensive training in four areas. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

James Li had similar experience:

I studied IELTS before coming to the UK. I studied in a famous English training centre in my city. My English teachers were Chinese but they were English majors. I had IELTS lessons studying four areas with different teachers for six hours at weekends. In the summer holiday, I entered the IELTS training lessons from Monday to Friday, studying four hours per day. We did a lot of past paper and practiced answering different questions. The most difficult part was that we were required to memorise a lot of words. I couldn't do it and I did not find it helpful in the exams because what I memorised did not appear in the exams. I could not fully apply what I memorised during the actual exams. However, I agree that I improved my reading skills as my reading teacher taught us very useful skills to locate the answers in the passage. Anyway, I still think attending the extra lessons was necessary for me as we had limited hours for English lessons at school. However, it was not enough for me to meet language proficiency for daily communication and academic studies in the UK, at least I built a basic foundation in English learning. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Kitty Lai had a different English learning experience than the other three participants as she was studying in an international school in China. The majority of the English lessons were taught by both Chinese bilingual teachers and English native speakers. More emphasis was put on improving students listening and speaking skills rather than grammar and reading comprehensions; therefore, the communicative approach was widely adopted in the classroom. In addition, many English activities and events were held to give opportunities for students to practice English in school. Being taught in

this environment, Kitty Lai could speak English fluently and naturally with the English native speakers. She revealed that she did not meet any language barrier in communication with her English peers and teachers in MM School and she was considered good a English speaker in the UK. However, she admitted that she was poor in grammar and sentence structures as she did not learn grammar rules systematically in her international school in China, which affected her essay writings in A-level subjects.

As my school is an international school in China, English is a very important subject for all students. We had English lessons every day taught by both Chinese and English bilingual teachers as well as English native speakers from America or Canada. Our school paid great attention to students' listening and speaking skills. We spent a lot of time listening to American and British English from recordings or videos. In the lessons, we had many opportunities to practice English as the class size was small. Retelling stories was very common in English class. Our English teachers often required us to retell the story we had read or watched in English in the class. In addition, our school organised many English speaking activities every month such as drama performance, English talk shows, English singing competitions, and so forth to give us many opportunities to practice our English. Because of my previous learning experience, I do not have any problems in communicating with my English classmates and teachers. Actually, most people in the UK comment that my English is very good, which makes me feel very proud of myself. However, I am not good at grammar. I often made grammatical mistakes in writing. I did not learn grammar systematically previously in China. This bothered me a lot in my studies because my economics teachers often corrected my grammatical mistakes in essay writing and my EAL teachers also corrected me a lot in my IELTS writing tasks. (Kitty Lai, Reflective journal, 2018)"*

In this study, while analysing the participants' previous English learning experiences as well as their language difficulties, the data showed that the widely adopted approach to English language teaching in China is a combination of the grammar-translation method and audiolingualism, which, according to Hu (2002: 93), is characterised by systematic and detailed study of grammar, extensive use of cross-linguistic comparison and translation, memorisation and structural patterns and vocabulary, painstaking effort to form good verbal habits, an emphasis on written language and a preference for literary classics. Learning in the audiolingual and grammar-translation classrooms, my participants built a solid foundation in vocabulary and grammar rules, but they failed to improve their English speaking proficiency for communication both in daily life and academic studies. Knowing the

limitations of the English teaching in schools, they took extra English lessons outside schools during weekends and holidays to prepare their overseas studies before coming to the UK.

7.3 Second Language Learning in the UK

7.3.1 English Medium Instruction Classrooms

After arriving in the UK, all subjects were taught through English medium instruction. In the case of my participants, they all started their English learning from an early age and most of them also attended additional English training lessons to prepare them for their studies abroad. However, regarding their transition from China to the UK, they have all shared that they are struggling with English as it is very challenging to engage with the English medium of instruction all the time. This was reflected by one of the class teachers I interviewed who pointed out the language barrier is the greatest challenge for students whose first language is not English to study in the English medium instruction classroom:

> *The major problem is always going to be the language base. This is the greatest challenge for everyone who comes here learning all subjects with the English medium instruction, especially if it is not their native language.* (Data from teachers, February 2018).

In this study, the data shows that when learning unfamiliar and complex subject knowledge in English medium instruction contexts, student cognitive capacity was challenged by both the subject content as well as the language. Most students reported that unfamiliar words and complicated concepts prevent them from understanding the important content delivered in the English medium instruction classroom or digesting the information provided in their textbooks.

For example, Vivi Wei wrote in her journal about the language barrier in her English medium instruction lessons:

> *Studying in the UK, learning all the core subjects such as mathematics, further mathematics, physics and economics in English is a challenge for me. The biggest difficulty I meet in English medium classrooms is that I cannot understand what the teacher said in the lessons. I can understand most English words, but not the meaning. I mean I cannot understand the main points. There are many vocabularies with the specific terms or concepts in each subject which I never learned previously. These terms make it more difficult for me to understand the lessons, particularly in economics and physics lessons.*

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Sometimes, I cannot digest the information in the textbooks as it is written in English. (Vivi Wei, Reflective journal, October 2017).

James Li also shared similar ideas, revealing that his English deficiency as well as the English way of thinking affected his understanding of the subjects.

In the lessons, I could not understand a lot of key terms because there were many new words which were complicated to me. The teacher explained them to me, but I still did not understand them. English medium instruction is actually a big challenge for many international Chinese students especially when we are learning some subjects that we are not familiar with. We not only have the language problem but also find it difficult to understand the content in the English ways of thinking. I mean we might work out questions or understand a point in different ways. Take mathematics, for example: Chinese students work out the mathematics questions differently from their English peers and teachers. Thus, in the English medium instruction lessons, when all the subjects were taught in the English language and with the English ways of thinking, it is a big challenge for us. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang shared that being inadequate in listening comprehension skills meant he failed to catch important points delivered in the lessons. He revealed that studying all the subjects through English medium instruction, he could not understand the content of the lesson sufficiently, and he failed to catch the key points or understand the tasks in the academic subject due to his insufficient English competence.

All the subjects are taught in English, but due to my low language proficiency especially my poor listening skills, I could not fully understand what the teachers taught in class. To be frank, it was very challenge for me for the first few months when I arrived in the UK. I could hardly understand my teachers. I mean, I knew what they were talking about, but I couldn't catch the important points delivered in the class. Thus, I was not able to finish my tasks to a high standard. If lessons were taught in Chinese or bilingually, I would had learned and understood all the topics. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

By comparison, Kitty Lai was the only participant who thought her English was good enough for everyday communication and it was only a challenge when learning some subjects. Her English is

better than other participants because she had been studying in an international school where all the subjects were taught through English medium instruction.

She told me,

Most people encounter language difficulty. But for me, it is not a problem because I had been studying in the international school in China for two years before I came here. In my previous school, all the subjects were taught in English by native English teachers. And I had learnt English since an early age. I have been used to communicating with people in English. So, when I am in the UK, I can communicate fluently with my teachers and the English peers and I am used to studying in the English medium instruction classrooms. However, one thing I have to mention is that some teachers do not like my American accent. They always correct me while I am speaking American English. I also admit that my English is not good enough for academic study, particularly for studying those subjects which require a good command of English proficiency. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, April 2018)

From the above data, due to their inadequate English proficiency, most participants encountered great challenges studying their A-level subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms in the UK, which hindered their understanding of the subject contents.

7.3.2 Content and Language Integrated Learning Classrooms

Although the majority of the participants encountered challenges studying all subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms in the UK, they all reflected that they improved their English listening ability and enlarged vocabularies especially subject related vocabularies through content and language integrated learning.

Vivi Wei shared that studying in the UK, she was learning content in other subjects such as physics or economics through the medium of English while at the same time learning English by studying a content-based subject.

In the UK classroom, I use English to learn my core subjects such as mathematics, further mathematics, geography, and economics. I develop my understanding of a subject gradually and learn English at the same time. Although it is challenge for me to understand

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all the contents, I have enlarged my English vocabulary greatly. For example, I have learned many English words related to the subjects such as economics, physics and further mathematics which I never learned previously. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

Kitty Lai demonstrated that she learned many academic vocabularies through studying her A-level subjects.

Different subjects and different topics use particular words and phrases. I learned many academic vocabularies which are not always used in everyday language through studying my A-level subjects in the UK. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang shared similar views that through content and English integrated learning, he had made considerable progress in listening skills and leaned many subject-related vocabularies, although he did not improve his understanding of the subject contents.

Although I did not make much improvement in understanding the core subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms, I have improved my listening skills greatly, and learned many subject-related vocabularies through the academic lessons as all subjects were taught by English speakers. I believe being exposed to English listening every day in the lessons helps students learn the language. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

7.4 Bilingual Learning Experience

7.4.1 Subtractive Learning Scenarios

Most participants encountered challenge in studying the core A-level subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms. From the data, both the class teachers and the students considered the English barrier was the main factor hindering her progress in their studies. In case of this, the class teachers suggested they improve English proficiency as much as possible by speaking and using English all the time instead of speaking their home language.

James Li shared his views in the interview, pointing out that his physics teacher always required Chinese students to speak English during lessons as he considered it a good way to improve their English proficiency and thus help them understand the physics lessons.

My physics teacher is not happy when we speak Chinese with our Chinese peers in lessons. He always says, 'English, please'. He keeps telling us that speaking English all the time is the best way to improve English. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

However, in the 'English-only' classroom, James Li had difficulty in comprehending exam questions. He mentioned that he was not able to fully understand the questions, or he sometimes misunderstood the questions due to his inadequate language skills. He also mentioned that he could not use English to answer the questions in detail, which caused him to get low grades in the tasks or tests.

However, my physics teacher's 'English-only' suggestion is not effective because improving speaking does not help us understand the subject contents. Without Chinese translation or explanation from my Chinese peers, I could not fully understand the exam questions. Sometimes, I even misunderstood some questions after the teacher explained it in English to me. It was also a big challenge for me while answering the questions as I could not answer them in detail due to my English deficiency. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang and Vivi Wei also had negative views of the 'English-only' policy. They pointed out that there were too many complicated terms and concepts which they could not fully understand in English. Without being permitted to discuss the topics with their Chinese peers in Chinese, they had to look up new words or vocabulary items in a dictionary and then translate them into Chinese, which was time-consuming and ineffective.

My physics teacher does not allow us to talk in Chinese which makes it hard for us to have a better understanding of the contents taught in the lessons. English is not our first language, so we cannot comprehend or digest all the content delivered in English, especially when we encounter some complex terms. For example, when we were learning the electricity topic, we came across many complicated English vocabularies. We had to waste a lot of time on looking in the dictionary to check the Chinese translation, and sometimes the translation was not accurate. It would be much easier if we could talk in Chinese with the Chinese students. Some Chinese students were very good at physics and English. If we could ask them for explanation, it would be more effective than finding the translation in the dictionary on our own. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Only speaking English in the classroom does not help us understand the subject being taught. I understand that the teacher would like us to improve our English in this way, but it is not just about the language. Our aim in the lessons is to learn the subject. (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

7.4.2 Additive Learning Scenarios

Studying in English medium instruction classrooms was a big challenge for the participants to understand the subject content which greatly hindered their progress in their academic studies. Knowing that the target language only was not an effective way to help them understand what the teacher taught, Chinese students sought bilingual assistance from their Chinese peers in school as well as attending lessons elsewhere with bilingual teachers.

For example, Kitty Lai commented that bilingual teaching or assistance helped her understand mathematics questions quickly and effectively; therefore, she often discussed mathematics questions and tasks with her Chinese classmates in class.

Only speaking English in lessons is not an effective way for international students to comprehend the subject content. I understand the complicated mathematics questions more quickly with a bilingual explanation from my Chinese classmates. Actually, I sometimes ignored the teacher's 'English-only' suggestion and discussed the questions with my friends in Chinese during mathematics lessons. (Kitt Lai, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang preferred asking his Chinese peers for help when he did not understand a specific definition or when he failed to catch the meaning of the content delivered by the teacher.

I often asked my Chinese friend for an explanation who is very good at both English and physics when I can't understand some specific terms or when I can't catch the meaning from my teacher. It helps me have a deeper understanding of the key points. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018).

In addition to seeking bilingual assistance from their Chinese peers, the participants also joined extra one-to-one lessons with bilingual subject teachers. For example, Vivi attended online lessons with a

Chinese physics teacher who previously studied A-levels in a UK independent school and also obtained a degree in a science-related subject at Imperial College London. Vivi shared that during the lesson, the Chinese physics teacher began explaining a concept or a technical term in English and then she switched to Chinese to explain the concept again, which helped her understand the content both in English and Chinese. She commented that code-switching was the best way to prevent disturbance or non-understanding as well as to ensure effective and accurate instruction. Using Chinese to teach key conceptual knowledge helped her understand the points easily. For example, she revealed in the interview that,

> *I join physics tutoring online once a week. My teacher is Chinese and did an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering at Imperial College London. She obtained four A* grades in mathematics, further mathematics, physics and chemistry in her A-level exams. I think she is a brilliant teacher because she is not only good at the physics subject but also good at English. During teaching, she often uses both Chinese and English. For example, she first explains the point in English and then she switches to Chinese to explain the point again. After studying with her, I always have a deep understanding of the subject. I think the code-switching teaching method is an effective way to avoid misunderstanding the concepts and ensure effective and accurate instruction. I mean, sometimes we might misunderstand the meaning of a concept or terms while using a second or foreign language.* (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

7.5 Conclusion

In this study, the data indicated that the participants were taught in the audiolingual and grammar-translation English classrooms while in primary and secondary schools, where they learned the language systematically through intensive oral drilling of sentence patterns and memorisation, as well as grammar exercise training. Learning English using audiolingual and grammar-translation approaches helped students learn basic vocabulary and grammar rules, yet it failed to improve their speaking skills as these approaches did not create enough opportunities for students to practise speaking English and apply what was taught to real-life communication.

Thus, the deficit in the English language was a barrier on their way to academic success particularly in terms of studying subjects which require a higher command of English in the English medium instruction classrooms in UK schools. In this study, most participants reported that they encountered great challenges in understanding the important content delivered by the English-speaking teachers in

the classroom, especially when they met complicated terms and concepts in the A-level subjects. They also revealed that due to poor speaking skills they failed to communicate with their teachers and English peers effectively in the classroom.

This finding is in line with many studies. For example, much of the literature has identified that the lack of English competence is perceived as a major obstacle to a Chinese student's academic success (Huntley, 1993; Sun and Chen, 1999; Wan, 2001). Some studies also show that students are dissatisfied with the knowledge they have gained when English is used as a medium of instruction because they fail to understand key points in the lectures (Huang, 2009; Chang, 2010; Tatzl, 2011). Limited vocabulary and slow reading speeds hinder their understanding of the learning content (Chuang, 2010). Chen (1999) reflects that students' low-level language proficiency impacts on their understanding of lectures, assignment writing, and the ability to ask questions in class, which greatly affects their attainment in academic study. Edwards, Ran and Li (2007) reveal that due to the language barrier, Chinese students do not have the adequate listening and speaking skills to effectively communicate with their teachers and peers in the classroom and perform academic reading and writing.

Although it was challenging for the participants to study in English medium instruction classrooms due to inadequate English proficiency, they improved their English listening skills and enlarged their academic vocabularies through content and language integrated learning in the English medium instruction classroom. Similar findings were found in other studies. For example, Galloway (2017) demonstrats that English medium instruction provides more exposure to English and more chances to acquire it, which can enhance students' English proficiency. Tatzl (2011) also shows that through English medium instruction, students' linguistic skills were enhanced, including academic and specialised vocabulary size. However, improving English through content and language integrated learning in the English medium instruction classroom did not help my participants learn the core subject effectively. They reported that only speaking English in class did not help them fully understand the content or exam questions in lessons. Instead, they found it more effective to learn the knowledge and key points by seeking bilingual explanations from their Chinese peers or attending extra lessons with Chinese bilingual teachers.

In this chapter, I have responded to the research question regarding Chinese EAL students being challenged learners in relation to linguistic adaptation through analysing the narratives of their previous English learning experiences in China and their academic studies in the English medium instruction classrooms in the UK. The next chapter will focus on how EAL lessons were taught in order to help students meet their linguistic needs.

Chapter 8 Teenage Chinese EAL Students and EAL Classes

8.1 Introduction

The language barrier was a significant factor hindering Chinese students' adaptation to academic study during their transcultural academic experience in the UK. English as an Additional Language (EAL) lessons are arranged by MM School with the aim to improve students' English proficiency. However, due to the different cultural backgrounds and different learning preferences and expectations, there is a big mismatch between the EAL teachers and the Chinese EAL students. The participants were concerned that EAL classes did not correspond with the linguistic needs of international students.

8.2 EAL Classes in MM School

EAL students encounter a wide range of different experiences and contexts in UK schools. In some rural schools there are very few EAL learners, while in some urban schools, almost 100% of the learners are EAL students. Some students are educated in state schools supported by local authorities while others in academies, free schools and private schools (EAL Nexus, The Bell Foundation, 2019, provided by https://ealresources.bell-foundation.org.uk/eal-specialists). Most independent schools have an EAL department which runs EAL classes to support international students whose lessons are taught entirely through the medium of English.

MM School has around 100 boarders per year, for whom English is an additional language. The majority of these pupils arrive in Year 12 or Year 10, but there are some who start from Year 7. All the students from other countries whose first language is not English are assessed by the admission team to identify the degree of help each student needs for reaching the language requirement of their targeted university (6.5/7.0 in IELTS). All international students need to take both English and mathematics tests for the entry requirements. Moreover, they all need to be interviewed by the admission team. Whether they can be admitted to the school will be decided on the basis of their interview and paper tests (information on the MM School website).

MM School has an EAL department. There are four teachers in the department, two of whom are British and the other two from other countries in Europe. The aim of the EAL department is to support these students in their language learning and communicative competence so that they can speak and write accurately, clearly and confidently. Support is also given for specific areas of vocabulary for subjects such as geography, business, science and so on (information on MM School Website).

Students who arrive in Year 12 without an English language qualification will be prepared for IELTS and those who arrive in Year 7 to 10 will be given general language support to help them access the whole curriculum and develop their speaking and writing competence. All the A-level Chinese students attended at least four EAL lessons per week to improve their academic English proficiency as well as preparing them to pass IELTS for their immediate university application.

Mr Cook, the director of international relations in the school and also an EAL teacher himself explained to me:

> *There are four teachers in our EAL department helping international students learn English as an Additional Language. EAL lessons are available from Year 7 to Year 11. Students get four to five lessons per week. Each lesson lasts 45 minutes. In addition, they get five to six of what we call mainstream English lessons per week as well. So, in total they have as many as 10 or 11 lessons of English teaching. Actually, they may get a quarter of the timetable for English. But for sixth-form students, they get a quarter of the timetable preparing for IELTS. Some students don't need that if they have got the GCSE English qualifications in first language at A or higher. They won't need an IELTS for their future university application. If they don't get an A in their first language, we will recommend they do IELTS during sixth-form. The IELTS module consists of Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking.* (Interview data, March 2018)

8.3 Issues in EAL classes

8.3.1 Teaching Scenarios and Pedagogies in EAL Classes

I observed lessons taught by three different teachers in order to gain insight into how the EAL lessons are taught in MM School, such as how the class was organised and the pedagogies employed in teaching as well as class awareness of foreign language teaching and learning. I also interviewed the students individually after each lesson to understand their attitudes towards the teaching.

- Ways of Organising the Classes

Lesson 1 (Monday, 4 November 2018, second period)

The lesson that I observed was delivered by an EAL teacher who had been teaching in MM School for more than three years. She is a native English speaker. There were five students in the class with four Chinese and one Korean. They were all Year 12 (the first year of A-levels) students whose age were between 16 and 17. The lesson took place in a classroom in the EAL department. The theme of the lesson was to improve students' speaking. The EAL teacher prepared many questions on a map, such as 'What makes you so proud of yourself?' and 'What is the biggest problem facing the world?' etc., then all questions were labelled with a number. Students were not allowed to see the questions on the map. When the teacher asked one to answer a question, he/she could pick up a number that she wanted to answer. For example, if the student chose number five, then the teacher would ask her the number five question written on the map. All the students took turns to choose a number and answer the question. This went round and round until the end of class, in which 'teacher-centred' was dominant and there was no time for dialogue and discussion. The length of the lesson was 45 minutes.

Extract 1 (Transcription from classroom recording in lesson 1, 2018)

1. *EAL teacher: Well, ok, Zoey, what is your lucky number?*
2. *Student Zoey: Number 10.*
3. *EAL teacher: Good. Question number 10. Ah…what makes you so proud of yourself?*
4. *Student Zoey (silence): …I don't know…*
5. *EAL teacher: Ok… What about Vivi? What makes you feel proud?*

From my observation, there were different questions concerning different topics, and students responded differently according to their familiarity with the topic. For example, in terms of the questions that they were familiar with, they would express their ideas more extensively using one or two sentences. However, when they were asked unfamiliar questions, they would either keep silent or give one-word answers. Two students were reluctant to answer the questions especially when they picked a question that they found challenging. This is reflected in the data in Extract 1, line 4; when Zoey was asked to describe what makes her feel proud, she refused to answer the question. When one student gave up on answering the question, the teacher would give him/her some ideas about the topic or she would choose other students to answer the question instead (see Extract1, line 5).

In terms of students' performance in speaking, the topics set were too challenging and not relevant to their level of English. There were too many topics concerning different areas in one lesson. Therefore, it was not surprising that they had so many negative comments when I interviewed them soon after the class.

For example:

Extract 2 (Transcription from students interview in lesson 1, 2018)

Why had the teacher prepared so many topics in one lesson? I have no idea what the teaching goal was! (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

Today, we were given too many speaking topics like dream, social problem, world issues, etc. which were very challenging for us because with some topics, like world issues, I did not know much about it. Anyway, the lesson only last 45 minutes. Why not just focus on talking about one topic? (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Lesson 1 failed to motivate students to speak because the topics did not interest them and some topics were not within their level. Jones (2007) suggests that if students are introduced to topics that interest them, they are more likely to be motivated, while Liu (2005) suggests that interests mattered a lot in students' active participation in classroom activities. Moreover, Lightbown and Spada (2006: 57) also comment that, 'If we make our classrooms places where students enjoy coming because the content is interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, where the learning goals are challenging yet manageable and clear, and where the atmosphere is supportive and non-threatening, we can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn'. However, most topics prepared in the lessons were not interesting but very challenging to the students.

Lesson 2 (Tuesday, 5 November 2018, second and third periods)

The lesson was taught by the head of EAL. This class was said to be the only one related to IELTS. There were eight students who were in Year 12 with one student from Spain and the rest from China. At the beginning of the lesson, the EAL teacher checked their homework with the students. They were given the vocabulary homework one day before the lesson.

Extract 3 (Field notes in lesson 2, 2018)

The homework was as follows:
Match the verbs below with their definitions
Conclude contribute derive facilitate identify involve

1 To give money, help or ideas to something that other people are involved in

2 To decide that something is true after considering all the information

3 To get something, especially an advantage or a pleasant feeling, from something

4 To include or affect someone or something

5 To recognize something or discover exactly what it is, what its nature or origin is

6 To make it easier for a process or action to happen

During the vocabulary section, the EAL teacher mainly used a teacher-student interaction method, asking each student to answer the questions in the homework. The section went smoothly as all students answered the teacher's questions and they all did their homework in advance. The teacher also explained how to use the verbs in detail.

Extract 4 (Transcription in lesson 2, 2018)

1. *Teacher: Cici, what about number 1, 'To give money, help or ideas to something that other people are involved in'?*
2. *Cici: Contribute*
3. *Teacher: Good. Contribute. Do you know how to use this verb? What prep would you use?*
4. *Cici: To. Contribute to.*
5. *Teacher: Very good. What about noun?*
6. *Cici: Contribution. (Transcription from classroom observation, 2018)*

The teacher would also give them some examples to help students understand how to use the vocabulary in context.

Extract 5 (Transcription in lesson 2, 2018)

Teacher: Number 4, 'To include or affect someone or something means involve.' For instance, 'Dealing with these issues involves…'

After teaching the vocabularies, the teacher asked students to finish filling the form using the vocabularies they had learned.

Extract 6 (Field notes in lesson 2, 2018)

Task in lesson

Complete the text with the correct form of the words: conclude contribute derive facilitate identify.

1____why some cities have higher crime rates than others may seem difficult, however certain patterns do emerge. Places where people 2___more taxes into a system which supports poorer people generally have lower crime. This might explain the causes to an extent. Some people claim that some crimes are 3_____from poverty, which would support the concept of societal improvements leading to a lower crime rate. However, reducing crime will 4____much more than just tacking poverty. Governments need to ensure the police are adequately staffed and able to 5 __ a rapid response so as to deter criminal behaviour. Many cities with a low crime rate are known to have a strong police force that works as an effective deterrent. Perhaps we can 6_____ by stating that social support and deterrence are the key contributions to improving safety.

Students were given 10 minutes to finish this task individually. After that, the teacher asked them to answer the question.

Extract 7 (Transcription in lesson 2, 2018)

1. *Teacher: Vivi, can you answer question number one?*
2. *Vivi: Identifying.*
3. *Teacher: Very good. Do you know why 'identifying' not 'identify'?*
4. *Vivi: Um…because it is the subject of the sentence.*
5. *Teacher: Good.*

From the observation, the vocabulary task did not present any challenge to the students. They had good understanding of the grammar rules, and they all answered the questions correctly. I think this is because most Chinese students had previously studied grammar and vocabulary in China where the grammar-translation approach was dominant in most English teaching classrooms (Hu, 2002).

After that the vocabulary task, the teacher began to teach IELTS Speaking Part 3. He explained that in IELTS Speaking Part 3, students should learn how to construct an argument. Therefore, he required all

the students to work in pairs and discuss their opinions on the topics: *(1) Should judges reduce the number of people sent to prison for minor offences? (2) Is prison the most effective punishment? Does prison encourage criminal behaviour? Can it reduce re-offending? (3) Is there any convincing argument for having criminals meet their victims?*

The teacher did not provide any further resources for this topic. He wrote down some key sentences: *On the one hand, it can be argued that ..., and on the other hand ....* He said all students were required to use these sentences in their speaking. Then, he divided them into four groups, with two in each group.

However, during the group discussion section, all the students were quiet. No matter how the teacher reminded them to speak, they just kept silent but wrote their opinions on their notebooks. They only spoke when the teacher asked them to.

Extract 8 (Transcription in lesson 2, 2018)

1. *Teacher: Kitty, can you tell me your arguments on these topics following the structure I gave.*
2. *Kitty: Um… (Very reluctant at the beginning) I think criminals should be put in prison…It is not fair for the victims…and it... (As she was not able to continue speaking, then she was stopped by the teacher.)*
3. *Teacher: Please follow the structure 'One the one hand… on the other hand…' You should talk from both sides. It will help you develop your ideas.*
4. *Kitty: Um… (She did not continue to say anything)*

From the data, most students were quiet and not active in discussion. Although they were good at grammar and had a large commend of vocabulary in terms of using it within an exam-based context, they were not able to put the vocabulary into practice. Learning vocabulary is not only remembering words and their meanings but also using them from a dynamic perspective. Communication activity should be designed to encourage students to work out a word within its real-life context. The grammar-translation method has dominated foreign language teaching in China for many years and it is still widely used, helping students lay a solid grammatical foundation to express the language accurately. However, the disadvantage is that students only learn the rules instead of the language skill. Thus, many Chinese students find it difficult to use the vocabulary and grammar rules when speaking.

From my observation, the speaking tasks seemed very challenging for the students (see Extract 8). From their answers, none of them used the vocabulary taught them to construct their arguments for the speaking topics. The reason may be that for the Chinese students, the taught vocabulary (such as identify, involve, contribute, etc.) was not taught that commonly used in a speaking context. Another reason is that 'whether criminals should be sent to prison' was a challenging topic for them. They might lack knowledge about this topic. The vocabulary taught at the beginning of the lesson was not enough for them to develop their ideas. Students cannot just learn the words. They need to learn how to structure their ideas. For example, the teacher should share some knowledge with them about the topics. The teacher could also give students some relevant articles and resources and texts to read first which could help them form their own opinions.

Lesson 3 (Friday, 9 November 2018, second period)

This lesson was delivered by an EAL teacher who mainly taught adjectives in the lesson on that day. There were six Chinese sixth-form students in the classes. The EAL teacher started the lesson by playing a game. Firstly, he announced that he would display a video about international students' views on boarding life at MM School. Before watching the videos, students needed to work in pairs to write down 10 adjectives that they would hear in the video. After the teacher explained the game, all students sat in pairs and discussed words to be written down on the paper. After 10 minutes, they stopped and watched the video and ticked the words that they wrote if they appeared. The teacher explained if any pair got 10 words that they heard in the video, they should say 'Bingo'. However, at the end of the video, none of them got 10 adjectives relevant to what they watched in the video. After the game, the teacher analysed the adjectives in sentences, and the students worked in pairs to do tasks related to the language point that the teacher had focused on. The teacher also prepared some quiz games for the students. They worked in a team to compete with other teams.

From the observation, the goal of the lesson was to teach adjectives. The teacher organised different activities such as games, videos, and discussion, etc. to help students understand adjectives in sentences. However, the students seemed very reluctant to participate in the games and activities.

Extract 9 (Transcript of lesson 3, 2018)

1. Teacher: Any group got 10 adjectives mentioned in the video?
2. Students: (Silence)
3. Teacher: Any group?

4. Student A: Only 6.

5. Teacher: Good. Tell me what you wrote.

6. Student A: Friendly, nice, difficult, new, strange, good.

7. Teacher: Brilliant. In the video, the boarder did mention those adjectives. Anyone who
   would like to share? Any group?

8. (No one responds)

- Pedagogies Employed in Teaching

From my observation of the three EAL lessons, communicative language teaching was the dominant approach adopted by the majority of the EAL teachers who arranged several communicative activities such as 'Bingo' games, quizzes, group discussion and pair work. However, most students did not enjoy the activities and were very reluctant to play the games. They complained that playing games is a waste of time and the lessons could not help them improve their IELTS score.

Extract 10 (Transcription of interview data, 2018)

> *I think the EAL lessons are very boring and it is a waste of time. I don't know the meaning is of playing games. I really do not understand why the teachers like playing so many games in class. Shall we just learn the IELTS topics directly? She could just teach us some ideas and vocabularies concerning the topics and give us some time to talk about it. There is no need to play games.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

> *I understand that my EAL teacher would like to use more communicative teaching and a more student-centred approach, but the games that they do in the class are very boring. We are not primary school kids. When they set the activities, they need to understand our culture, our age and our interests. But it seems that they don't care. There have been so many complaints. But they still do games! What was worse is that the games are usually not related with IELTS topics at all. But why can't EAL teachers just start teaching us common IELTS speaking topics such as hometown, study, accommodation, sports, etc.? These topics are more common to be asked about the exam and they are all related to our personal lives.* (Vivi Wei, interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang also criticised the speaking activities in the EAL class:

Why should we talk all the time in order to learn? I do not like speaking in the class. I enjoy listening to others speaking and the teacher lecturing. I do not think too much speaking is a good way for me to lean. Instead, I think listening is more important. I think I will lean better by listening to the teacher attentively. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

The data showed that the communicative approach was not welcomed by the Chinese students. They particularly complained about playing games in lessons. They thought learning through games was a waste of time. This is in line with many studies which revealed that Chinese students are reluctant to take part in discussions, answering questions or playing games (Jin and Cortazzi, 1996). They have been used to the education in China which is teacher-centred because in Chinese traditional culture the teacher is an authority figure in a classroom, where the teacher mainly talks about a subject while students are sitting silently, taking notes and listening to the teacher (ibid.).

For example, Kitty said in the interview,

Western students like learning through group discussion or asking questions, but we Chinese like learning through teachers' instruction and independent thinking. I think group discussion is actually a waste of time because sometimes most students are talking about things not relevant to the study. I learn more effectively individually. Therefore, I hope my EAL teachers are aware that students from different cultures may have different learning habits. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

8.3.2 Misunderstandings and Mismatches

- EAL Teachers' Perspective

Teachers normally speak highly of Chinese students who are hardworking, modest and disciplined. However, when being confronted with some disappointment, they also have their reservations, which are worthy of our attention.

Hard working but not interactive

Most EAL teachers perceived Chinese students as hard-working students who listened well in class and finished homework on time. However, similar to the subject teachers' views (Chinese students' lack of active participation in class was discussed in Chapter 6), the EAL teachers were also disappointed with Chinese students' passive participation in lessons in which they were unwilling to work in groups and preferred whole class work or individual work. From the EAL teachers' perspectives, they did not like asking questions in lessons.

Extract 11

> *Vivi is a hard worker; however, she must become more vocal when there is a misunderstanding or uncertainty in her own understanding.* (EAL teacher A, Interview data)

> *Kitty is a hardworking student who listens well in class. But she is a quiet member in the class. She lacks questioning.* (EAL teacher B, Interview data)

> *Most of the Chinese students are not active in class. They are often quiet in pair work or group discussion. They don't like asking questions. That is why their progress with English has been limited over the last few months.* (EAL teacher C, Interview data)

> *I am concerned about Bob's performance in the exam. He struggled with answering questions. The problem is that he never comes to see me when he doesn't understand certain concepts, nor does he ask me questions in lessons. Based on his performance in the lessons and his classwork and homework, I am concerned about his progress and future on the course.* (EAL teacher D, Interview data)

> *James is too quiet in my class. He should try to speak more in lessons and outside the classroom to build up fluency and confidence in his speaking.* (EAL teacher B, Interview data)

Disciplined but less autonomous learners

In addition to passive learning, EAL teachers also revealed that most Chinese students have less learner autonomy although they seldom broke the school rules and attended all the classes on time. They paid great attention to grades and exams but not to the processes of learning.

Extract 12

> *Chinese students never skip my lessons. They are disciplined. But only studying from EAL classes is not enough to help them pass the exam. They need to read widely outside class to improve vocabulary and see grammatical structures in context. And they need to listen to as much English as possible.* (EAL teacher A, Interview data)

> *Vivi needs to spend more time reading and immersing herself in English, perhaps by doing activities which she enjoys such as watching films, in order for her to improve her capacity to express herself.* (EAL teacher B, Interview data)

> *Kitty finishes all the tasks in my EAL lessons. In order to further improve, she still needs to continue working hard and make an effort to read extensively, both for pleasure and academic purposes, as this will allow her to develop her range of vocabulary and her awareness of lexical choice.* (EAL teacher C, Interview data)

The data from the EAL teachers showed they reflected a lot about the passive learning most Chinese students exhibited in class (see Extract 11). This is in line with many Western academics who have described Chinese students negatively as using a silent, by rote and passive style of learning (Mclnerney, 2005; Park, 2000). However, the students' abilities and ways of learning are being interpreted according to the current Western cultural context. This interpretation does not take into account the Chinese culture of learning, or students' achievements and expectations. An understanding of how different cultural attitudes affect learning is necessary. For example, as per Jin and Cortazzi (2006), influenced by Confucianism which emphases the importance of order and respect for authorities and values pragmatic acquisition of knowledge, Chinese students are accustomed to listening carefully and silently to the teachers in class. However, this does not mean that they are not good students. For example, though Chinese students are assumed to demonstrate poor learning motivation and strategies, they flourish academically and achieve considerably higher levels than their

Western counterparts in mathematics and science (Mehdizadeh and Scott, 2005). This explains how Chinese students are not simply memorising through rote learning but understand facts and know how to apply them to ensure their success. Therefore, teachers in the international classroom should be aware of Chinese students' unique learning characteristics related to their cultural heritage.

The EAL teachers also reflected on Chinese students' lack of independent study after class (see Extract 12). In Chinese schools, teachers are particularly expected to have deep knowledge and be able to teach and analyse all the knowledge required for students, in particular their exam topics. My own experience of learning in secondary school in China more than 10 years ago was very similar and the teachers focused on all that we had to learn in the exam topics for the *Gaokao*. For example, each subject teacher analysed and summarised all the exam points for students. What we needed to do was to listen carefully and take notes. Then, we did several practice exercises based on the points and notes. Thus, Chinese students may largely depend on the teachers to teach them all the required knowledge in class rather than learning it independently after class. Therefore, when Chinese students transfer from Chinese school to the UK school system, they are still used to depending on the teachers.

For example, Kitty wrote in her journal,

> *The education here is very different from what I received in China. My English teachers in China explained everything to us. We never needed to express our opinions about a topic that the teacher hadn't taught. And the teachers never asked questions before they finished explaining the knowledge about the subject. However, it is different here. We are asked to express opinions most of the time even when the teacher still hasn't taught us anything about the subject. I am very anxious talking about something that I am not sure about. I prefer the teacher to explain everything for me rather than discovering it by myself.* (Data from student's reflective journal, 2017)

- EAL Students' Perspectives

At the same time, Chinese students have their own perceptions about their EAL teachers as well. All my participants were rather disappointed with their EAL lessons. Most of them thought the lessons were mistargeted because of teaching materials and the form of delivery. They complained that the EAL teachers did not know much about IELTS and its required materials and levels and they did not have detailed lesson plans.

Communicative but less organised

Students revealed that the communicative approach was widely used in the majority of EAL lessons, which emphasises that the goal of language learning is communicative competence.Therefore, all kinds of communicative activities are arranged in class to get them to speak as much as possible. However, most of the EAL lessons are less organised.

For example,

> *My EAL teachers always emphasise speaking competence. It is not limited to speaking lessons. In grammar, reading, listening or vocabulary lessons, EAL teachers always arrange many games, activities and tasks for us to speak. However, most of the activities are not well organised. I mean they are not that relevant to the language points. Sometimes, we play the game, but we don't know why we should play it and what language gains we can achieve. For example, in a reading lesson, the primary aim was to teach us reading skills. However, we played games and we had group and pair discussions. We talked outside the topic. I mean we discussed something not related with the reading passage until the end of the lesson. Finally, we wondered if it is a speaking lesson or reading lesson? We were confused.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

> *I think EAL lessons are too communicative. We speak too much in the games or other activities but most of the time we fail to develop linguistic competence. Besides, my teachers teach us casually. For example, we sometimes watch TV shows in lessons; sometimes, we read newspapers in class and sometimes we discuss some gossip…We are not taught systematically, and all topics and tasks are set without a clear goal.* (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

> *The class has no system and the content of the class is often disordered. I could learn nothing from the lessons. EAL teachers are very nice and patient. But they have no idea what we want, and they are not experienced in teaching English as a second or foreign language."* (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

The above data show that most students thought the EAL classes were too communicative and less organised. It seems that the communicative approach was dominant in all lessons, but the use of

language was limited to specific phrases prescribed for narrow communicative situations. However, students should master both the ability of reading and writing and the ability of listening and speaking; therefore, various teaching methods should be applied. The grammar-translation method, the cognitive approach, the communicative approach etc. should be equally applied in EAL classes. Moreover, no matter what approach is to be adopted, lessons should be well organised and taught systematically to develop students' language skills.

Not target at improving IELTS scores

All participants complained in the interview and in their reflective journal that the EAL lessons at MM School failed to improve their IELTS scores.

Kitty Lai wrote in her journal:

> *I have been learning EAL for two months since I was accepted by this school. We all took the entrance exam and were divided into different groups by our exam scores. For those weak students, the school offers at least 16 EAL lessons per week, and for those advanced only four lessons a week are provided. There are several EAL teachers; however, they have little experience and various accents. And they all use different irrelevant materials to teach us but their aim is to prepare us for the IELTS. Many of my classmates think the EAL lessons are useless because teachers are not serious about teaching and some teachers do not even prepare the lessons well and take a carefree attitude towards teaching. As a result, the four components in IELTS, such as listening, speaking, reading and writing are not evenly covered and practiced. I have to say our teachers are too free to teach whatever they want. I don't really understand why we have to pay such much in extra fees for having these EAL lessons that do not serve the purpose and meet our linguistic needs – passing IELTS. (Student reflective journal, November 2017)*

Vivi Wei also complained about the EAL lessons in her journal:

> *In terms of the EAL lessons, personally, I think it a waste of time for me I find it hard to get used to them. They mainly teach us the structure of IELTS writing, and some vocabularies. We read many readings by ourselves in class often and teachers don't teach much or teach systematically. Some teachers do not have a clear idea of what to teach us. And a lot of materials are not relevant to IELTS, which makes me lose my motivation to study. I suggest*

they use the Cambridge IELTS past paper. And for the speaking lesson, I really do not know how to give my comment… And there is too much homework which I do not see helping me with my IELTS. I really want to drop this course. (Student reflective journal, November 2017)

Bob Zhang and James Li also shared their attitudes during their interviews, complaining that the EAL lessons did not help them to pass IELTS to reach their university language requirement.

This course has nothing to do with my IELTS. My teacher does not know what we need at all. They actually don't know how to teach us! All international students require an IELTS qualification for university entry. Most universities require 6.5, with some universities requiring a higher score than 7.0 in each unit. However, some of my EAL teachers have no idea how IELTS is tested. They do not teach us any topics in IELTS. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

80% of the IELTS lessons are about grammar and vocabulary. Only teaching grammar and vocabulary is not really enough to help us for the IELTS, which requires us to do listening, reading, writing and speaking. There are many different topics in the exam. They should teach us from topic to topic. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

The data showed that EAL teachers were criticised for not being examination-oriented in their teaching goal. For example, most students revealed commented that 'What EAL teachers teach is not IELTS! We have to pass the test.' This is because the exam-oriented systems have deep influence on Chinese students where most students are trained in lessons for upper secondary school or university entrance examinations (Hu, 2002). They may have been accustomed to the exam-oriented environment of education where teachers teach whatever comes up in the examinations and the teachers' responsibility is to enable students to pass various tests and examinations. Thus, when their EAL teachers do not focus on IELTS, it is not surprising that students are disappointed with the EAL lessons.

Not target at improving academic English

Some participants also revealed in the interview that EAL lessons, to some extent, could improve everyday communication but not their academic subjects because teaching methods were not effective for them.

For example, James Li said,

I think the EAL lessons are better for improving everyday English but not enough for academic learning. I guess it is because they teach us English in the way they teach the native English students. However, we come later at an older age. We are not kids. We cannot learn English like the local kids. (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

Bob Zhang also said,

EAL lessons do not help with our subjects study because EAL teachers did not study physics, further mathematics, or economics previously. They could not help us with the subjects. They could teach us some subject related vocabularies, but that is not really enough to help us understand our subjects. I think the only way they may help us is to give language support in the subject class. But that is not possible in our school. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

The data showed that EAL classes could not help with students with their academic study because they taught them general English for daily communication instead of academic English for the subjects the students were learning. The reason was that EAL teachers were not supporting them during the mainstream lessons and they might not know the subject knowledge. However, EAL students' progression in English should be seen as a process that is integral to their progress in studying all the subjects. They should be supported and monitored systematically within the different subjects.

8.4 Extra IELTS Classes Elsewhere

8.4.1 Extra Time and Resources

As the majority of international students are required to achieve a total score of at least 6.5, with each part no lower than 6.0 to meet the language requirements of the university, all my target students attended extra IELTS classes run by Chinese teachers at the weekend and during the holidays because they thought the school EAL classes were hardly helpful enough to get the score required by university admission within the given short period of time. The added value from the weekend IELTS classes was that the medium of instruction is normally bilingual (Chinese and English). All the participants

confirmed that they had benefited greatly from the weekend classes and improved their exam grade rapidly as a result.

Bob Zhang told me in the interview that,

> *While studying EAL in MM School, I took the IELTS test in central London for three times, but I always got a total score of 5.5 each time. As I never improved my score, I was very worried because I need at least 6.5 to go to university. Then, my friend introduced me to the IELTS lessons taught by the Chinese teacher. I joined the lessons every weekend and during all the half-term holidays. The lessons were so good. The teacher taught us all based on the IELTS tests and related materials such as the Cambridge IELTS 4-12. The goal was very clear.* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Vivi Wei also joined extra IELTS lessons at weekends and during the holidays.

> *I joined the extra IELTS at weekends and during half term holidays. I think the IELTS classes taught by the Chinese teacher are much better than the EAL lessons at school. Well, I mean the Chinese teacher is more focused on the ILETS exam, teaching us not only the language points in the IELTS topics but also teaches us many exam skills. For example, while doing IELTS reading test, she taught us how to locate the answer in the reading text, such as highlighting the key words, topic sentences etc. which I think is very useful. I can find out the answer quickly and save a lot of time. After studying with the teacher for one term, I have achieved a total score of 7.5 in IELTS.* (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018).

Kitty Lai also thinks exam techniques are of a great help for achieving the improved scores in IELTS. She considered that the exam skills helped her improve her IELTS quickly.

> *I like my Chinese IELTS teacher who teaches me the methods of focusing on exam skills which can help me improve the IELTS scores in very short time. Although, some people argue that we are only trained to improve the scores not the English ability, I don't agree with them because I can improve my English ability through learning and passing the exams. We are sixth-form students, the reality is that we need the score urgently to meet the university entry requirements. And my Chinese IELTS teacher is much better than what they think. Through her lessons, I have not only achieved my targeted score in IELTS but*

also improved my academic writing skills which was very helpful for my economics essay writing. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018).

From the data, we can see that the lessons taught outside schools were more focused on improving the exam scores and the target was clearer, which was more preferred by the students because they all wanted to pass the entrance exam for their university.

8.4.2 Bilingual Pedagogies

In addition to the IELTS teaching resources and clear goal of passing the exam, bilingual teaching was another reason why the extra IELTS classes were welcomed by the Chinese students.

> *My Chinese IELTS teacher used both English and Chinese in teaching. For speaking lessons, she mainly used English. For example, she asked questions in English and communicated with us in English. But when we did not know which English words to use or how to describe something in English, she would use both Chinese and English to explain which helped us learn the language points easily. For reading and writing, she mainly taught in Chinese because she needed to explain many grammatical rules, language structures, exam techniques, etc. I think bilingual teaching is an effective way of teaching. I can understand things easily.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

From Kitty Lai, we can learn the bilingual approach was mainly adopted by the Chinese teacher to explain the language points and exam techniques during the extra IELTS lessons.

James Li, preferred his Chinese teacher because he found it much easier to communicate due to his English barrier. He revealed in the interview that,

> *I prefer learning IELTS with my Chinese teacher because I can talk with her freely and ask for help with my weak points. But it is hard for me to do the same thing to the teachers at school because my English is not good enough to explain my problems or to fully understand my EAL teachers who explaining everything in English.* (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

From James Li, we learn that bilingual teaching is very important for second language teaching because the use of native language helps students understand difficult words and complicated grammar rules.

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Bilingual teaching also helps the teacher describe difficult concepts, reduce the time needed to explain tasks and demonstrate the real second language situation (Baker, 2006).

Bob Zhang, Kitty Lai and James Li revealed that their bilingual teacher understood the problems that they might encounter and knew how to help them solve those problems. This was a significant reason for them enjoying attending extra IELTS lessons with their bilingual IELTS teacher.
For example,

> *My Chinese IELTS teacher is very professional and experienced. She has been teaching IELTS for eight years, helping many Chinese students to obtain 7.0 in IELTS. She understands the problems we meet and knows how to help us effectively. She often focuses on explaining the difficult points and common mistakes that Chinese students make in their exams. With her help, I improved greatly and passed my IELTS. However, my EAL teachers had no idea about what we wanted. I guess they had no experience of learning English as a second language and they didn't know what problems we were facing in English learning, so they didn't know how to help us. Just like we are Chinese native speakers, but I never know how I learned this language so it would be difficult for me to teach my English peers how to learn Chinese.* (Bob, Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

> *My EAL teachers mainly focus on teaching grammar and vocabularys. But they are not good at explaining the grammar rules. I guess it is because we don't share the first language. They don't aware our language differences. So, they actually don't know why we make grammatical mistakes and how to help us improve. However, my Chinese IELTS teacher knows all language mistakes that we made and why we made.* (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

> *My Chinese IELTS teacher has a better understanding on our language difficulties and knows what to teach us. She knows our level of English and why we make mistake and how to improve. But it is not the case when it comes to my EAL teacher at school. I think some vocabularr lessons taught by my EAL teachers were too easy for us. It is for English beginners. For example, one of my EAL teachers kept teaching us very simple grammatical rules such as past tense, comparative forms for many weeks. I had learnt these grammars points since I was five years old in China. So, in her lessons, I always felt sleepy and bored. From this you can see, they actually don't understand us.* (James Li, Interview data, 2018)

From Bob Zhang, Kitty Lai, and James Li, we learn that bilingual teachers can teach language learning strategies more effectively because they are aware of students' learning problems and difficulties as they share the first language and the experience of learning English and the teacher is able to explain in the students' competent language (L1) the grammar points that help their comprehension.

In addition, understanding both cultures is also an important reason for improving their IELTS. For example,

> *My EAL teachers don't know my language, my country and my culture. It is hard for them to teach me how to describe the topics related to our country in IELTS speaking. But my Chinese teacher who is not only good in Chinese and English but also knows the cultures of these countries, can teach me to use the English language for the IELTS speaking topics effectively and quickly. For example, when I need to describe a tradition or a legend in China, I found it very difficult to translate the words and make English people understand what I mean. And none of my EAL teachers know about it. Although I can use a translator, it does not work because some translations are not correct at all in dictionaries. However, my Chinese teacher knows both languages well and she can teach me how to use the correct words, sentences, etc. to help me describe my ideas.* (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

From the above data, we learn that understanding both cultures is important for second language teaching. The bilingual IELTS support classes are successful for the participants because the teacher not only knows both cultures but also both languages. She is able to use students' first language to explain the complicated words and concepts. Including students' first language and culture are important in developing their confidence (Gregory, 1994; Garcia and Li, 2015). The teacher's positive attitude towards the children's first language and their culture can prevent them from suffering low self-esteem caused by frustrations and language-related difficulties (Gibbons, 1993).

Most EAL teachers lack familiarity with Chinese culture and educational systems. Most teenage Chinese students have developed their own philosophy, culture and basic concept of education before they came to study in the UK. Chinese students formed their learning preferences in a Chinese cultural and educational context. Thus, teaching Chinese students without understanding Chinese culture and education would lead to a failure (Rao, 2006). This explains why most EAL teachers' enthusiasm in the classroom does not satisfy Chinese students or help them achieve their scores.

8.5 Applying a Focused Bilingual Pedagogy in Teaching IELTS

I have been teaching IELTS to EAL Chinese since 2010 and I have helped more than 96% of students to reach the language requirements of the university, with more than 60% achieving a total score of 7.0 or above. In order to have a better understanding of why a bilingual approach helps Chinese students to improve IELTS, my experience of IELTS speaking lessons is analysed in this section.

- IELTS speaking class

My target group is EAL Chinese students aged 14-17 who are studying in different independent schools in the UK. They attend my weekend lessons in London and their level of English is intermediate. Their first language is Mandarin Chinese. The class capacity is six students. The majority of them need to achieve a brand score of 6.5, with each part scoring at least 6.0 to enter their universities and some of them have to obtain 7.0 or above to meet the language requirement. The aim of the lessons is to get students familiar with the IELTS speaking topics and gain knowledge about each topic, to teach them how to develop their ideas on different topics and finally to enable them not only to speak fluently and naturally but also to achieve their targeted score in IELTS.

- Analysing one speaking lesson

The speaking lesson lasted for two hours because students need to travel far from their school to study with me in central London. Therefore, each time when they come, they will study 2-4 hours. Previously, students have already learnt topics such as interests, accommodation, making friends, sports, food and cooking. From learning the topics, they have learned basic speaking strategies; for example, how to start a conversation, clarify information, and how to encourage people to speak more. And they have also learned vocabulary relating to the topics and they are able to express their views on different questions. The topic of this lesson was cities and towns and it was focused on improving their speaking fluency in real life. The lesson integrated vocabulary, listening and conversation strategies, but the aim was to facilitate their speaking.

- Teaching approach of the lesson

Although the students have been studying in the UK school for at least one year, and some of them have been in the UK for four years, it is still very difficult to fully adopt a communicative approach in

the class because of the motivations and expectations of students and teachers being closely related to examinations. No single approach can achieve the goals of various contexts, whether it be communicative language teaching or others (Prabhu, 1990). Thus, a combination of communicative, audiolingual and bilingual approaches was applied in order to meet the Chinese students' expectations about learning speaking. Vocabulary building, listening comprehension, speaking strategies and free talks were designed to break down the learning process to scaffold students for research at a more complex level.

- Organisation of the lesson

Section 1 (5 minutes)

The warm-up activity began the lesson with some basic questions related to the topic in order to familiarise students with the lesson content as well as to provide a context for speaking English or a reason for speaking to make them feel secure talking and set up the topic of the lesson.

For example,

Extract 1 (Transcription from class)

1. Teacher: Hi, hello, everyone. Good morning. How are you? Nice to see you again.
2. Ss: Hi… (Students are very happy and saying hi to each other) …
3. Teacher: OK. Today, we are going to talk about Cities and Towns…. Kitty, where are you from?
4. Kitty: Well? Me? Ok. Huangzhou. I am from Huangzhou.
5. Teacher: Good. Where is Hangzhou?
6. Kitty: Um…it is in Zhejiang province, in the southeast of China.
7. Teacher: Very good. What about Zoey? Which city do you come from? Huangzhou as well?
8. Zoey: Hehhh…how did you know? Yes. My hometown is Huangzhou.
9. Teacher: Can you tell me more about Huangzhou? Where is it and what is famous there?
10. Zoey: Well, my hometown is in the southeast of China, not far from Shanghai. It is a beautiful city with many gardens, rivers, bridges, um…and so on.
11. Teacher: Excellent. Now, James, where is your hometown?

In Extract 1, we can see that students felt free to talk about their hometown although they did not give very long answers while responding to the questions. I began the lesson asking questions about their hometown because the topics were familiar to the students. Learners' familiarity with the topic has a clear effect on comprehension, and it also influences the amount of negotiation work that takes place, with less familiar topics leading to less negotiations (Lightbown and Spada, 1999; Ellis ,2003). Thus, English teachers should relate the lesson topics to the students' lives, involving familiar subject of significance to them. When a student knows something well, he/she is more likely to be interested or motivated to talk about it (Ellis, 2003).

Section 2 (15 minutes)

After the warm-up section, students watched a five-minute-video on YouTube. The title of the video is *Hangzhou, the most beautiful city of China*. The video was all in English which mainly described the most famous places such as the West Lake, Tea Gardens, Temples in Hangzhou, and it also mentioned its fantastic transport system, delicious food and friendly people.

Extract 2 (Transcript from the video)

> *Hangzhou is known as the most prosperous city in China. It has been rated the No.1 Chinese City ...because of its beautiful nature, architecture... Hangzhou is commonly referred as Shanghai's back garden...*

While watching the video, students were asked to write down some key words or points that interested them. Showing the video provided students with sufficient information about the city and the language they needed to express their opinions on the topic. Students were invited to talk about their ideas of the city after listening to some people's statements in the video. The free talk was carried out in the group discussion to potentially maximise the speaking opportunities for students to speak and minimise the anxiety of public speaking (Lynch, 1996: 110). During the group discussion, learners focused on communication rather than picking out others' mistakes (Porter, 1986). This section provided a comfortable way to promote talking between students rather than requiring them to speak in public.

Section 3 (30 minutes)

This section lasted for about 15 minutes. Then I began to focus on the exam questions related with the topic to meet students' needs to pass the exam.

Extract 3:

1.Teacher: OK. OK. Now let's get through the exam questions. I will be the examiner…Please speak as much as you can using your own experience or copying some points or ideas that you heard in the video. But the most important thing is relaxing while speaking…OK, who would like to answer my question first? Which part of your hometown do you like best?

2. Zoey: Let me try. West Lake. It is probably the most popular tourist attraction of the city. You can enjoy the beautiful views of the lake, mountains, towers, temples, trees and flowers. If you are interested in photography, you shouldn't miss it. (The student spoke fluently and naturally and most of the ideas were copied from the video she watched.)

3. James: I think West Lake is the most famous lake in China. It is surrounded by trees, flowers, and mountains. People enjoy riding bicycle or taking a walk around the lake while enjoying the beautiful view.

4. Teacher: Fantastic. Zoey and James. Yes, I agree. West Lake must be the most popular place in Hangzhou. I go to Hangzhou almost every summer. I often take a walk around the lake where you can enjoy beautiful lotus… (The teacher was sharing her experience with the students). OK, Vivi. What should visitors see in your hometown? Which place will you recommend?

5. Vivi: If you are interested in nature, visiting tea gardens is a thing you must do in Hangzhou. Visitors can go there for hiking, mountain bike riding and drinking fresh green tea.

6. Teacher: Wow. Tea garden…. All the tea gardens in Hangzhou are built on the hills or maintains… (The teacher is sharing her experience). OK, what about Bob Zhang. What should visitors see in your hometown?

7. Bob: There are many places that you can visit. West Lake, Tea Gardens, um…雷锋塔（Lei Feng Ta） 英文怎么说？(The student suddenly switched into Chinese and asked the teacher how to translate Lei Feng Ta in English.)

8. Teacher: Well. Tell me what is Lei Feng Ta?

9. Bob: It is... um. It looks like a tower.

10. Teacher: How tall is it? What is special?

11. Bob: About five storey tall…about 100 metres…

12. Teacher: Well. It is called Lei Feng Pagoda. If you don't know how to translate it, you don't necessarily need to. You can explain it like how you explained it to me just now.

13. Bob: Oh, I see. Can I continue my speaking?

14. Teacher: Sure.

15.Bob: People can visit West Lake, Tea gardens, which are beautiful natural landscapes. They can also visit some historical places such as Lei Feng Pagoda. It is a five-story tall tower built about 1000 years ago. It has a lot of stories and legends, which makes it more attractive to visitors.

…….

According to the data in Extract 3, students spoke actively while responding to the teacher's questions. Most of them such as Zoey, James, and Vivi were able to express their opinions on different questions fluently and naturally (see Extract 3 lines 2, 3, and 5). The reason was that both the warm-up discussion and video sections had enabled them to become familiar with the topic and gather some knowledge about it, which improved their confidence to speak. Unlike the other students, Bob Zhang was not fluent at the beginning when he was stuck with some Chinese words that he did not know in English (see Extract 3, line 7). However, with the help of the teacher who explained and encouraged him to use another way of expression (see Extract 3, lines 8-12), he started to speak fluently (see line 15).

Section 4 (50 minutes)

After the teacher-student mock exam section, students rested for about 10 minutes and then they began the final section of the lesson. After getting enough input in the previous three sections, students were given a more challenging task. An IELTS topic cue card was given out.

Describe a city/town that you live it/visited
You should say:
-where it is
-when is the best time to visit it
-what people can do there
-and explain the reason why you like

Firstly, the students had one minute to think about this card; they could write down some notes if they wanted. After that, they worked in pairs to describe their city to each other. The teacher went to each group to supervise them in order to make sure everybody spoke during the pair work time and also to give bilingual support if students need help translating. After that, each student was invited to give a two-minute presentation to the whole class. While speaking, the teacher set a timer to see if they could reach the two-minute requirement because IELTS Speaking Part 2 requires candidates to speak for two minutes. This went round and round until they met the requirement with each student giving their presentation at least twice. At the end, all of them could talk about the card fluently for about two minutes.

- Reflection on transforming my EAL pedagogy with Chinese learners

In the past, I thought teaching English successfully was about providing systematic and understandable rules for grammar, memorising words and letting students practise more because this is the way I experienced English while I was studying in China. While learning about communicative language teaching, I realised that teaching is not only about the form and meaning of the language itself but also a social tool to communicate for a particular purpose and to solve problems in real life.

Teaching Chinese students in the UK is very different from teaching English in China. As students are studying in UK schools, where all the subjects are taught through the medium of English, they do not lack the opportunity to be exposed to English every day. Moreover, they all have EAL classes in school. Therefore, to teach EAL students in the UK, I need to think, what is my advantage? How can I help them to achieve better results? Why do they pay extra fees to study with me?

During my nine years of IELTS teaching both in China and in the UK, I have found it very difficult to carry out the communicative approach in a Chinese class because students are used to relying heavily on the teacher's instruction and presentation and, therefore, they become quite passive and reluctant to learn by themselves. I want to adopt and advocate a more learner-centred, task-based approach, but first I need to motivate learners and encourage learner autonomy within a top-down educational system.

To motivate them to learn, most tasks and teaching materials should be related to the exam because they pay extra fees to study with me and their only goal is to pass IELTS. Not only the students but the parents too care only about the exam results and the higher score, the better. Due to this reason, CLT is a bit challenge in my class. Thus, I adopted and explored a combination of various approaches in

class, and I found that a bilingual approach is the most effective way to teach EAL students in the intercultural context to meet their needs both to improve language competence but also pass the exam.

- Comments from parents

Despite the difficulties and challenges that I meet while teaching Chinese EAL students in the UK, I have helped most students achieve their targeted scores and received many positive comments from their parents. They have sent me messages through WeChat, one of the most popular online social application in China to express their satisfaction about the IELTS results. They were pleased that I had helped their children improve their IELTS scores from 5.5 to 6.5 or even higher within a short period of time, which the EAL lessons in their schools could not help them to achieve.

For example, both James Li and Bob Zhang's parents were very happy that their children improved their IELTS scores from 5/5.5 to 6.5 and reached the language requirement of their dream university after studying with me for about 20 days.

> *Thank you very much Sue. My child James has improved greatly after studying with you for 20 days. Although he has been studying in the UK school for two years, he never improved his score. He always got 5.5. Now he has achieved 6.5, which enables him to reach the entry requirement of the university. Thank you very much. I hope he can keep studying with you to get 7.0 in IELTS.* (WeChat message from James' mother, 2018)

> *Bob got 6.5 in writing. I couldn't believe it. He has improved so quickly. He used to get 5.0 to 5.5. Thank you very much Sue. You must have spent a lot of time and effort on helping him. Bob will continue to study IELTS with you. His next goal is to achieve 7.0 in IELTS.* (WeChat message from Bob's mother, 2018)

Kitty's and Vivi's parents felt very thankful that I helped their daughters achieved a high score of 7.5 in IELTS to satisfy the requirements of the top universities in the UK.

> *Thank you very much, Sue. Kitty finally got a total score of 7.5, with listening 7.5, reading 7.5, speaking 7 and writing 7. She is so happy that she meets the language requirement for LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science). I would like to give my sincere thanks to you because Kitty was really struggling while she always got 6.5 in either writing*

or speaking in her previous exams, although her total score was 7 or 7.5. It was just 0.5 below the requirement, but it was much more difficult than you think to reach the requirement. She failed the tests for six times but luckily since she met you, she passed. (WeChat message from Kitty's mum, 2018)

Hi, Sue, how can I thank you? I am so happy that Vivi achieved 7.5 in IELTS. I am very pleased that she achieved 7 in writing and 8 in speaking this time. Writing and speaking were her weakest parts. Thanks to your help, she has reached the language requirements of almost all universities in the UK. (WeChat message from Vivi's mother, 2018*)*

From the parental data, it is obvious that parents paid great attention to the score that their children achieved, and the higher the better. Influenced by Confucian Heritage Culture which emphasises the importance of education to one's achievement and success, most Chinese parents regardless of their different educational backgrounds and different occupations, share high expectations about education, and also high aspirations for their children because they believe that one's 'social status' can be raised by education and attending a good university is the key to this achievement (Chen, 2004). Therefore, they aim for higher educational qualifications. The language requirement of top universities in the UK requires at least a total score of 7. In order to help their children achieve a higher score in IELTS, the parents of my target students were willing to pay extra fees for the IELTS preparation courses and they were eager to be updated with their children's progress in their studies. Thus, they often kept in close contact with me to get feedback. One of the main reasons why my bilingual and exam-oriented approach towards IELTS teaching received good comments from the parents was that I helped their children achieve higher scores to meet the language requirement of their dream universities.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed how to support teenage Chinese EAL students to succeed linguistically and academically in their learning journey in the UK. The data showed that this is a big mismatch between EAL teachers and students. For example, the EAL teachers complained about the students' passive participation in class and lack of independent learning after class. However, all student participants shared the opinion that the school EAL classes do not help EAL students to improve their English proficiency or their IELTS scores so that they might attend a UK university. They blamed both materials and teaching methods for not being engaging and not being tailor-made to their linguistic needs. The language barrier is the biggest concern for them because it not only affects their academic

studies but also hinders their friendship with students from other cultures. However, they do not find the EAL classes help them solve the problems or, in other words, the learning class does not correspond with the international students' linguistic needs. This is in line with many other studies reflective of the learning experience of international students who find it hard to adjust to the teaching style, content, the EAL curriculum and also the pedagogical approach of their host country (Li, 2001; By and Viete, 2009; Wang, 2006). Moreover, Chinese students expect the teachers to be more specific and more focused on exam driven knowledge point by point that will help them pass exams. That explains why those bilingual Chinese teachers are much better received as they are paid to do the job.

The data also show that bilingual teaching plays an important role for second language learning. The Chinese students prefer the IELTS lessons taught by the Chinese teacher instead of their school EAL teachers because the Chinese teacher had the experience of learning English as an Additional Language which enables her to be a good learner model (Cook, 2005). Bilingual teachers can be more sensitive to students' learning problems (Lee and Lew, 2001) and can anticipate students' learning difficulties, especially when sharing the same first language (Medgyes, 1994). They are able to understand students' weaknesses and difficulties in learning and provide more exercises for practicing their basic language skills. They can use their first language to explain grammar rules and difficult English vocabulary. Therefore, they can teach language-learning strategies more effectively (ibid.). As pointed out by Vygotsky, using students' first language to help them understand the content matter of the subjects would enhance their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1997). Furthermore, using the first language to aid students' learning in the classroom can enhance their cognition of both language systems and therefore prevent language loss (Mellen, 2002; Li, 2000). In addition to L1, cultural understanding also plays an important part in their language learning. The interview data reveal that when students are asked to describe some topics related to their L1 culture, understanding students' L1 knowledge becomes fundamental.

Therefore, teenage Chinese students may need more attention because they are at a critical stage in their transition from Chinese to British schools. Intercultural communication should be emphasised to help teachers develop a better understanding of students' cultural differences, previous educational experiences, and their learning styles in order to better assist international students in their academic transition (Wang, 2006). In addition, more opportunities should be provided for EAL teachers in independent schools to receive language teaching training to support EAL students' cultural, linguistic and academic needs.

PART FIVE CONCLUSION

The following chapter will bring together the findings from the three data analysis chapters to answer the overarching research question of the study.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The aim of the study was to explore the cultural, linguistic and academic adaptations of four teenage Chinese EAL students through researching their learning journey at an independent school in London. Ethnography was adopted as the methodology for this study in order to understand, in depth, their motivation and expectations as well as the frustrations and dilemmas they encountered during their transition from the Chinese to the English education system. This concluding chapter will firstly summarise the main findings of the research with some recommendations, then it will proceed to discuss how this research contributes to the existing literature and the proposed direction for future research.

9.1 Main Findings

Sub-question 1: What has motivated Chinese teenagers to come and study for GCSEs/A-levels in UK independent schools at such great expense?

The reasons why Chinese students are enthusiastic about UK education have been studied by many researchers in the previous literature. According to their findings, most Chinese students choose to study in the UK because of its world-leading academic reputation, superior teaching styles and methods, advanced research facilities, administrative systems, and library and IT provisions (Bourke, 2000; Counsell, 2011; Matthew, 2014). Previous research also indicates that Chinese students thought studying in the UK would give them an opportunity to develop their language skills and provide them with more chances for cultural mixing with UK students, thereby extending their cultural competence and developing not only an awareness of the host culture but also a greater awareness of their own (Van Der Maid, 2003; Huang, 2008; Greatrex-White, 2008).

From the previous literature, much has been written about university students studying in the UK or in other Western countries. However, little research has been done on teenage Chinese international students choosing to study in secondary schools in the UK. Based on the narratives and observations of the four teenage Chinese EAL students, this study gives an in-depth description of their transcultural

learning experiences in a UK independent school. Their decisions to study in a UK secondary school were reflected in their narratives and were mainly due to a mix of motivations, such as a less exam-oriented education system, more varied subject selections, less competitive university admission, etc. For example, from the participants' stories, we learn that students considered the UK education system more relaxed than the Chinese one as the study hours were shorter and they learned fewer subjects in the UK school. They revealed that the exam-oriented education system in China was very stressful as they had to spend more than 10 hours studying every day from Monday to Saturday in order to get high marks in the exams. As pointed out by the participant Vivi Wei who talked about the long hours and feeing 'very tired' in China,

> *I had to get up at five o'clock in the morning and got prepared for school every day… I spent the whole day at school attending lessons and doing homework until 9:30 pm… I felt very tired during my secondary school in China. However, in the UK, it is very relaxing as school begins at 8 am and finishes early in the afternoon… I have plenty of time doing things I like….* (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

This finding was consistent with the literature, which suggested that the exam-oriented education system has consumed Chinese students' lives and led to imbalance in the overall development of students (Tuner and Acker, 2002; Mori, 2000; Yao, 2004; Wang, 2006; Zheng, 2008). Unlike in Chinese secondary schools, these Chinese students did not need to spend all the time in their English secondary school doing homework or practising exam papers in order to succeed in the exams. Instead, they had plenty of time to develop their hobbies such as doing sport or joining clubs while studying in the UK.

In addition, the findings show that the wider range of subject options at A-level is a significant reason why students made their decision to study in UK independent schools. In the Chinese upper secondary school system, most of the subjects are compulsory and there are only nine subjects available, while in most UK independent schools, there are about 20-30 optional subjects in different areas such as computer science, economics, business, drama, science, art technology design and so on. It is flexible enough for students to choose any three or four subjects according to their interests, the course they aim to study in the university, and their future career plan.

Furthermore, the findings show the perception of the UK university admission system as less competitive was the most important reason why both parents and students made the decision to choose to study in a UK independent school at a young age and at such a high cost. According to narratives

from both parents and student participants, they had the perception that it would be much easier to be admitted to a good university with A-level qualifications compared with the route through the Chinese education system. They considered it would be much easier because students only study three or four subjects at A-level, while students in China are required to study nine subjects for the Chinese *Gaokao*. Moreover, the competition is fierce in the *Gaokao* system. According to statistics on the Chinese education official website called Education Online (EOL, 2017), there were 9.4 million candidates taking the exams in 2017 and 7 million of them were admitted to study in a college or a university. The percentages of admissions at the key universities, known as the Yiben universities in China, varied from 9.48% to 30.5% (EOL, 2017). Fewer than 10% of students were admitted to study at the top universities in China (Dimmock and Leong, 2010). In Guangdong Province, for example, a place where I studied for 12 years and did my *Gaokao*, 758,000 students attended the *Gaokao* in 2018. Among them, about 180,000 candidates were admitted to degree courses in universities, but only about 200 students were admitted to the top Chinese universities (edu.sina.cn, 2018). Therefore, knowing that they did not hold any advantage when competing with other candidates in China, my participants decided to transfer from the Chinese educational system to the UK to escape from the competition of the *Gaokao*. This fierce competition was explained by the participant Bob Zhang:

> *In China, the competition is fierce. Most students work very hard, but they cannot go to the top universities, particularly the best universities, like Tsinghua University and Beijing University. It is very difficult for them to be admitted to study there even though they study hard or they are very good in school performance.* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

This finding was consistent with some of the previous literature which revealed that the highly competitive *Gaokao* and the limited number of first-class universities and educational resources led to an increasing tendency among students to try to escape from the Chinese educational system to study in the UK (Mori, 2000; Wang, 2006; Dimmock and Leong, 2010; Yang, 2014).

The findings in this study also show that some parents had high expectations for their children, such as expecting them to attend one of the top five universities in the UK. For example, Kitty Lai's parents revealed that,

> *Since we will invest a large sum of money for her education in the UK for at least five years until she finishes her first or second degree, we hope that she can graduate from a top university. The London School of Economics and Politics or University College London*

are our aims for her. These two universities have been ranked in the top 20 of the world….
(Interview data from Kitty Lai's parents)

In order to adapt more smoothly and to overcome the academic gap in transferring from one educational system to another, my participants were sent to study abroad at a younger age (14-17) corresponding to their lower secondary school years in China. The parents thought that if the students could study in the UK as teenagers, it would be easier for them to attend a good university. For instance, Vivi Wei's mother mentioned, "We believe that, studying abroad at a younger age, Vivi will have more chances to apply to a top university, like the University of Cambridge…as she will have a longer time period to improve her English and get prepared for her future university".

Sub-question 2: Why are they particularly challenged learners in relation to cultural, linguistic and adaptation?

- Cultural Challenge

While analysing my target students' motivations for studying in the UK at such a young age, as mentioned previously, all the participants had positive attitudes and expectations for UK education before coming to study there, considering it less-exam oriented, more relaxed, and with an easier university admission in the UK educational system. However, the transition from a Chinese to English educational system was not an easy journey either in their daily lives or their academic studies due to cultural differences as well as the great differences in the teaching and learning systems. The findings of the study show that although all the students were excited when they first arrived at a new school in a new country, they found it hard to get used to English food and eating habits upon their arrival; they felt discomfort from moving out of their Chinese community; and they encountered difficulties engaging more fully with local students or students from other nationalities in the school. For instance, the participant Bob Zhang shared his view that he found it hard to make close friends with his English peers in the geography class due to different cultural backgrounds and the difficulty to find mutual interests. The finding confirms Ding's (2008) study. She points out that international Chinese students' social interaction with English peers remained at the superficial level of daily greeting because while they were communicating with their English counterparts, they failed to find mutually interesting topics among them. As pointed out by Bob Zhang,

There are many local students in my geography class. We often have some chats when we
meet, but we can't take the initiative to get involved in their lives. The interaction is

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relatively superficial, not deep. We have different cultural backgrounds and values. We behave differently…. We have different interests and different tastes. (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Apart from the aforementioned challenges, the findings show that the participants encountered serious difficulties in their academic studies in terms of being unfamiliar with the new learning environment, failing to adapt to the student-centred teaching approaches, and having gaps in their modes of learning in the UK classroom. For example, they were considered passive or rote leaners when studying in the interactive UK classroom in which students are encouraged to be active learners. In this study, they were found to be reticent, unwilling to ask the teacher questions, or reluctant to interact with English peers during lessons. As mentioned by Vivi Wei's chemistry teacher, "Vivi has a good understanding of the topics. She picks up things quickly. However, she does not get involved during discussion time. She does not like asking questions…". This is in line with many studies that point out that Chinese students' learning strategy is often criticised as rote and passive (Dahlin and Watkins, 2000; Jackson, 2002; Kennedy, 2002; Shi, 2006; Wang, 2006; Cross and Hitchcock, 2007). However, on the other hand, in this study, the participants argued that the teachers should not use terms like 'silent Chinese students', 'rote learning', or 'passive learners' to define them. Not asking questions in lessons does not mean that they are passive or rote learners. For example, the participant Kitty Lai shared,

Western students like learning through group discussions or asking questions, but we Chinese like learning through teachers' instruction and independent thinking. I think group discussions are actually a waste of time because sometimes most students are frequently talking about things that are less relevant or not relevant to what has been taught in class. I would rather learn all by myself. (Kitty Lai, Interview data, 2018)

As Hofstede (1997) indicates, different cultures affect the approaches to learning differently. A country's culture determines the student's learning style, strategies, process, and approaches. Chinese students' unique learning style relates to their cultural backgrounds. Influenced by Confucius' cultural heritage, which emphasises respecting elders and being modest and harmonious, the teaching approaches in China require students to be quiet in class and listen attentively to the teachers, and ask questions after class (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). This explains why the participants did not like interrupting the teacher to ask questions during lessons. They would ask questions after class if they thought it was necessary. Chinese students' learning approaches should be valued (Cheng et al., 2011: 826).

In addition, the participants commented that the student-centred teaching approaches were too relaxed, and they complained the teachers were hardly teaching them anything new or focused in class. Instead, they either learned from peers in group discussions in class or caught up independently after school. Student-centred pedagogies are based on the notion that students learn best through discovery in a self-directed learning environment based on their real-life experiences and situations (Gibbs, 1992). As Tang, Collier and Witt (2018) note, Western classrooms place a higher priority on autonomy for the learners, and Gibbs (1995) also points out that students have greater autonomy over the pace of study as well as the content and choice. However, this is not what the Chinese students were used to. In this study, the participants preferred the teaching and learning styles in China where the teachers played an important role in teaching and explaining all the content concerning the subjects in lessons, unlike in the UK classroom, where the teachers gave them a topic or a task to work on with peers in the group. For example, the participant Kitty Lai shared her belief that teachers in the UK acted as facilitators, who organise activities for students to discuss in the group. The teachers seldom teach much about the subject but sit in the classroom to answer any questions. However, Kitty was more accustomed to the Chinese teacher-centred classrooms in which teachers spend more time explaining the subjects rather than leaving students to study with their peers in the group or by themselves. 'I preferred the teacher spending more time explaining the subject knowledge rather than letting us learn it by ourselves or with other classmates', said Kitty Lai. In China, teacher-centred pedagogies are rooted in the Chinese traditional culture characterised as Confucianism, where teachers are believed to be like the philosopher Socrates and a role model to students, and where knowledge and morality are unified in the body of the philosopher (Wang, 2006). Teachers are at the centre of the teaching and learning process transferring knowledge and they play an important role in the classroom, ensuring positive outcomes for students' academic performance (Guo, 1996; Ho, 2001; Lingbiao and Watkins, 2001). Wang (2006) also noted that the teacher acts as the source of all knowledge and therefore is powerful and is expected to be treated with respect. This explains why the participants wanted there to be tighter control over the learning process in the classroom.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that teachers and schools should improve their communication with international students from diverse cultures in order to enhance their awareness of cultural differences. They might then have a better mutual understanding of how different cultures affect learning, appreciate different learning styles and adopt appropriate teaching methods while teaching students from different cultures.

- Linguistic Challenge

Consistent with many previous studies (Chen, 1999; Wong, 2004, Shi, 2007, Campbell and Li, 2008), the findings of this study show that the linguistic barrier was a significant factor hindering students' adaption to living and studying in the UK. For example, inadequate speaking proficiency impeded some participants' attempts to make friends with their English peers. Bob Zhang revealed how he felt anxious speaking to the local students because he was not confident in his speaking ability. He also mentioned that he found it difficult to understand British pronunciation and intonation, finding it especially hard to understand English slang. This hindered his attempts to communicate with the English students at school. Language barriers also affected the students' participation and communication with teachers and peers during lessons. According to three participants, Vivi Wei, Bob Zhang and James Li, their lack of speaking competency was largely due to their previous English learning experiences in China in which audiolingual and grammar-translation approaches were dominant. More emphasis was put on improving students' grammar and vocabulary in order to improve exam scores rather than developing their English-speaking skills. Some participants also revealed that they had lacked opportunities to communicate in English in real-life situations. The findings revealed that being taught along grammar and translation models in China, students learned and memorised linguistic points well for the exam but were less confident about using them in a natural communication situation due to a lack of opportunities to do so.

In addition, all participants considered the lack of English vocabulary for specific terms, definitions, and concepts as an obstacle to studying their core A-level subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms. They reported that they had difficulty understanding their teachers in the lessons, and they failed to understand the questions in their subject disciplines, especially when they encountered some complicated concepts. Because of their low proficiency in terms of subject vocabulary, they also found it challenging to write lab reports or essays in physics, chemistry and economics lessons. For example, Kitty Lai, whose English was better than that of the other three participants as she had previously been studying in an international school where all subjects were taught through English medium instruction, still found it a challenge to write economics essays. James Li revealed that he could not understand a lot of key terms because there were many new words, and Vivi said that she could not catch the main meaning of some specialist work while studying core A-level subjects in the English medium instruction classroom. This finding was consistent with some studies. For instance, Shi (2007) points out that Chinese students might have limited access to specialist vocabulary in their subject areas, which makes it more challenging while studying the subjects in English in a foreign country. Other studies also show that students are dissatisfied with the knowledge they have gained when English is

used as a medium of instruction because they failed to understand key points in the lectures (Huang, 2009; Chang, 2010; Tatzl, 2011).

Sub-question 3: How are these students supported to meet the linguistic, cultural and academic challenges in their learning journey?

The findings of this study show that the language barrier is a significant concern for the participants during their transcultural experience at the UK independent school because it not only hinders their friendships with students from other cultures but also affects their academic studies in the English medium instruction classrooms. Furthermore, as international students whose first language is not English, they are required to past IELTS in order to meet university language requirements. Thus, in addition to studying three or four core A-level subjects, my participants still needed to prepare for the IELTS for their future university applications.

English as an Additional Language lessons were arranged by the school with the aim of improving the students' English proficiency for their academic studies as well as improving their IELTS scores. However, there were misunderstandings and mismatches between the EAL teachers and the Chinese EAL students. For example, the EAL teachers complained about the students' passive participation in class and lack of independent learning after class, while on the other hand, all my participants were concerned that the school EAL classes did not correspond with their linguistic needs. They complained that EAL lessons were not helping to improve their English proficiency for academic studies or their IELTS scores to enable them to attend a UK university. For example, participants Vivi and Kitty thought the EAL classes were both too communicative and not organised enough. They blamed both the materials and teaching methods for not being engaging and not being tailor-made to their linguistic needs. They commented that the EAL teachers arranged too many games during the lessons, which they considered very boring and not effective in improving their linguistic proficiency.

The findings also show that the EAL classes failed to help the participants with their academic studies. Students revealed that the EAL lessons in school only improved their English proficiency for daily communication rather than improving their competency in studying the A-level subjects because the EAL teachers were not supporting the students during the mainstream lessons and might not know the relevant subject knowledge. However, the EAL students' progression in English should be seen as a process that is integral to their progress in all the subjects they are studying at school. They should be systematically supported and monitored within the different subjects.

Another mismatch between student expectations and the EAL lessons was that the teachers were criticised for not being examination-oriented in their teaching goals. The Chinese students expected the course to be more specific and more focused on teaching exam-driven knowledge point by point as that would help them pass exams. Similar to previous research (Hu, 2002; Wang, 2006), the Chinese students in my study were used to an exam-oriented educational environment wherein teachers teach whatever comes up in the examinations and the teachers' responsibility is to enable students to pass various tests and examinations. Therefore, when some EAL teachers did not focus on improving IELTS scores in the EAL lessons, the Chinese students felt disappointed with the lessons.

Main Research Question: How can teenage Chinese EAL students be best supported to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically?

Based on the findings from the three research sub-questions, all the participants in my study had high expectations but a less realistic picture of the UK education system. Therefore, they paid the high tuition fees and high living costs required to transfer from China to study in a UK independent school, assuming that it would be easier for them to succeed and therefore attend a good university after finishing the A-level courses in a less-exam oriented education system. However, what they were not get prepared for was the fact that they encountered serious challenges both in their daily lives and academic studies during their transition to UK schooling. To best support these young Chinese teenagers to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically, it is important to enhance their transcultural experiences in the UK. Firstly, it is important for teachers in the UK to enhance their awareness of students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds in order to better support their academic transition. Secondly, the findings of this study indicate that the learning environment for the teenage Chinese EAL students will be further improved if they are able to receive home language support either through bilingual EAL teachers, Chinese bilingual subject teachers or their Chinese peers. In other words, a bilingual approach plays an important role in supporting Chinese EAL students in their cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation. Thirdly, joint efforts and mutual understanding between both teachers and students are vital steps towards helping the teenage Chinese EAL students to adapt to the UK educational system.

- Developing Classroom Awareness

In this study, the findings show that there were many misunderstandings and mismatches between both teachers and students in terms of teaching pedagogies and learning styles, which hindered the students' cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation and adjustment to the UK. For the educators, it is important

to be aware of students' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds means teaching students with different styles of learning, and teaching should be responsive to individual differences. Without an awareness of international students' cultural backgrounds, teaching will fail to meet students' linguistic needs. For example, in this study, Vivi Wei complained that the EAL teachers' methods were very boring as the teachers were not aware of the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

> *I understand that my EAL teacher would like to use more communicative teaching and a more student-centred approach, but the games that they do in the class are very boring. We are not primary school kids. When they set the activities, they need to understand our culture, our age and our interests.* (Vivi Wei, Interview data, 2018)

To best support students in the intercultural classroom, no matter whether student-centred or teacher-centre approaches are adopted in the classroom, teachers need to take into account the learners' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, different age groups, as well as individual differences. The more awareness that teachers have of their students' individual differences, the better developed the learning strategies will be.

In second language classes, effective class delivery depends largely on teachers' classroom awareness. As an EAL teacher, I think it is important to be aware of the different learning processes of L1 and L2 while teaching EAL students from other countries. Influenced by Vygotsky's work (1978), linguistic research in the 1970s took the sociocultural approach, which confirms that L2 involves a very different learning process from L1 and requires more conscious input and purposeful learning (Kranshen, 1982). Some teachers emphasise the 'target language only' approach in the classroom in the belief that students could learn the language by being immersed in it. However, while people learn their first language by being immersed in it, this cannot be the case with L2 learners because L1 and L2 differ greatly in conditions of learning (Spolsky, 1989). This explains why the participants felt disappointed when the EAL or subject teachers taught them in the same way they taught the local students, and they felt extremely challenged when their classroom teachers insisted that they should speak the target language only. As mentioned by Bob Zhang,

> *My physics teacher does not allow us to talk in Chinese, which makes it hard for us to have a better understanding of the content taught in the lessons. English is not our first language; so, we cannot comprehend or digest all the content delivered in English, especially when we encounter some complex terms.* (Bob Zhang, Interview data, 2018)

Therefore, it is very important for both subject and EAL teachers to enhance their awareness of both the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the EAL students so that appropriate teaching approaches could be adopted in the intercultural classroom.

- Developing Bilingual Pedagogies

The findings from this study show that a bilingual approach helped the Chinese students cope with their academic difficulties. For example, the participants gained effective support from the other Chinese students while learning the core subjects in the English medium instruction classrooms. Due to the fact the Chinese students shared their first language and culture, they could explain the contents in Chinese to the participants, which helped them learn, understand and interpret the knowledge more effectively. In addition to seeking bilingual support from their Chinese peers, some participants joined extra tutorials with Chinese and English bilingual teachers, who could adopt code-switching to explain key points in the subjects to enable the participants to understand the points more easily. Bilingual teachers can be more sensitive to students' learning problems (Lee and Lew, 2001) and can anticipate students' learning difficulties, especially when sharing the same first language (Medgyes, 1994). As Vygotsky points out, using the students' first language to help them understand the content of the subjects would enhance their cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1997).

The findings also show that students' bilingual pedagogies helped them improve their linguistic competency. For example, they joined weekend IELTS lessons taught by bilingual Chinese teachers which helped them improve their IELTS scores and meet the language requirements of the universities. This finding shows that students can build on their understanding of how their first language works in order to learn a second. It explains how the bilingual process allows languages to complement each other to offer and generate links and connections between the learnt knowledge and the new. Bilingual pedagogy is an inclusive, learner-centred and realistic approach which offers the opportunity to close the gap between L1 and L2. Bilingual teachers are able to understand students' weaknesses and difficulties in learning and provide more exercises for practising their basic language skills. They can use their first language to explain grammar rules and difficult English vocabulary; therefore, they can teach language learning strategies more effectively (Medgyes, 1994). Furthermore, using the first language to aid students' learning in the classroom can enhance their cognition of both language systems and therefore prevent language loss (Mellen, 2002; Li, 2000).

Therefore, to best support the teenage Chinese students in their transition to the UK educational system, it is vital for the school to arrange bilingual teachers to support them both inside and outside the

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classroom, especially during their first few months in the school. However, it is disappointing to note that neither the EAL nor the subject teachers at the independent school are bilingual teachers.

- Joint Efforts and Mutual Understanding

The implication of this study suggests that Chinese students' overall adjustment and academic success require joint efforts and mutual understanding from both teachers and students. From the teachers' perspectives, in addition to increasing their cultural awareness in intercultural classrooms, schools need to think what effective training programmes can be provided for academic and support staff to increase their knowledge and skills for intercultural situations. Efforts need to be made to identify the students' feelings about support so that suitable academic help can be provided for them. They have to find out how effectively they function when targeting the needs of international students. From the students' perspectives, they should have adequate preparation and related knowledge about British teaching and learning approaches. They should also develop a readiness and awareness to meet the challenges of the different academic cultures in China and the UK by trying to get involved in more activities both inside and outside the classrooms. For example, students can take an active role in participating in classroom discussions or joining school activities to interact with peers and teachers. An integration strategy to enable foreign students to become more involved in British culture may help teenage Chinese students' transcultural adaptive process in an effective way.

9.2 Recommendations

In recent years, since the number of teenage Chinese students studying in UK independent schools has risen dramatically, there is an increasing need to study the challenges they encounter during their transition as well as the factors that contribute to their success in the UK education system. To enhance teenage Chinese students' transcultural experiences and support them to succeed culturally, linguistically and academically during their transition to the UK school, I have developed some recommendations for both parents and students as well as British educators based on the research findings of the study below.

Suggestions for Chinese Parents and Students

1. Before departure, it is important for both Chinese students and their parents to develop a readiness and awareness of different cultures in the UK. For example, they should do more research online to get the information about UK cultures in terms of ways of living, habits, food and so on. It is also useful

to get advice from previous students who have experiences of studying in UK secondary schools. All of these can help to alleviate some of the stress of their adaption to a new country.

2. It is also important for children and their parents to have a better understanding of the UK education system in terms of learning environments, curriculum and academic requirements and be aware of the challenges they could encounter in the new education system. They should be realistic while setting expectations for their child's university application after finishing the A-level courses in the UK. To improve their knowledge of UK education, it is important for schools to conduct orientations or give presentations to both parents and students either in China or online before students come to the UK.

3. After arriving in the UK, students would find it beneficial if they could move out of their cultural comfort zone and interact with English-speaking peers through participating in more activities, both inside and outside the classroom. The findings of this study indicate that due to the large number of international Chinese students living in boarding houses or studying in the same classes, the participants had limited opportunities to communicate with local peers or students from other countries. Thus, it is important for the school to mix students from different cultures as this would help students to adapt to the new environment.

4. Since the linguistic challenge is a significant hindrance for Chinese students' adaptation to the UK education system both in their daily lives and academic studies, it is important for them to receive adequate preparation in the English language both before coming to the UK and after arriving. For example, it is beneficial for them if they practice more conversational English in real-life situations because it can help them improve their general English communication skills. In addition, they have to improve their English for Academic Purposes; for instance, students need to learn technical terms and concepts related to the subjects that they intend to study in UK secondary schools. In addition, those who plan to study economics, business or other humanities subjects may have to learn how to write English essays or answer essay questions.

Recommendations for Independent Schools

1. UK independent schools that want to attract and retain more teenage Chinese students should become more aware of the cultural differences between China and the UK and understand more about students' previous educational experiences and learning differences. Cultural awareness can help teachers to adopt more appropriate approaches to teach international Chinese students and enhance their transcultural experiences in the new country.

2. It is essential to improve the effectiveness and use of student services and academic support in the school. Schools should understand what kind of support international Chinese students actually need and what sort of support could genuinely help them. Therefore, schools should offer more opportunities for staff and international students to talk together to enhance mutual understanding and communication.

3. This study indicates that bilingual support played a vital role in the participants' academic success in the UK. However, as there were no bilingual EAL teachers or bilingual subject teachers in the school and teachers had a lack of bilingual resources, all the participants had to attend extra lessons with bilingual Chinese teachers after school or during weekends to improve their IELTS and A-level subject scores to meet the university entry requirements. Since there is an increasing number of teenage Chinese students coming to study in UK independent schools each year, it is essential that sufficient funding is provided to recruit bilingual EAL specialists or subject teachers to support international Chinese students. Alternatively, more opportunities should be provided for EAL teachers in independent schools to receive training to support EAL students' cultural, linguistic and academic needs. A substantial and long-term training programme should be arranged to train bilingual teaching staff to incorporate bilingual support for EAL students.

9.3 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

This ethnographic study contributes to a deep understanding of the recent trend of Chinese students coming to the UK to study at younger ages than earlier groups. Based on four teenage Chinese students' transcultural experiences, the study has explored their motivation for transferring to a UK secondary school at such a high cost. The study has also investigated the challenges and dilemmas that they encountered while switching to studying in the UK educational system. Compared with other studies on international Chinese students, this research gives deeper insights into the cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation issues faced by this group of Chinese students. Without acknowledging these young learners' educational and cultural backgrounds, effective teaching and learning cannot happen. Since little research has been done concerning these younger groups within the British education system, my study fills the gap by informing UK independent schools of potential challenges faced by teenage Chinese EAL students in their transition to UK secondary schools. This research will benefit independent schools in the UK that either already have a large number of Chinese students or wish to attract more students from China as well as students from other countries in East Asia.

Ethnography was adopted in this study as it is an essential approach to understanding the cultural life, feelings, beliefs, needs and acts of individuals from hearing their own stories. In this study, I collected data from students, parents, and teachers through a range of research methods such as participant observations, interviews, reflective journals, and so forth. While I collected the data, owing to my insider role as well as the learning techniques I knew for conducting interviews and observations with young people, all the participants felt comfortable and enthusiastic about sharing their rich stories and opinions about their intercultural adaptation and adjustment experiences at the UK school. This enabled me to collect rich, vivid and valuable data for the research study. My transcultural experiences in China and the UK also helped me to develop a greater understanding of my participants' cultural, linguistic and academic adaptation issues. To ensure the validity of the data collection and analysis, I adopted triangulation techniques to compare data collected using different research methods; this helped me check the validity of the data and provide an in-depth description of meanings in a particular setting. Compared with previous studies of Chinese students in the UK education system, my study provides more detailed, richer data with an in-depth description of the living and studying experiences of teenage Chinese students in the UK.

In addition, a significant aspect of the methodology is that I was able to talk to the participants in Chinese and then employed translation as a technique to transcribe and present the data. I did not translate students' conversations word for word as Chinese and English are very different. For example, 'a word in Chinese may require a phrase in English, a clause in English may require only a phrase in Chinese' (Chen, 2004: 116). Chinese may be more concise than English; therefore, one page of Chinese text might require two pages in English when translated. While translating the collected data, I paid great attention to comprehension of the meaning and spent a lot of time on syntactic and lexical restructuring in order to translate the original Chinese data into English as accurately as possible. These methodological experiences may be a useful reference for other studies which focus on researching international teenage students in an intercultural context.

9.4 Limitations of the Study

The aim of this study was not to research Chinese students on a large-scale, based on surveys and questionnaires, but to focus on a small group to obtain in-depth knowledge about the experiences of cultural and linguistic adaptation of a group of students switching to the UK secondary education system. I believe that the experiences of the teenage Chinese EAL students in this case study can say much more than statistics. This group of students' transcultural experiences have not been adequately documented and their individual stories have not been noticed. My study fills the gap in the literature.

However, I acknowledge that this small-scale study cannot represent all international teenage Chinese students who are studying in UK independent schools as each student's circumstances may vary and their motivation for studying in the UK as well as their adaptation issues may differ. Nevertheless, my study sheds light on intercultural adaptation issues and provides useful information for other teenage Chinese students considering transferring to the UK to study on GCSE/A-level courses. I hope my research findings can stimulate further research into how to support teenage Chinese EAL students in their learning journey in UK independent schools. In terms of future research, the following areas are worth exploring.

9.5 Directions for Future Research

Firstly, as this study focused on only four teenage Chinese EAL students in one independent school, in the future I would like to do more comparative case studies in different independent schools in the UK since there is an increasing number of young Chinese students coming to study there. This group of teenage students came at a young age, when they were 14 to 17 years old, and teenage students can be more sensitive when experiencing early overseas study, early independent living, and switching between education systems and classroom environments. Moreover, this study was carried out in a boarding school; all the participants stayed in the boarding house while studying in the UK. The findings show that they complained that as the majority of international students in the school were Chinese, they had fewer opportunities to have contact with the local students, which hindered their ability to form friendships with their English peers. They also reflected that they did not have enough time to get immersed in the English language environment due to the large number of Chinese students, which affected their linguistic and cultural adaptation. Therefore, my future research will focus on students who are staying in English host families while studying in UK independent schools. I am interested in investigating whether being immersed in an English living environment helps students to adapt to UK education more easily in terms of linguistic, cultural and academic adaptations and adjustments in their transcultural learning journey.

Secondly, the next step of my research is to investigate whether this group of students find it much easier to adapt to university academic study after finishing A-levels in a UK secondary school. Their parents sent them to study at a UK secondary school at a young age with the aim to better prepare them for studying at a good university in the same country. The findings of the study show that all the participants cared about their exam scores, preferring teacher-led instruction with a strong exam focus. They also joined extra IELTS lessons outside school in order to get high marks. Despite all the challenges and dilemmas that they encountered, they finally achieved the grades to meet their

university entry requirements. For example, Kitty Lai obtained IELTS 7.5, and A* in economics, A in pure mathematics and A in further mathematics in her final A-level exams and was accepted by the London School of Economics and Politics (LSE) to study a BSc in Actuarial Science. Vivi Wei achieved 7.5 in her IELTS, and AAA in physics, pure mathematics and further mathematics in her A-levels to meet the entry requirements of University College London (UCL) to do a BA in Educational Studies. James Li went to study Integrated Design and Engineering at the University of Bath with IELTS 7.0 and AAB in three A-level subjects: art, pure mathematics and physics. Bob Zhang reached the entry requirements for UCL to do a BSc in Management Science with IELTS 7.0 and four A-levels (Chinese A*, pure mathematics A, economics A, and geography B).

My present study has focused on four teenage participants' transcultural experiences in a UK independent secondary school. Despite the challenges they encountered during their adaptation process, they were high academic achievers in their A-levels and got into top UK universities. Bilingual support played an important role in their academic success. I intend in my future research to investigate whether this group of students get on well both academically and culturally, at these top universities. Academic study in universities may place greater demands on essay writing and understanding academic readings and may require students to work more independently, or in groups. Are they going to be successful learners and become more integrated into the cultural and social life of the university? I would like to get more insights into their continuing learning journey to become successful translingual and transcultural learners in the future.

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Appendix A: Interview and Focus Group Guide

Interview Guide (for four student participants)

1. How long have you been in the UK? When did you arrive in the UK?
2. Why did you choose to study in the UK?
3. Why did you decide to transfer from Chinese to UK education at such a young age?
4. Say something about your secondary school experience in China.
5. Why do you think the UK university admissions are much easier than those of China?
6. Tell me more about the *Gaokao* in China.
7. Which qualification are you studying for at MM School? Which subjects are you learning?
8. Which is your dream university after finishing your A-level course? Which course will you study at the university?
9. Did you encounter culture shock when you first arrived in the UK?
10. Please tell me about your boarding experience at MM School.
11. What do you think of the boarding life at school?
12. How many international students live in your boarding house?
13. How many Chinese international students are boarders?
14. Are there any English peers living in the school boarding house?
15. How are your friendships? Do you interact more with Chinese peers or students from other countries?
16. Do you often socialise with your English peers?
17. Are there any school activities for you to socialise with the local students?
18. Do you attend the activities organised by the school?
19. What was the biggest difficulty you encountered during your studies in the UK?
20. Was the language barrier a major challenge for you?
21. Please tell me about your experiences of learning English in China.
22. What do you think of the English-medium instruction classrooms in the UK?
23. Did you encounter any other challenges in your academic studies?
24. Which subject do you think is the most difficult in your course?
25. Are there any differences between the subjects you are learning here and those your learned in China?
26. Did you encounter any cultural differences during your academic studies in the UK?
27. What were the major differences in the methods of learning and teaching between China and the UK?
28. Did you ask questions in class?
29. Why don't you like asking questions?

30. What do you think of EAL lessons?

31. Do the EAL classes help you improve your English for academic purpose? Do the EAL lessons help you improve your IELTS scores?

32. What other support does school offer to help you with your academic studies?

33. Did you go to the weekly 'clinic' to get help when you encountered a difficulty studying your subject?

34. How did you deal with the cultural, linguistic and academic challenges?

35. What kind of coping strategies have you used for overcoming the difficulties in your transition process?

36. What do you think of bilingual teaching? Please tell me more about the extra bilingual lessons you had with your Chinese teachers.

Interview Guide (for the students' parents)

1. Please tell me briefly about yourself and your background.

2. Say something about your child's experiences in secondary school in China.

3. What has convinced you to send your child to study in the UK school at such a young age and at such great expense?

4. What do you think of the UK education system?

5. Why do you think it is much easier for students to be admitted to a top university after finishing A-levels in the UK?

6. What are your expectations for your child?

7. Which universities do you plan for your child to go to?

Interview Guide (for the school teachers)

For Director of International Admissions

1. How long have you been working as the director of international admissions at MM School?

2. How many international students do you recruit each year? How many of them are Chinese?

3. Generally, which are the most popular A-level subjects among Chinese students?

4. Do Chinese students encounter any difficulties when they study in the UK?

5. What is the most serious problem they encounter?

6. Is language a big barrier for them?

7. What language lessons do school offer to support them?

8. Can you tell me more about the EAL classes at MM School?

9. How does the school support international students in their academic studies?

10. Do they encounter any problems while studying the A-level subjects such as economics, physics, geography and mathematics with instruction through the medium of English?

11. Do they make more friends with their Chinese peers or students from other cultures?

12. Do they communicate with their English peers?

13. Does school arrange any activities for the international students to socialise with the local students?

14. Do Chinese students actively participate in school activities?

15. Which universities did the previous Chinese students go to? How many of them have been admitted to the top five universities over the years?

16. Can you tell me more about how the school supports the international students both in their daily lives and academic studies?

For EAL Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching at MM School as an EAL teacher?

2. Do you teach Chinese EAL students?

3. What do you think of their English proficiency?

4. How do they perform in your lessons?

5. Are they active in participation and in interacting with peers in class?

6. What are the major difficulties for them?

7. What suggestions do you have for Chinese students to help them meet their linguistic needs?

8. Do EAL teachers support students in their A-level subjects' studies?

For Economics Teachers

1. How long have you been teaching economics at MM School?

2. Do you teach Chinese students?

3. What do you think of their economics studies?

4. Normally, what scores can Chinese students achieve? Grade A, B or C?

5. What are their major problems when studying economics?

6. Compared with their English peers, why do Chinese students have fewer advantages when studying economics?

7. Is it because of their low levels of English proficiency or their different ways of thinking?

Appendix B: Students' Reflective Journals

Reflective Journal by Vivi Wei

2017 年 10 月 28 日

我刚到英国时觉得我们学校很美，校园非常大，到处是树木草地。我比较失望的是：中国生好多啊，跟没出国一个样。我的朋友圈里都是中国人，除了一位哈萨克斯坦女生。造成这个现象的原因很简单，中国人太多，容易抱团。对比之下，学校里比较稀少的日本、韩国、泰国学生就有挺多的欧洲朋友。还有一个原因就是没有很多机会跟外国人接触，我选的课基本都是中国人，外国人一只手就可以数的清。且住宿生和住宿生一块玩，走读生和走读生一块玩，有些隔阂。然后我还觉得还是文化隔阂吧，纯英国人的语音语调语速我已经很难适应了，如果他们再说些当地俚语或是网上的梗的话，我就完全懵了。

在英国学习的过程中，遇到的最大困难应该就是听不懂老师在讲什么。不是那种听不懂单词，而是我每个单词都听得懂，组合起来却不知道在讲什么。一些生涩的专业词汇也是导致上课听不懂的主要因素，这会使理解更加困难，尤其是在经济、物理课中。

学校里的 EAL 课，我个人觉得有些浪费时间，因为我在课外也学习雅思且还有四门课要花费时间，没有那么多精力去应付一周六节且作业很多的 EAL 课（非常想 drop 掉了）。而且老师教的方法都不一样，很难受。我个人感觉他们教的挺乱的没有什么条理，且给我们做的阅读听力题很不标准，尤其是听力。希望学校能使用正确的雅思教材，剑桥雅思就够了。还有学校里的口语教学，有些一言难尽的感觉。口语课太随意了，我们就是各种玩游戏，完全没有感觉到口语有半点进步。老师教学非常不系统，也没有固定的教材。她偶尔让我们课堂上看英文电视节目，有时候就随便找份英文报纸让我们阅读，然后让我们小组讨论。我们阅读讨论时间都拿来聊八卦了，当然是用中文聊，因为班里都是中国人。

Reflective Journal by Kitty Lai

2017 年 11 月 29 日

自从来英国后，我已经上了两个多月的 EAL 课了，当时入学时，我们进行了分班考试，不同程度的学生被分到不同的班级，也相应拥有不同数量的课程，比如说有些英语成绩较差的学生，一周有多达 16 节英语课，而少部分学生一周只有四节课。英语部们有不同的老师，而老师的水平参差不齐，甚至有些老师带有浓重的口音。我觉得 EAL 就是普通的英文课，跟雅思没有太大的关系。老师可能是由于对雅思系统考试不够了解，在教学上，雅思听说读写四个板块上并没有很好的权衡。老师把大部分时间用于练习口语（口语内容和雅思考试话题没有关系）或者词汇（形容词，副词，动词之类的词汇），阅读听力部分涉及甚少。一般老师建议我们课后自己看 BBC 或者英语视频练习听力，也建议我们多读报纸，提高雅思阅读能力。另外，很多时候老师备课不充分，授课十分随性，她们经常在四个板块中随意切换跳跃，让学生感到混乱。最无法理解的是这门课是国际学生的必修课，但是这个课程是额外收费的，不包括在学费里。我同学雅思已经 7 分了，学校还要求她们必须参加这门课程，理由是说同学们仍有薄弱的方面需要提高。然而这个课程并没有带给学生需要的帮助，通过雅思考试的

同学们大多数都额外花钱到校外参加雅思培训课提高成绩。因为学校的 EAL 课跟雅思考试没有太多的关系。

Reflective Journal by James Li

2017 年 12 月 3 号

在英国学习最大的感触是学习上对独立自主的要求很高，刚过来的一段时间很不适应。后来慢慢地开始顺着英国这边的学习方向来调整自己的状态。当然了，在国内学习的是美式英语，初到英国在英语上栽了不少跟头，比如说 can't 和 can not 这个梗。而且很多老师也并非是英国本土人，口语非常重，所以他们的英语在当时的我听来简直是天方夜谭，加上当时初到英国人生地不熟，所以就造成了听不懂也没人可以请教的状况。

初到英国，自以为懂得一些英国文化。其实，懂得的东西都是英国很 old-fashion 的一些事情，最近的一些文化我都闻所未闻，跟英国人交流起来就有不少的障碍，导致我几乎不愿意和英国学生聊天。而且，我觉得英国每个私校的中国人都很多，我们学校就更不用说了，宿舍全是中国人。所以，大多数中国人都聚在一起。

中国学生很少和英国及其他国家的学生玩到一起，原因有很多，首要原因就是文化差距大，设想西方和东方的文化，相联系的地方几乎没有，没有相同的节日，所以中国的学生更倾向和本国学生一起玩，毕竟有相同的习俗。而且，很多外国同学他们用的社交软件是国内没法使用的，这更加拉开了中国学生和其他国家学生的交流频率。由于经常很中国学生呆在一起，在英语的进步上和其他西方非英语国家的学生来比就相形见绌了。这就导致了恶性循环，初到英国的学生本想着和国外学生多多交流，但是发现没有中国人经常和外国人交流，这就给新生立下了不好的榜样，也让他们失去了和外国学生交流的信心。总而言之，很大程度上都是语言的沟通出现障碍，其实在文化上只要多沟通就可以缩小差距，但是要是沟通不畅，那就很难去了解文化了，并且造成大面积的影响，甚至很多外国人想和中国人交流，但是却找不到可以聊天的人，也就造成了误解。

至于 EAL，这是英国的一个英语课程。我的老师 Mrs S 经常课堂上练习口语，但是我很少主动说口语，除非老师点名让我回答问题。因为如果我主动回答问题，又说错了的话，我会很尴尬。不过，Mrs S 几乎不会主动叫学生回答问题，所以大部分时间，我只听其他学生说，而我就一直保持安静啦。除了口语课，老师就大部分时间花在讲授一些有关语言的相关知识，但是她很少讲到用法，就算讲到也是一笔提过，并不详细，深入的讲。虽然 EAL 老师们都很友好也很有耐心，但是我和同学都觉得得 EAL 很无聊很浪费时间，因为这个课的教学一点都不系统。老师根本不知道我们真正需要的是什么。可能是他们没有教外语的经验吧。所以，在EAL课上，我学不到任何有用的东西，还不如自己看语法和词汇书，或者刷几道雅思题目。

Reflective Journal by Bob Zhang

2017 年 11 月 27 日

我刚搬进 MM 学校的宿舍时，非常兴奋激动，因为宿舍的建筑风格就是《哈利波特》电影里面看到的那些建筑风格。而且特别棒的是，我住的是两人间，我只有一个舍友，而我初中时的

宿舍是六人间，人太多了。宿舍里有宿管帮我们每周洗两次衣服，而且每天有阿姨来房间搞卫生。在国内的宿舍，我们都需自己动手干这些活。

刚到英国的那个几个星期，我最不适应的还是食堂的饭菜。英国的菜和中国菜实在差别太大。例如，这里的蔬菜几乎都是沙拉。我真不喜欢吃生的蔬菜。食堂里唯一煮熟的蔬菜是西兰花。但是那味道太奇特了，我的意思是它没有油也没有盐，没有任何味道。我们中国一般会放油盐蒜等酱料来炒青菜，英国的蔬菜就好像是水煮一样，没有任何味道。由于太想念中国的菜，我每周末都会去中国城吃中餐，偶尔也会网上点中餐外卖。

我觉得刚到英国时，语言障碍是大部分中国学生面临的一个问题。我和英国学生交流时特别紧张，总觉得自己英文不够流利。因为我在国内学的是美式英文，所以很难适应英国人的语音语调，经常听不懂他们在聊什么。虽然我大部分朋友是中国学生，但是我也有一些英国的朋友，因为我选了地理课，班上都是本土学生为主，我是唯一的中国学生。我和本土学生的友谊只是那种很表面的普通朋友吧。我的意思是我们见面会打个招呼，或者简单聊一下天，但是我却从来没有真正走进他们的生活，最大的原因是文化差异。我们有不一样的文化背景及价值观，所以经常找不到共同的话题。而且我觉得他们的行为也挺奇怪的。比如说，他们有点疯狂，太过外向，玩起来很疯。怎么说呢？例如，他们喜欢在图书馆听超级大声的音乐。。。。。。总之就是我们没有共同兴趣和爱好吧。

学校的 EAL 课本来目的是为了提高国际学生的英文水平及通过雅思考试的。可是，对于这个课的质量，我非常失望。80%的雅思课时都被老师们用于讲解语法和词汇了，这远远不能够帮助我们提高雅思的听说读写四项的分数。雅思考试涉及非常多话题，老师应该一个话题一个话题教学生，让我们掌握相关知识点。

Appendix C: Ethics Forms

Ethics form

<div align="center">

Department of Educational Studies
Ethical Practice in Research Form

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Name: Chunwen su	**Degree: PhD in Education**
Student Number: 33445383	**Year of Degree: 2ⁿᵈ year**
Title of Research: Educational Provision for Linguistic and Cultural Adaptation: A Qualitative Case Study of Teenage Chinese Students in a UK Independent School	
Supervisor: Dr. Vicky Macleroy, Dr.Yangguang Chen	

Section 1:

	YES	**NO**	**N/A**
I have reflected carefully on the research that I propose to undertake.	YES		
I have reviewed the 'Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004)' and 'Good practice in Educational Research Writing' published by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). Note that, depending on your research topic, you might need to review other published ethical guidelines (e.g. BPS, BSA).	YES		
I have discussed the ethical aspects of this research with my supervisor, and my research complies with these guidelines.	YES		

Section 2:

Research Checklist:	**YES**	**NO**	**N/A**
1. Does the study involve participants who are particularly vulnerable or unable to give informed consent? (e.g. young children, children, adults with learning or communication difficulties, patients). Note that you may also need to obtain satisfactory CRB clearance (or equivalent for overseas students).		NO	
2. Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to the groups or individuals to be recruited? (e.g. children at school, parents, patients, people in custody, members of organisations)	YES		
3.In the case of action research will the researcher inform the sponsor/host of the work they propose to undertake? (e.g. head of school)			N/A
4. Will the research be carried out without the knowledge and/or consent of the participants? (e.g. covert observation of people in non-public places)		NO	
5. Will the study involve discussion of sensitive topics (e.g. race, bullying, sexual or drug activity)?		NO	
6. Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?		NO	
7. Will the study involve prolonged data collection or repetitive testing?		NO	

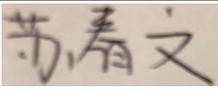| 8. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		NO	

If you have ticked 'no' for all questions in Section 2, then please sign below and arrange for your supervisor to sign this form. If you have ticked 'yes' to any of these questions, then please complete and sign the second page of this form.

Signature of student:	Date:
Signature of supervisor:	Date:

There is an obligation on the supervisor to bring to the attention of the Departmental Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

Section 3:

Please provide a brief outline of your research:

My study aims to investigate how Chinese teenagers are adapting while doing GCSE/A-level in a UK independent school; how they get supported and meet the challenges linguistically and academically; and how they would succeed and achieve in their learning journey.

Please set out the ethical issues arising from your research:

There are some elements of ethnographic research that can cause particular problems with gaining ethnical approval and more importantly ensuring the researchers actually behave ethically when undertaking the research. We have to consider how to protect those who might be offended and how to protect their confidentiality

Please identify how you intend to address these ethical issues:

It is important that all participants should give informed consent before they become part of the research. It means that the potential participants should be told exactly what the research seeks to investigate and what will be done with any of the information that they give to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be used to keep their confidentiality. Participation is entirely voluntary and that they have the right to withdraw from the research any time during the period of data collection.

Comments of Supervisor

I have discussed the research study with Chunwen Su and the importance of anonymity for the school in her research study and the research participants. Chunwen Su is fully aware of the ethical issues in conducting her research and she will be obtaining written consent from all the research participants.

Signature of student: CHUNWEN SU 苏,肴又	Date: 14/11/2017
Signature of supervisor: *U.P.Macleroy*	Date: 16/11/17

You must now submit this form to your Programme Administrator. If you do not submit this form, your dissertation (or research report) will not be able to be submitted. If you do not submit this form by the required deadline, your research will not be considered until the next meeting of the Ethics Committee, and you will not be able to proceed with your research until it has been considered.

STATEMENT OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

This project has been considered using agreed Departmental procedures and is now approved. This approval is valid for a maximum period of five years.