Conceptualising cultural issues and challenges within a UK Information School context.

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Abstract

Introduction:

Students in UK Higher Education are increasingly working together in multicultural group work settings, with many courses entirely or almost entirely featuring international students. Additionally, Master's degree students whose course of study lasts one year are required to adapt to a new educational culture quickly, despite having in some cases little or no prior experience of group work.

However, there is relatively little research into Master's level students' experience of multicultural group work

Aims and objectives:

This study aimed to answer the following question:

What are the most important challenges, issues, conflicts, tensions and also benefits encountered during multicultural student group work in a UK information school?

In doing this, the following sub-questions were used:

- What are the challenges, issues and benefits in multicultural group work?
- What factors impact upon multicultural group work performance?
- When do challenges and issues occur in multicultural group work?
- How do cultural differences affect group performance?
- How does multicultural group work influence students' experience and satisfaction?
- How does the information science context impact on group work?

This was achieved by:

- Use of the literature to identify challenges, issues and conflicts in student group work
- Conducting case study research approach to investigate student multicultural group work using observation and interview data collection methods

- Investigating students' perception towards multicultural group work
- Identifying the factors affecting multicultural group work and
- Producing model of factor affecting multicultural group work

Methodology:

The research study adopted a case study approach and the setting was the Information School at the University of Sheffield, UK. Research participants were Master's degree students studying on the MSc in Information Management and MA in Librarianship programmes.

This is a qualitative research study, which adopts an inductive approach. Data collection methods include the observation of students conducting a group work assignment and 26 semi-structured interviews in which participants were questioned regarding their experiences of multicultural group work across several modules. In addition, institutional and module documents were used to provide a comprehensive perspective on each case.

The analysis of the documents and observation data alongside interviews was used to produce the case study reports. Furthermore, the thematic analysis of the interview data was undertaken to identify and conceptualise the themes.

Findings:

Factors such as the identity of group mates, language, whether the group was self-selected or allocated, assignment design, and support available from tutors and academic staff were all found to strongly influence students' experience of group work.

The MA Librarianship cohort (primarily home students) were found to be reluctant to associate and collaborate with individuals on other courses and encountered difficulties when working with students from other countries and cultures. These

international students in turn reported feeling intimidated, stressed or undervalued in such a situation.

A model was developed to show the relationship between the various factors that influenced multicultural group work, using Tuckman & Jensen's (1977) stages of group development as a framework.

Conclusion:

This research makes a contribution towards understanding the variety of factors that influence multicultural group work, specifically at Master's-level and also a contribution to understanding group formation.

The way students chose their group members is linked with their sense of familiarity and similarity with other students. The majority of participants preferred to work with their friends and students who shared similar academic attitudes with them.

There are various factors which impact on students' group work experience. Some of which are unique to multicultural group work. Factors such as English language skills, student's name, communication style and student understanding of the task are present in multicultural groups. In addition, factors such as assessment and design of group work task had major impact on students' experience and their view towards the group work. Students were less likely to engage in activities, which do not bear any mark, and they aim to achieve higher marks.

The research can be used in the design and management of multicultural group work tasks and activities to achieve a better understanding of group dynamics and improving the student experience.

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1. INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes four sections. In the first section the value and relevance of the research topic is addressed before the aims and objectives of the research are presented and the researcher's personal reasons and motivations behind choosing this research topic are presented. In the fourth and final section, the structure of the thesis is outlined with a short of summary of each chapter.

1.1. RESEARCH RATIONALE

European universities host millions of international students, and according to the European Commission (2013) Europe has 46% of the total share of international students. In 2014-2015, 24870 out of 8220 (59%) of postgraduate students at The University of Sheffield were international students (HESA, 2015). It is predicted that the number of international students in Europe will be doubled by 2020. It is not surprising then that universities are trying to maintain the quality of their courses not only to increase international student satisfaction, but also to ensure they attract more international students every year. International students not only bring economic benefits to UK universities but also to the country, it is reported that they contribute £7 billion a year to the UK economy and £120 million to the city of Sheffield alone (Coughlan, 2013). These numbers also highlight the importance of maintaining the number of international students by ensuring the best possible experience for them. Nevertheless, there was a sharp decline in number of international students in 2015 due to changes in UK students visa regulations (the removal of the post-study work visa) (Morgan, 2016).

The UK is said to host the majority of international students studying in Europe and 'internationalisation' has become a commonly discussed topic (De Vita & Case, 2003) and forms an important part of most UK universities' strategy. Internationalisation has brought both advantages and disadvantages to UK higher education (HE); international students are a major source of income for UK universities, as they pay

higher tuition fees than both home students and European Union (EU) students (De Vita & Case, 2003; Ippolito, 2007). However, it has been noted that in multicultural classes it can be difficult to engage all students during class (De Vita, 2001). According to Ippolito, (2007) the financial incentive of international students obscures the shortcomings of multicultural education. In the UK, the term 'international students' is widely used to mean non-UK or EU students and the term 'home students' refers to EU and UK students (Morrison, Merrick, Higgs, & Le Métais, 2005) The combination of home and international students has brought about changes in UK HE education. Student satisfaction in multicultural classes is potentially different from classes with purely domestic students; in order to satisfy both international and home students, it is essential to identify suitable ways to meet both groups' needs, perceptions, and expectations (De Vita, 2002; De Vita & Case, 2003).

Ippolito (2007) believes both home and international students suffer from institutional shortcomings in supporting multicultural education. She emphasises that multicultural education should aim to achieve educational and cultural goals. (Evans, N., Wilson, F., Housley, H., Kimoto, L., Silver, T., Rhodes, G., Cox, L., Ebner, J. & Kessler, (2009, p.103) identify that:

"For domestic students, the transition to university can be exciting, unfamiliar and challenging. For international students it is all that and more. Much is unfamiliar to a new international student: the culture, the environment, the climate, and usually the language. The challenges are numerous and the learning curve is steep. Most universities recognise this and offer a variety of support services, the most common of which is new student orientation"

Moreover, De Vita & Case (2003) suggest that because of an increase in 'global citizenship', teaching students to how to work and live in multicultural societies should be one of the educational goals. After graduation, both home and international students are likely to work in multicultural organisations at some point and their ability to perform in multicultural teams would play a crucial role in their future professional life. Furthermore, it should be considered that every culture has

unique features. Concerning education, it has been identified that students with different backgrounds and cultures have differing motivations, attitudes, and expectations toward education (Evans, Haughey, & Murphy, 2008) For instance, Asian students have been found to be more likely to study in a group than Western learners (Latchem & Jung, 2009). Therefore, in order to meet the needs of international students, their culture should be considered in instructional design (McLoughlin & Oliver, 2000). Supporting this view, Seufert (2008, p.411) stresses that *"Culture is even a critical influence factor on the acceptance and use of learning systems."*

Vygotsky (1978) notes how an individual's cultural cognition framework impacts on their information processing. Joy & Kolb (2009) emphasise that cultural differences between students have a major influence on their learning process. Building on this, De Vita (2002) argues that in multicultural education, teaching methods should be able to consider and satisfy both home and international students' needs and if not, a teaching method for multicultural education should be developed. According to Thorley & Gregory (1994) group work can offer opportunities which individual work cannot. Group work has great worth to the educational system because of its inherent advantages, such as a noticeable increase in students' learning outcomes compared with individual learning (Thorley & Gregory 1994). However, group work is mentioned as one of the key challenges of multicultural education for both home and international students - it has been noted that students from different cultural backgrounds face difficulties when asked to work in a group (Ippolito, 2007). The quote below is taken from a UKCISA (2004) report which is from an Indonesian postgraduate student; this highlights various challenges for international students when working or communicating with home students:

"Tell us how to mix with UK people… because in fact there's lots of barriers to get close to them. Sometimes UK students underestimate international students' capabilities and it is hard to work in a group." (Merrick, 2004, p.67)

Ippolito (2007) states that culture has impact on students' group work outcomes in both positive and negative ways. She mentions that in multicultural groups, students

usually spend more time on completing a task than when in a group with group members from same culture. Also, she describes language as a barrier, which makes communication slower and more challenging. Reviewing the literature shows that culture potentially plays a major role in students' group work experience.

However, the majority of the research on multicultural group work in higher education are conducted in the field of business and marketing, mostly in management and organisational studies such as Popov et al. (2012). This highlights the importance of conducting research in different disciplines (i.e. information science) to establish whether the findings are similar or dissimilar to those of previous studies. Understanding the factors affecting multicultural group work is especially important as students mostly learn their group work skills during their education and if they do not gain successful experience it may affect their performance in their future careers. Understanding these factors also is very valuable for the information science field as graduates are expected to have advanced team-working skills be able to work in diverse working environments (QAA, 2015).

 This study then, will focus on issues and challenges students face during their multicultural group work in a UK information school.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

Main research question: What are the most important challenges, issues, conflicts, tensions and also benefits encountered during multicultural student group work in UK information school?

a. What are the challenges, issues and benefits in multicultural group work?

b. What factors impact upon multicultural group work performance?

c. When do challenges and issues occur in multicultural group work?

d. How do cultural differences affect group performance?

e. What are the factors causing the conflicts?

f. What is the role of cultural differences in multicultural group work?

g. How does multicultural group work influence students' experience and satisfaction?

h. How does the information science context impact on group work?

Research objectives

1) To use the literature to identify challenges, conflicts and tensions in student collaboration in higher education

2) To use the literature to investigate and identify what challenges students experience in multicultural education

3) To explore the research questions through multiple case studies of group activities in selected modules in a Russell Group university

4) To explore students' perceptions of multicultural group work in different contexts

   - To provide another sense of multicultural experience

5) Exploring the factors affects the way the groups perform

6) To collect empirical data through observation and individual or group interview

7) To identify the factors affecting group work performance using multiple source of data

8) To present a case study report

9) To analyse the data, using thematic analysis and data triangulation, to provide insight into the tensions, conflicts, issues and challenges in the selected cases

10) To compare findings with the relevant research literature.

11) To produce a model for multicultural group work

1.3. PERSONAL MOTIVATION

The research topic was chosen by the researcher due to personal interest and experience. As she worked towards her MSc in Information Management as an international student at The University of Sheffield, she had the opportunity to personally experience multicultural group work. She experienced both positive and negative examples of multicultural group work during this time.

With this valuable perspective, she decided to investigate how culture can impact upon students' experience and group performance and provides an insight into multicultural group work.

Also, she wished to use the research findings to help improve both international and home students' experience.

1.4. THESIS STRUCTURE

Brief summaries of the chapters in the thesis follow below:

Chapter 2 Literature review

In this chapter, the relevant literature is reviewed. The chapter provides background knowledge for the study and also highlights existing gaps in the wider knowledge.

Chapter 3 Methodology

In this chapter, the philosophical stand of the research is discussed. The methods used in this research are explained and discussed beside other possible methods. The research design is presented and every step is explained in detail.

Chapter 4 Case study report: the case of Information Resources and Information Literacy

In this chapter, the case context is presented followed by the narrative of the group process for each Information Literacy (IL) multicultural group subject to this study. After this, findings of the thematic analysis of the case are presented.

Chapter 5 Case study report: The case of Knowledge and Information Management

In this chapter, the case context is presented followed by the narratives of group process for each Knowledge and Information Management (KIM) multicultural group subject to this study. After this, findings of the thematic analysis of the case are presented.

Chapter 6 Case study report: The minicase; themes not related to specific cases; cross-case analysis

This chapter includes the narratives and thematic analysis of the MINICASE multicultural groups. In addition, themes which were not related to any specific case are also discussed. This is followed by a cross-case analysis which compares all three cases to highlight their similarities and differences.

Chapter 7 Discussion

In this chapter, the main findings are presented and discussed using the literature to explain how the findings are consistent with existing knowledge and highlight the distinctive findings.

Chapter 8 Model

The model illustrates all factors found to impact upon students' group work performance and experience and is presented and described in this chapter.

Chapter 9 Conclusion

The research questions and aims and objectives are revisited and answered in this chapter. The theoretical implications for the research and implications for educators are discussed. Additionally, the research limitations and recommendations are presented and discussed.

1.5. DEFINITION OF TERMS:

In this research:

The term *course* refers to the whole programme of study, such as MSc in Information Management or MA in Librarianship. Each of these courses includes different modules.

Module refers to all aspects of a module, including assessments, tasks, handouts etc.

Classroom refers to the location and the time students spend in classroom sessions which support a module.

Help and support refers to assistance provided by a tutor or lecturer to students in terms of the needs of the specific module, e.g. tutorial sessions.

Tutor refers to a teaching assistant (often a PhD student) but not a member of academic staff

Lecturer refers to a member of academic staff who teaches students studying on a particular module.

Other key terms, e.g. *multicultural* are more complex in meaning and will be explored in the literature review

2. CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, background knowledge for understanding multicultural group work and potential issues affecting it is provided. The chapter starts by providing an overview of what learning is and how it is defined in the literature by introducing different learning theories and discussing the theories, which are widely adopted in UK universities. Following this, group work and its significance to student learning is investigated using the literature and after that multicultural group work and the factors affecting it are discussed. The section finishes by reviewing the definition of culture and theories which are used to justify and explain the role of culture in human behaviour and attitudes.

These areas were especially central to review as they provided the background knowledge for the researcher, helping her to understand the learning theories and the reasons behind why constructivism and social constructivism theories are extensively used in UK education. Group work is considered as one of the main elements of social constructive learning theory; as such it was essential to understand how groups work and what are the common group work characteristics.

As the research aims to investigate multicultural group work, it was necessary for the researcher to understand how culture is defined in different theories, and what cultural differences mean in the literature. Consequently, understanding how multicultural groups work and the issues surrounding it was vital.

The researcher used her understanding and knowledge gained by reviewing the literature to design the research questions and interview questions.

2.1. LEARNING

2.1.1. PHILOSOPHY AND THEORIES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

In this section, philosophies and theories regarding teaching, namely objectivism, behaviourism, cognitivism, consructivism and social constructivism are reviewed since doing so presents the evolution of educational thinking, which has been influential in UK higher education (HEA, 2009).

2.1.1.1. OBJECTIVISM

The concept of objectivism has been widely discussed by researchers of education for some time. Lakoff (1987, p.158) notes that objectivism is "one version of basic realism" according to which reality exists independently of humans. Lakoff (1987) outlines the major assumptions of objectivism as (a) there is a real world consisting of entities structured according to their properties and relations, categorisation of these entities is based on their properties; (b) the real world is subject to certain immutable 'rules' so that it can be modelled; (c) symbols are representations of reality and can only be meaningful to the degree that they refer to reality; (d) the human mind processes abstract symbols in a computer-like fashion so that it mirrors nature; (e) human thought is symbol- manipulation and it is independent of the human organism; and (f) the meaning of the world exists objectively, independent of the human mind and it is external to the knower.

An objectivist educator believes that there is one true and correct reality, so objectivism assumes all people achieve the same understanding of a phenomenon. From an objectivist point of view, the world is seen as a real structural object and furthermore its structure can be modelled for the learner's mind. In other words, learners' minds may mirror reality and its structure by making sense of its theoretical models and conceptual symbols, but the meaning they produce is seen as an external object, which is formed by the real world's structure. Objectivism sees learning as a process of mapping these concepts onto a learner's mind (D. H. Jonassen, 1991). Lakoff (1987, p.163) understands knowledge in the following terms:

"*knowledge consists in correctly conceptualizing and categorizing things in the world and grasping the objective connections among those things and those categories*".

Objectivism maintains that learning is simply defined as a change in learner behaviour and/or a change in the learner's cognitive structures. The aim of education in an objectivist system is to help learners understand the real world, which it is not achieved by encouraging them to develop their own understanding and interpretation of the world but rather by interpreting the world for them through the teacher or, as they are named in objectivism, the instructor. The objectivist approach is a teacher-based system where students are passive and accept the given information by their instructors. Therefore, teaching should be designed to effectively transfer the objective knowledge in the learner's head (Duffy and Jonassen, 1992; McPherson and Nunes, 2004) .

Two main learning theories are based on objectivism: behaviourism and cognitivism.

2.1.1.2.   BEHAVIOURISM

Even though learning has been defined in different ways, the majority of definitions prior to 1960 considered learning to be a change in behaviour (Greeno, 1980). Thorndike (1913) introduced "*connectionism*" theory, which was later used as a base for behaviourist theory by many educational theorists, but was itself was inspired by Pavlov's classical conditioning theory, Thorndike believed learning occurs by "trial and error". He emphasised that basic learning includes connections between physical experience and responses, which are evident themselves in behavioural form. Thorndike believed that humans learn when the result of an experiment is satisfactory and do not learn when the response is annoying or punishing (Schunk, 2011, p.74). According to Driscoll (2000), behaviourism was first introduced to American psychology by John B. Watson in 1913. Its main exponent, B. F. Skinner was said to emphasise behaviour as a basic subject matter of psychology. Skinner based his theory on Thorndike but believed that learning is "trial and success" rather than "trial and error" (Skinner, 1991). Behaviourism was recognised as one of the most popular learning theories for a significant period of time. In 1976, Hergenhahn (1976, p.57) rated behaviourism as "perhaps the greatest learning theory of all

time". Watson (2009, p.11) defines it as "a natural science that takes the whole field of human adjustments as its own. It is the business of behaviouristic psychology to... predict and control human activity". Merriam et al. (1999) conclude that most common assumptions regarding the process of learning from the work of Thorndike, Tolman, Guthrie, Hull, Watson and Skinner as:

(a) The focus of study is observable behaviour rather than the internal thought process; in other words, learning can occur through a change in behaviour;

(b) The individual's behaviour is shaped by their surrounding environment. What learners learn is determined by elements in the environment rather than by the individual learner.

(c) Finally, the most important: 'reinforcement' – making it more possible that an event that has already occurred will happen again.

Behaviourism explains that humans' specific reactions and responses are learned from specific incentivising situations. In the behaviourist theory, it is assumed that in the early stage of the learning process, the learner's mind is blank - this belief highlights the importance of sensory experience in formulating the content of the mind.

Skinner's approach to the psychology of learning was concerned with a search of functional relationship between environmental variables and behaviour. Skinner defines learning as a more-or-less permanent change in behaviour that can be detected by observing an organism over a period of time (Driscoll, 2000). Behaviourism as a learning theory relies wholly on observable behaviours but does not put emphasis on mental activities. What the learner *does* is important and not what the learner *thinks*. As such behaviourists contend that learning is exclusively the acquisition of new behaviour. Behaviourist systems are mostly teacher-centred. A teacher within this system would specify educational objectives and then define the desired experience in order to achieve the intended learning outcome by producing/shaping specific behaviour (Merriam et al., 1999). One of the main educational goals is to prepare the students for their everyday and professional lives.

Behaviourism believes that to achieve this goal, the similarity between in-classroom and outside-classroom experiences should be maximised (Hergenhahn, 1976).

Behaviourist learning is based on conditioning, of which there are two types:

1. The classical conditioning that occurs when a natural reflex responds to a stimulus, like the famous "Pavlov dog observation". Classical conditioning is simply, when a certain stimulus is followed by a certain expected response (S--->R).

 2. Behavioural or operant conditioning (also called 'behaviour modification' or 'behaviour shaping' in the literature) occurs when a response to a stimulus is reinforced. This is essentailly a feedback system, wherefore a reward or reinforcement follows the response to a stimulus, then the response would be more likely to occur in future.

This concept of reinforcement central to Skinner's behaviourism was initially expressed by E. L. Thorndike as the "Law of Effect" (Driscoll, 2000). There are two critical fields of thought in the behaviourist learning system:

1. In order to understand learning one would have to look for a change of behaviour. 2. If one wants to be certain of what learners are actually doing, then the learners must be observed.

These beliefs highlight the most common criticism towards behaviourism. Behavioural theory does not account for all kinds of learning, since it disregards the important activities of the mind as it does not cover the whole learning process. Also, it is not able to explain certain kinds of learning such as the recognition of new language patterns by young children, for which there is no reinforcement mechanism (Driscoll, 2000; Hill, 2001; Jarvis et al., 2003). Behaviourism's limitations have brought the need for new learning theories to address its weaknesses and the area it does not recognise. Cognitivism is introduced as one of the theories after behaviourism.

2.1.1.3. COGNITIVE THEORIES

The study of cognitivism did not directly follow from behaviourist theorists like Tolman and Pavlov using cognitive concept in their research. Rather, Driscoll (2000) claims that the invention of the computer significantly contributed to the research of learning and investigation into memory, perception and learning. In cognitive systems, learners are viewed similarly to computers during learning process - they receive the information, process it and store it and the learning outcome is in the form of learned capability. Unlike the behaviourist view, cognitivists believe there exists an intermediary stage between the learner receiving raw information and producing knowledge which is learners' information processing. Bandura, (1986, p.51) defines it thus:

"Learning is largely an information processing activity in which information about the structure of behaviour and about environmental is transformed into symbolic representations that serve as guides for action."

Bruner (1966) claims that learning happens in three different ways: *enactively*, *vicariously/symbolically*, by observing model performs and *iconic* learning. In enactive learning, learning may be a result of one's actions; if the result is successful and satisfactory, the behaviour will be retained. If, however it leads to failure, the behaviour will be discarded. This definition might seem similar to behaviourist learning theory, but in the cognitive view behavioural consequences are the source of information and motivations rather than strengthening behaviours. In this learning process, when learners succeed they understand they are doing the task correctly, otherwise they would avoid learning behaviours, which may lead to failure and dissatisfaction. Within this theory, it is emphasised that learners learn by using their cognitive ability rather than consequences. *Vicarious, and symbolic,* learning mostly occurs when learners observe. This observation might include watching TV, cartoons, reading books, etc. Iconic learning refers to a mode of learning which is between enactive and symbolic; in *iconic* learning, knowledge is present in the form of visual images. This usually includes pictorial demonstrations like graphs, maps, films or videos. In *iconic* learning, the learner develops the ability to link external objects internally as icons or images. However, when learning more complicated

skills or objectives, learning will be achieved by a combination of observation and practice/performance (Ellis, 2013; Schunk, 2011).

Jean Piaget's theory is claimed to be a combination of empiricism (skills learned by sensory experience) and nativism (the belief that some skills are innate and humans are born with them). He even considered his theory to be constructivism and called it cognitive constructivism as he believed knowledge is not completely produced internally by the learner, but it is developed through learners' interaction with surrounding environments. Piaget claims children learn by actively approaching their surroundings and obtaining and constructing knowledge; he also emphasised that their actions are neither aimless or random. In this view, children's' learning has a direct relationship with their cognitive development, meaning older children are capable of learning more complicated skills (Driscoll, 2000). In this view, learning occurs when the task is partially known to the child and partially unknown. As a result, the known part will be integrated with the prior knowledge and the unknown part will make small changes in the child's cognitive structure (Hergenhahn, 1988).

Different areas of Piaget's theory have been criticised, for example, he conducted his research on a limited number of children aged under 15 so his research cannot be generalised. Additionally, he sees the stages of development as distinct and separate but as Bruner, (1968) claims cognitive stages are not completely distinct. In addition, the theory is been criticised since Piaget's theory is more concerned with mental processes and the relationship between age and learning process rather than the relationship between learners and their surrounding world (Jarvis et al., 2003).

Constructivism in a cognitivist light defines learning as a constructive process. In this process, learners build an internal illustration of knowledge that is their personal interpretation of their experience of their surrounding world. In this view it is believed that knowledge is not the truth, and is not imposed upon learners from the outside but it is the result of an internal process. As a result, individuals have different interpretations of the world (Schunk, 2011). These illustrations contain specific structures and linkages with other existing knowledge and the foundation of the learner's knowledge structure and these structures can be changed when the

learner gains new knowledge or modifies existing knowledge. Learning is an active process where meaning is developed on the basis of experience (Bednar et al., 1992). Learners' engagement in deep realistic and pertinent problem solving facilitates them to develop meaningful illustrations, these illustrations help them to apply knowledge more instinctively to new conditions since learners are able to compare new conditions with known and related conditions. The possibility of applying knowledge increases when learners build more links across their related knowledge structure. Learners will perform better when their learning context is closely similar to the actual context (Grabinger and Dunlop, 1995). McPherson & Nunes (2004) believe cognitive constructivism outlines how knowledge emerges through the learning process with a series of meanings being built together within a greater construct; these meanings relate to the culture and context the learner studies in. The individual's experience guides their understanding of the subject being studied.

The major development from cognitive constructivism was social constructivism, which Lev Vygotstkii established. Vygotskii's ideas were based on Piaget's theory of cognitive constructivism, but he believed that the relationship between child and reality was missing from Piaget's work so he concentrated on discovering the actual relationship of children's developmental level to their learning capability (Vygotsky & Vygotskiǐ, 1978). He highlighted the role of collaboration in order to improve the level of development. He believes children learn by imitating but they can only imitate what is already in their developmental level so they use scaffolding in order to absorb the tasks which are in proximal development (Jarvis et al., 2003). He concludes developmental processes do not overlap with learning processes but follow the learning process, occurring at a later stage. This causes the "zone of proximal development" (Vygotskiǐ, 1978, p.90). He adds that each individual has its own proximate development as such they have different potentials, He emphasises the learners' potential would be better observed during their teamwork with guidance and later this idea was used as a base for social constructivism (Jarvis et al., 2003). This social aspect of constructivism has an important role on an individual level as well as the social level, as collaborative interactions enable individuals to

examine the viability of their understandings, ideas, and assumptions (Savery and Duffy, 1996).

2.1.1.4. CONSTRUCTIVISM AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

As mentioned above, social constructivism is based on cognitive constructivism theory and it shares some epistemological views with it, but in some areas they have different principles (Staples New & Cochran, 2007). In cognitive constructivism, the teacher's role is to provide direct instruction but in social constructivism, teachers play the facilitator role; collaboration between teacher and students is a fundamental part of the learning process, which enables learners to construct their new knowledge. In the constructivist view, as children develop, they experience the world in subjective ways, interacting with their own given surrounding enables them to learn. But in social constructivism, learning happens when children are involved in social activities and interacting with other learners or their teachers. In this theory, learning is known as a social, dialogical process in which communities of practitioners socially negotiate the meaning of phenomena (Jonassen et al., 1995). Similar understandings and shared meanings are developed within interaction between students and teachers; Grabinger and Dunlop (1995) call this the cultural aspect of knowledge. In social constructivism, children use conversation to solve their "cognitive conflicts" this happens through social processes as they believe knowledge exists within social actors and it could be learned by communicating with others. In other words according to Jonassen et al. (1995) learning is conversation, and the thinking and intelligence of a community of learners is distributed throughout the group. Knowledge and intelligence is not owned by each individual, but rather is shared by the community of practice.

Currently the term 'constructivism' is loosely used as a wide-ranging approach to teaching and learning at the practice level. This view is part of the discourse of UK higher education - for example, many pioneering educational researchers and academics identify themselves as constructivists (Biggs, 1999; Cox et al. 2008; Levy & Petrulis, 2012; McPherson & Nunes, 2004). As such, QAA (2007, p.6) emphasises the

importance of active and deep learning and developing problem solving skills in students.

"Students should be assisted to learn actively and in depth and to develop problem-solving skills and higher-order skills of reasoning and analysis in a structured and supportive environment."

As Hergenhahn (1988) states, in the classroom the teacher's role is to introduce ambiguity or problems and to help learners to make sense of it for themselves. This is usually achieved by asking students questions or asking them to work in small groups and trying to engage them in the teaching process.

Constructivism is the approach currently advocated for teachers across UK higher education. For example in his highly cited book, Biggs (1999, p. 12) argues that constructivism is "empirically sound and easily translates into practice". The University of Sheffield clearly values constructive learning as it emphasises that graduates should be taught to be able to work collaboratively toward shared goals and be a constructive team members by practicing constructive learning during their study (The University of Sheffield, 2011).

For this research (as mentioned earlier) it was important to understand the learning theory which is adopted in UK and inherently by the University of Sheffield. This enabled the researcher to obtain great understanding of the logic behind course and module design. The review clarified the importance of the group activities within the classroom and group assignments. In addition, as the researcher previous study (undergraduate and before) were in behaviourist educational system she benefited from fully reviewing and understanding existing learning theories and their similarities and differences. This helped her to achieve better understanding of the UK higher education. In addition, the review also used in designing the interview questions to investigate the participants different previous educational background and its impact on their performance and their view towards group work.

In addition, this understanding helped the researcher to identify that this emerges as one of the aspect to consider in analysis of case studies, as the learning approach will have an impact on how group work set up.

2.1.2. GROUP WORK

Group and group work are the main focus of this research. As such it is important to understand why group work is one of the main component of social constructivism and what is considered as a 'group'. Stages of group dynamics are discussed and compared with multicultural group dynamics. In addition, two most used modes of team/group work, collaboration and cooperation, are explained and compared.

2.1.2.1. PEER INTERACTION AND GROUP WORK

Different strategies can be used in order to implement the constructivist approach in an institution. Goodsell (1992) believes learning is an active and constructive process, the learner needs to engage in active and purposeful work using new information in order to learn new skills, information or ideas. In collaborative learning, students not only receive new information but they also create something new with that information. This process of absorption and creation plays a vital role in student learning. The constructive classroom provides an opportunity for students to actively construct their knowledge. One of the most popular models of teaching and learning which is used by constructive approach is active learning (Clark, 2009). Active learning involves choosing a suitable instructional method in order to engage students in appropriate cognitive processing (Clark, 2009). One of the active learning exercises is group work, which includes collaborative or cooperative group activities. Although group work was used prior to social constructive theory, this theory highlights its role in the learning process (Frey et al., 2009).

Biggs (2013) argues featuring group work as a learning activity helps to achieve constructivist learning. Schwartz et al. (2009) add that students engaging in a group work activity will have the opportunity to discuss their ideas within the group and hear other students' thoughts and conception of the task. In the other words,

conceptual improvement can occur when individuals share their perspectives and understanding and examine them within the context of others, adapting their internal illustration in response to that process of negotiation (Bednar et al., 1992). Without group work, students' knowledge would be limited to their own experience (Frey et al., 2009). Also, it has been discussed that changing ideas and negotiation within the groups can increase student engagement in the learning process in addition to improving their critical thinking skills and exercise a higher level of thought by putting them in charge of their own learning (Gokhale, 1995; Totten et al., 1992). Moreover Johnson & Johnson (1986) claim this would enable students to retain information from class longer than students who work individually.

In addition to the above, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) accredits programmes in information science using its Professional Knowledge and Skill Base (PKSB). The PKSB includes aspects of both skills and professional expertise alongside CILIP's own ethics and values. Collaborative skills, including the ability to share knowledge and contribute as part of a community of practice have been stressed in the PKSB (CILIP, 2013a). Also, CILIP lists collaborative and team working skills as one of the main skills for jobs in the information science field (CILIP, 2015, 2016). However, in CILIP's PKSB's wheel team work and ability of perform as part of a group is not mentioned and highlighted (CILIP, 2013b).

Subject knowledge and skills stated in the Benchmark Statement are highly similar to those featured in the PKSB. As such, the importance of team working skills are also highlighted in the Subject Benchmark Statement for librarianship and information, knowledge, records and archive management (2015). For example, in the 'Skills' section under 'Management, planning and strategy' section it is stated that:

"Applying interpersonal skills to ensure effective teamwork and collaboration." (QAA, 2015, p.12)

Because of the nature of the programmes there is considerable emphasis on inquiry and evidence-based learning in these courses. In addition, the majority of learning and teaching is self-directed and student-centred (QAA, 2015). As a result, group

work assessment and discussion groups are a valuable part of these courses and all students are asked to work in a group at some point during their course of study.

Group activity is generally divided in two main categories - collaboration and cooperation, which are both based on constructivism. According to Dillenbourg (1999) there is an active debate regarding the definition of cooperative and collaborative learning. The terms have been used to mean the same thing, but the ways in which they are different should be considered (Roberts, 2004). The use of the terms "collaborative" and "cooperative learning" have developed independently of each other - collaborative learning theories emerged from the humanities and social sciences, in which the work usually explores nature of knowledge as a social construction and the role of authority (Matthews et al. 1995). However, cooperative learning is mostly based on American roots, and was introduced by Dewey, who believed it would help students to be more active and involved in learning and as a result would enhance their learning outcomes (Dewey, 2003). Panitz (1999) claims cooperative learning has more quantitative approach, and it is mostly interested in the final product or learning achievement while collaborative learning has more qualitative approach and in addition to the interest in the learning outcome it is interested in learners interaction or the process of learning while doing. He also adds that cooperative learning is potentially more teacher-centred but collaborative learning tends to be more learner-centred.

The terms collaborative and cooperative have been used with careful distinction in by some researcher but in vast body of literature these terms have been used interchangeably. Both terms cooperative and collaborative learning are used to discuss group work activities in education, it can be seen in work of Sharan, (1980) and Johnson et al. (1998). These terms will be discussed in detail later in sections 2.1.2.4. and 2.1.2.5.

2.1.2.2. THE GROUP

The group has been interpreted in different ways. Some scholars define it as being when two or more people connect in some way (Bonner, 1959), and group members have internal interaction related to their connection (Stogdill, 1959) but the group is not only limited to the number of the people involved, those working in the group also need to share a common interest (Arbuckle, 1957). Groups working with specific learning aims have different characteristics from other kinds of group work. In educational group work learning is the main goal, all group members must participate in the task and there can exist a rivalry between groups, which in turn places extra pressure upon the group members (Bany & Johnson, 1964).

Cartwright (1968, p.7) defines the group dynamics as:

"A field of dedication to advancing knowledge about the nature of groups, the laws of their development, and their development, and their interrelations with individual, other groups, and larger institutions"

There has been vast body of research related to small group processes. Many researchers such as Schutz (1966) and Gibb (1961) and Bales (1955) and Tuckman & Jensen, 1977 and Tuckman (1965) proposed different frameworks in order to categorise the group dynamics stages involved in the group process. Most theories are similar to the model Tuckman introduced as stages of small group development. A few years after his initial model, Tuckman critically reviewed the available models and compared them with his model and concluded that the majority of available research in this area is highly similar to his model (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). He then revised and improved his model, which is now one of the most cited sources.

According to Bonner (1959) the dynamics feature of the group is present because of group members' relationships toward each other and the nature of the task changing constantly. These changes accrue since members are under pressure and try to reduce their tensions. In addition, throughout group activity the membership and the amount of pressure on the group changes.

Tuckman and Jensen (1977) identify the general stages of group development:

1. **Forming:**

   During the early stage of group creation, group members need a leader to guide and direct them. Group members try to establish leadership themselves and make an impression. At this stage, members are not usually clear about their responsibilities. The leader is responsible for clarifying the task, the goal, and the external relationship.

2. **Storming:**

   As team members get more familiar with the task and group conflict, dissatisfaction and competition can rise between group members. Here, decision-making is difficult and the level of tension is higher as members try to lead the group. Some members can become more dominant and aggressive. If the situation is handled well, the group may be able to achieve more realistic objectives and achieve clarification.

3. **Norming:**

   In this stage, agreement is developed and trust and confidence is built. Group members actively share knowledge and contribute and start solving group problems together. Roles and responsibilities are clear and unity is strong. Major group decisions are made by all group members, and smaller ones may made by individuals. Team members may engage in social activities and they get to know each other and form this familiarisation will provide more honest feedback for each other. Team members can share their feelings and ideas and develop the sense of belonging to the group.

4. **Performing:**

   After passing the last three steps, teamwork is established. At this stage, the leader simply needs to delegate the tasks. Disagreements may still happen, but are able to be solved within the group. Group members help and support each other and the team's productivity is improved.

5. Deforming and Mourning:

This is the last stage. The group task is finished and members usually leave the group. If the group process is successful the members may feel positive and happy about their performance and the group performance. The first four stages of this model are generally the cited in the literature, as opposed to this stage, which researchers less commonly cite in their research.

2.1.2.3. MULTICULTURAL GROUP DYNAMICS

Research shows the group dynamics is different between mono-cultural and multicultural groups.

Snow, et al. (1996, p.12) define the multicultural group as follows:

"A multinational team, in contrast to teams from a single culture, entails differences among members in language, interpersonal styles, and a host of other factors. Such differences can create a balance (cohesion and unity) or an imbalance (subgroup dominance, member exclusion, and other undesirable outcomes), depending on how they are handled."

In general, multicultural groups are a type of group including one or more person from different cultural backgrounds. Students from different cultural backgrounds have different learning styles (Joy & Kolb, 2009). Also, Hofstede (1980) claims group members' culture has direct impact on their behaviour in the group work. Cultural differences have a direct impact on the group dynamics, as students need to develop working relationships and appreciate cultural differences. Usually in the storming stage, cultural differences are apparent and may bring further challenges to the group process (Snow et al., 1996). This fact highlights the role of culture in the success of multicultural group work, it is important to understand how people comprehend their culture and how they interpret their surrounding environment by comparing it to their learned culture. (Cox, Lobel, & McLeod, 1991) findings also support Hofstede's theory.

2.1.2.4. COOPERATION

Learning task structure can be different according to the grouping system (either collaboration or cooperation) in use. This means students can work on individually-set tasks, in homogeneous or heterogeneous small groups in which students may or may not be permitted to help one another with their work, and with or without a teacher (Slavin, 1980). Cooperative learning is more structured than collaborative learning (Oxford, 1997).

'Cooperation' is an adaptable concept meaning to work together as one group in reaching a common objective, while also attempting to reduce the discernibility of the differences between the individual work of different group members (Roberts, 2004). Cooperative work is accomplished by the division of the learning task's work load between students in a group as an activity where each member would be responsible for a set part of the problem solving task (Roschellel and Teasley, 1994). Olsen & Kagan, (1992, p.8) define it as such:

"Cooperative Learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others."

Cooperative learning changes the interpersonal reward structure and dynamics of the classroom, from a competitive reward structure to a cooperative one. Slavin & Ashman (1980) assert that in cooperative learning, one student's success helps another to be successful. Hänze & Berger (2007) claim that controlled forms of cooperative learning can cause better learning outcomes than traditional methods of direct instruction. Bruner (1985) adds that students involved in the cooperative learning need to deal with different understanding of a given learning task this would help them to improve their problem solving skills. As students support each other during the task, their external knowledge and critical thinking is internalised and converted into intellectual functioning tools. Students then use their critical thinking skills to apply their knowledge to different situations (Jones & Jones, 2008). As can be seen in the literature, cooperative learning brings similar advantages to

student learning as collaborative learning. It enables students by helping each other to maximise their learning outcomes (Johnson et al. 1998). Like collaborative learning, the main element of cooperative learning is team work and the goal shared (Slavin, 1996) this helps students to improve their cognitive processes and also learn to listen and accommodate other students opinions (Blumenfeld et al.,1996).

Johnson & Johnson, (1994) and Li & Lam, (2005) and Oxford, (1997) identify the main cooperative learning principals:

- *Cognitive development:* This is often viewed as the main goal of cooperative learning

- *Team formation*: teams are usually formed in different ways. Sometimes students choose their team members, sometimes they are allocated to their teams by the instructors

- *Team size:* smaller groups can perform better. Beebe & Masterson (2003) consider group of three as a small group. Davis (2009) believe the ideal group size for a successful group work is four to five members however Csernica et al. (2002) emphasis four members is the best size.

- *Positive interdependence:* in order to complete the task successfully, each group member takes responsibility for part of the task, which needs to be done in the best possible way; then when the parts are integrated, the final result will be successful. As the success of the task depends on each member, so each members' level of effort is vital.

- *Individual accountability:* As mentioned above, each member is responsible to finish his or her part successfully.

- *Face-to-face promotive interaction:* even though the task is divided between group members, it is important they communicate face to face to ensure they have a common understanding of the task and can help each other by providing feedback. This also helps group members to improve their social kills by employing these skills in their social life

- *Appropriate use of social, interpersonal, collaborative and small-group skills:* during cooperation students improve their trust-building ,communication, decision making, conflict management etc.

- *Group processing:* students in same team usually set a group goal which they maintain throughout the process. This helps them to apply any changes in order to improve the result.

2.1.2.5.   COLLABORATION

Dillenbourg (1999) defines 'collaborative learning' as a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together. Collaboration is a coordinated, synchronous activity that is the result of a continued attempt to construct and maintain a shared conception of a problem. Collaborative learning resultantly engages students in a social process in order to achieve their desired aims and to solve the problem (Roschellel and Teasley, 1994).

According to Vygotskiĭ (1978) students who perform in collaborative group work are potentially more capable of achieving a high intellectual level than those who work on their own. Also students' learning process can benefit further if the group members have different levels of knowledge and experience. Astin (1993) claims students who are involved in collaborative learning potentially achieve better learning outcomes. But according to Bruffee (1987) the benefit of student collaborative learning is not limited to students, it also enhances the instructor's understanding of what they are trying to teach to students and assists them to do it better.

Collaborative learning is generally semi-autonomous, as students usually do not choose their group or the task. Facilitators generally design the task and at the end assess them by comparing with previous and present student work in addition to professional standards. If the work is completely is non-autonomous, it cannot be considered as a collaborative learning activity as students would not have a chance to freely practice their understanding and ideas. Therefore, the degree of autonomy has a direct impact on collaborative learning (Bruffee, 1987).

Collaboration has been identified as a desirable element of inquiry based learning (Cox, et al. 2008; Levy & Petrulis, 2012). In addition, according to Hmelo-Silver (2004) collaborative learning plays vital role for problem based learning.

Students who learn collaboratively potentially do so more quickly than those who work on their own (Bruffee, 1987). By participating in such activities, students are preparing for the real world or as Bruffee (1987) explains, instructors hope by engaging students in collaborative learning they will increase students' level of "social maturity". However, utilising this quality in teaching does not guarantee it will bring all of the associated positive results - according to Bruffee (1987, p.47) designing and conducting successful collaborative learning needs to meet specific criteria. Bruffee introduced three elements, which play a critical role in the success of collaborative learning: "Willingness to grant authority, willingness to take on and exercise authority, and a context of friendliness and good grace".

But as mentioned above, in semi-autonomous collaborative learning, the instructor controls the activity (to some extent) which can result in a compromise in the willingness to grant authority, willingness to take on and exercise authority, and a context of friendliness and good grace. Also, in many cases students will not know each other beforehand and as a result the "friendliness" would not necessarily be present in collaborative work. This issue can be solved if instructors "re-acculturate" students, they can design the task in a way that encourages students to interpret the task within their group by identifying the most suitable language for their team to complete the task. Communication with the groups is highly important to the success of the collaboration (Bruffee, 1987, p.47). When team members communicate, they develop and share knowledge and understanding and this process helps students to comprehend the task better, develop mutual understanding expectations of their contribution to the task and engages them in the learning process. (Johnson et al. 2010; Klimoski & Mohammed, 1994; Mathieu et al. 2000).

Cooperative and collaborative learning are both actively used in higher education. Even though they are both based on social constructivism and may bring similar

advantages to the student learning process, in order to use them successfully it is necessary to select them as they suit the learning task by considering their differences and the task requirements (Oxford, 1997). To design successful cooperation or collaboration, it is imperative to understand the nature of groups, their characteristics, and their development process. Understanding the group dynamics could potentially aid instructors to design successful group tasks. The group dynamics helps instructors to direct the group activity in order to achieve higher learning achievements as bad group work activity may adversely affect learning (Bany & Johnson, 1964).

Placing students in groups does not automatically result in collaborative interactions, but Hathorn & Ingram (2002) point out that providing guidelines for groups can increase the likelihood of collaboration.

2.1.3. CONCLUSION

Defining learning is troublesome, as it has been approached from several different angles. Psychologists had previously defined learning as a change of behaviour before this understanding subsequently changed to information-processing (cognitivism) which directly relates to the learner's mental processes. Here learning is an active and constructive process. Educators see learning as a process of improvement, with intellectual, cognitive, and critical thinking skills and learner knowledge being developed over time. This literature review also observes that educators are also interested in the way learners manage their knowledge. Educators believe learning happens when learners are engaged in social interaction and negotiation. This point of view toward learning informs the principles of constructivism. For constructivists, the learner's personal world is assembled in their mind and that these personal constructions define their personal realities. Constructivists believe that learning should happen in an environment which is a simulation of the real world; this enables the learner to apply their knowledge to the real world at a later point. Learning here is seen as conversation, and the thinking of a community of learners is distributed as dialogue throughout the group. To

understand a new topic, the learner tries to process an appropriate understanding of the meaning; this attempt guides the learner into the active negotiation of the interpersonal and social context of a phenomenon. This social dimension of learning is understood to be equally as important as the individual dimension since the learner can examine the validity of their acquired knowledge in collaborative interaction. In the classroom, this social interaction can be cooperative or collaborative. In cooperative learning, the work is divided between group members with each member responsible for their own part of the task; however, in collaborative learning all group members attempt to perform the task together. Although in collaborative learning each group is formed by members who chose to perform the task together with their selected group mates, conflicts may occur during the group activity. The literature review observes that learners tend to join a group with class mates who have similar cultural background to themselves. Furthermore, groups with cultural diversity are found to have a different group dynamics. This finding demonstrates the critical role of culture in learning and group activity, an influence, which will be discussed in the thesis.

2.2. CULTURE

In this section different definitions of culture and related theories are reviewed. Next, cultural values and framework are discussed, including the values of Hofstede and Triandis's Cultural Syndrome. These values help to explain the reason for the differences in the way humans live, work and interact. Also, deep culture is discussed to highlight culture has impact on various layers of human life and it is not always in explicit features of human life. This follows by understanding of how culture and language link. This section concludes by reviewing three of the most important theories used in cross-cultural communication research and also used in this research to explain some aspects of the data.

2.2.1. DEFINITIONS

The anthropological view of culture has been one of the most popular and leading ideas in the 20th century (R M Keesing, 1974). As a result, the term *culture* has been used broadly in different fields of study so some scholars have been trying to narrow the definition to make it more accurate. Kessing believes, from an anthropological point of view, culture has not been seen as in artistic creation it mostly means learned, amassed experience. However, anthropologists have not agreed on the precise and narrow concept of culture and some of the general definitions of culture highlight this fact. Culture is a complex phenomenon, which includes all learned abilities and habits such as knowledge, customs, morals, and beliefs in a society (Tylor, 1871).

Kelly & Kluckhohn (1945) define this as a potentially key director for human behaviour, and argue it is historically created for living, implicit and explicit rational or non-rational behaviours. Culture also determines those explicit or implicit behaviour patterns which are communicated by symbols, creating the characteristic of human societies and involve their personification in artefacts. This can be understood to mean that culture fundamentally determines how humans behave with each other and present their identity even in the subtlest of ways.

It has been noted that the majority of definitions of culture do not have conspicuous divisions between the patterns of behaviours and patterns from behaviour

(Goodenough, 1961). Simpson, Gerard, Goodenough, & Inkeles (1961), argue culture definition is floating between two completely different concepts, firstly: it refers to "pattern of life within a community the regularly recurring activities and material and social arrangement which give a community the semblance of a homeostatic system." (p.521). In this view, culture is seen as a purview of tangible phenomena of events and things in the world or in other words, and cultural evolution is described as the transformation in society from hunting to agricultural forms of organisation. Homeostatic system in this definition means that each society has its own culture and societies and cultures have similar meaning. This view toward culture and society is criticised by Benoit & Graffeo (2014) stating seeing society as homeostatic fails to completely cover diversity and "intracultural" variation.

Secondly: culture has been seen as the contents of individual human minds and it includes the way that people systemise their experience of their natural and behavioural surrounding environment in order to structure their 'phenomenal world' of forms like their perception. Also, the way that people systematise their 'phenomenal world' in order to make a system for cause and effect relations like their plans to achieve personal goals. In addition, it includes the ways that people use to define their priorities and purposes then define their strategies to accomplish their purpose. Therefore Goodenough (1961) concludes that culture includes some standards or rules for defining "what is", "what can be", and "what to do about it". He believes everyday people as a member of a society use these standards as a direction or guidance for all of their life's decisions (major or minor). To make these decision they always consider the existing rules and standards, these decisions form a pattern, which characterise, create and maintain the society.

 As a result, there are two kinds of culture: firstly, a repetitive pattern that describe a society as a "homeostatic" system and secondly, people's rules and standards to observe, perceive, judge and act upon (p. 522). Goodenough adds that that the first kind is actually a product of the people's use of the second one. He adds every person has their own unique culture since every individual has their very own way to organise their experiences of phenomena - this includes the actions and statements of the surrounding people in order to make their own. Keesing (1974) adds that

linguists have made significant improvement in definition by differentiating language as *"a conceptual code"* from dialogues, they believe that obvious human behaviours are based on this code.

He describes culture with an interesting metaphor by saying: (J. Peterson, Keesing, & Keesing, 1971)

'People from a society observe the world through glasses with misrepresenting lenses. In fact, the events, things and behaviours that people assume to be "out there" are filtered through the perceptual lenses. As a result, the first natural reaction toward people with the different glasses is to classify their behaviour as an incorrect or bizarre. 'Ethnocentrism' is trying to view the ways other people live in the relation of their own cultural glasses.' (P.21)

Keesing believes people cannot take their cultural glasses off to perceive the world or they cannot look through other people glasses without their own glasses, but it is possible to identify the codes that are behind people's everyday life.

He states the point of cultural study is to understand human life and this study should be balanced by the conception of society and social system.

2.2.2. DIFFERENT CULTURAL THEORIES

Keesing (1974) believes culture cannot be easily seen as absorbed symbolic behavior, which differentiates human from other species. He adds that culture cannot be seen as a shared legacy in a specific society. Culture has been seen from different views and according to Geertz (1973), even though narrowing culture into a more specialised and theoretically more influential concept is one of the main concerns in theorising in modern anthropology, still anthropologists have not agreed on one main conceptual meaning. Some of the recent rethinking of culture has been categorised as such:

2.2.2.1. CULTURE AS AN ADOPTIVE SYSTEM

Hofstede et al. (2010) believes the ways or patterns which people behave, think, act or react are learned during their lifetime. They also add that these patterns are mostly formed in a person's early age since the individual is more likely to learn and absorb them; if the person desires to change his/her patterns it is necessary to replace the existent patterns with the new ones. Hofstede et al. stated the way these patterns work is very similar to the way which computers are programmed. Nevertheless, this statement does not mean that people are programmed like computers, human behaviours to a certain extent are pre-set and humans are able to change this pattern and respond in creative, new or even unexpected ways.

In anthropology, culture refers those patterns that are mentioned above. But it is not limited to activities, which refine the mind: it includes basic and common tasks in life such as greeting, eating, etc.

People from the same social environment share and learn their culture from the environment; due to this fact it can be concluded that culture is a collective phenomenon. Culture is something that people learn, it is not inherited or genetic (Hofstede et al., 2010).

Researchers here believe culture should not be seen as human nature or personality. This said, discriminating the borders between personality and human nature is negotiable. As it is hard to define which behaviours are caused by culture and which are caused by human nature.

2.2.2.2. CULTURE AS A STRUCTURAL SYSTEM

Levi-Strauss has been one of the pioneers of the structuralist approach. He is more interested in the relationship between phenomena than the nature of the phenomena themselves, and the system, which is formed by these relationships. He strongly believes the achievement of a general science of the human relies on structural considerations, which must include conscious (the way that member of a society interact with each other) and unconscious (in common ways like myth or ritual that members of a society use to describe their social life) social processes and he develops his theory with working with some of the major aspects of culture (or

mentioned as cultural domain) – language, kinship, art, social organisation, ritual, myth etc. (Lévi-Strauss, 1995, 2008).

He has continued to develop his theory of humans' symbolic worlds and the way that minds generate them. He interprets cultures as "shared systematic systems" which are constructed in the mind. He aims to discover the structuring of cultural domains in the principals of the major part of mind that create these cultural complications.

Ortner (1984) explain that Strauss attempts in defining culture: "He sought to establish the universal grammar of culture, the ways in which units of cultural discourse are created (by the principle of binary opposition), and the rules according to which the units (pairs of opposed terms) are arranged and combined to produce the actual cultural productions (myths, marriage rules, totemic clan arrangements, and the like) that anthropologists record." (p.135)

Strauss believed humans make sense of their surrounding world in various ways and structures their thoughts and understanding in their mind. This structure of thoughts and its process is the same in all cultures. Lévi-Strauss (1972) believes culture consists of hidden rules and it directs human behaviour. These hidden rules are what make cultures different from each other. As such, a main aim of structuralists is to understand these hidden rules in order to explain different cultures. To do so they need to understand the underlying meanings in human thought, which manifests themselves in cultural acts.

2.2.2.3. CULTURES AS SYMBOLIC SYSTEMS

The other approach towards culture is quite different from structuralism. In this view, culture is seen as a system of shared symbols and meaning (Keesing, 1974).

Parsons, Shils, & Values (1962) define culture as below which highlights that culture is a system of symbols:

"cultural patterns" include "systems of ideas or beliefs . . . systems of expressive symbols . . . systems of value orientations" (p.8)

Their view is close to how Geertz defines culture and symbols when "ideas and beliefs are seen as conception".

Geertz has been known as one the originators of this theory. He argues culture is not something locked inside the human mind, but exists within public symbols. All members of a society use these symbols to communicate their beliefs, value and philosophy with each other and the next generation (Ortner, 1984). Keesing (1974) believes that Geertz, like Lévi-Strauss (1955) resonates most when applying a theory to interpret 'ethnographic particulars' but finds them in people in real life. He does not consider myth or ritual, but humanity in symbolic action. This view is similar to that of Hofstede, as he believes people learn their culture from their surroundings and those people around them.

Geertz outlined culture as such: "it denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (1973, P.89).

He defines a symbol as:

"Any object, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception.... the conception is the symbol's 'meaning'" (1973, P.91)

Geertz (1973) believes meanings are in "peoples head" and symbols and meaning are shared by members of the society, not in them but between them. These symbols are public rather than private. Meaning, all members of the same culture share the same understanding of similar phenomena. In this view, cultural patterns are actual entities in this world; they are not myth or metaphysics.

This theory is also known as semiotics: to understand culture, one needs to study shared codes of meaning. Geertz even described culture as an "assemblage of texts" (1972, p.26).

David Schneider is another theorist who has done some related but distinctive work. He defines culture as a *system* of *symbols* and *meanings*.

He defines a symbol as:

"Something which stands for something else, or some things else, where there is no necessary relationship between the symbol and that which it symbolizes."(1968, p.1)

His definition is different from that of Geertz since Geertz sees a symbol as "a vehicle for a conception" and culture as a system of conceptions are communicated symbolically.

This system includes units and rules for relationships and styles of behaviour. The philosophy of cultural units or "things" are not dependent on their observability. He believes neither rules nor categories are concluded from behaviour.

"The definition of the units and the rules is not based on, defined by, drawn from, constructed in accord with, or developed in terms of the observations of behaviour in any direct, simple sense" (D. M. Schneider, 1980)

While Geertz defines culture as a *system of meanings* that are communicated in symbols, Schneider believes culture is included in the symbols themselves.

Keesing (1974) explains that Schneider believes culture should be analysed as a system of symbols and should be carried out independently from "the actual states of affairs" they can be observed as behaviours and events (Schneider, 1968, p.7).

Schneider later explains symbols and meaning as basic property, which a culture considers to be a fact for life. He continues:

Schneider (1972)*:"What its units consist in; how those units are defined and differentiated; how they form an integrated order or classification; how the world is structured; in what parts it consists and on what premises it is conceived to exist, the categories and classifications of the various domains of the world of man and how they relate one with another, and the world that man sees himself living in." (p. 38)*

Hofstede sees culture as patterns of behaviour, he believes people from the same culture act in certain ways since they share these patterns. However, structuralists believe culture consists of hidden rules, which guide human behaviours. And finally

in symbolic anthropology it is believed that culture is not inside the human mind, it is a system of meaning which is communicated by symbols. Symbols in this definition refer to people's understanding of a phenomenon; for example, the colour white is a sign of purity in some cultures.

Even though these theories define culture in different lights, they are similar in at least one aspect - people from different cultures are potentially different in the way they see the world and behave. However, as most of these theories noted that when people are exposed to new cultures they are potentially able to learn the new culture and as Geert Hofstede (2010) explained, new cultural patterns replace the old ones or according to the symbolic system, people learn the new symbols. However, this is not as simple as it seems: as Ward, Bochner, & Furnham (2001) state, encountering a new culture is a significantly stressful life event. People who move from one culture to another according to Ward et al. (2001) are called 'cultural travellers' or 'sojourners'. Sojourners are temporary residents who may experience the new culture for limited period of time like international students. However, when encountering the new culture, both sojourners and the 'host culture' might have different reactions toward each other like hate, suspicion, liking or trust. They may be willing to work with each other or may avoid each other. These feelings are mostly influenced by the general view toward the other culture at the nationality level for instance the political relationship, immigration views, known stereotypes, etc.

2.2.3. CULTURAL VALUES AND FRAMEWORKS

As mentioned earlier, it is expected that people from different cultures behave differently. This is also discussed by (G. Hofstede, 1980; Geert Hofstede, 1983b).

Hofstede conducted a broad study on how culture influences on the values in the work place. He conducted his research in IBM in more than 70 different countries for 6 years. Which resulted in defining four cultural dimensions, these dimensions later used in different setting such as universities which resulted in refining the initial

theory and adding the fifth dimension. These dimensions are used in different cultural research to explain the differences between cultures for example (Popov et al., 2012).

 As he identified five cultural values which have impact on how people act and react in groups. These four values or "dimensions" are:

- *Power distance*: how people from same culture deal with inequality

- *Collectivism and Individualism*: in individualist culture individuals look after themselves but in collective culture they look after their intergroup. He concluded that western countries are mostly individualist and eastern countries such as China more collectivist. Also he generalised that richer countries tend to have more individualistic culture.

- *Masculinity and femininity*: Geert Hofstede (1983a) describe that each society has different view towards the roles men and women can take. In some societies men and women can take different roles but in some societies the distinction between their roles is very apparent. In this kind of society men take more dominant roles and women mostly take service and caring roles. Hofstede calls the society with a bigger gap between women and men roles "masculine" and smaller gap "feminine"

- *Uncertainly avoidance*: Hofstede define this dimension as the way people from one society react to time passing, is called uncertainly as the future is unknown. Hofstede believes societies are divided in two groups regarding to this dimensions those who are more relaxed and secure toward different opinions and they do not work as hard. This group is called "weak Uncertainty Avoidance". And the other group is formed by those who are more aggressive, nervous or emotional which is called "strong Uncertainty Avoidance"

Similarly to Hofstedes's cultural dimensions, Triandis (1990) introduces cultural syndrome. Cultural syndrome is a pattern of norms, believes, values and behaviour,

which can be used to compare and contrast two different cultures. These syndromes are:

- Cultural complexity: he described it as the value of the time for people from different cultures. This means that the more complex the culture is the more attention needs to be paid to time. Also it is suggested that people from more industrial or technological culture pay more attention to the time. (Levine & Bartlett cited in (Triandis, 1990)). Another element in complex culture is the 'specificity' meaning the more complex the culture the more specific people's roles are. And the opposite culture is called 'diffuse'. Triandis believed that more Western countries have specific characteristics and the majority of Middle Eastern countries have 'diffuse'.

- Individualism versus collectivism: based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions but Triandis also emphasises that people have the tendency for both individualism and collectivism.

- Loose versus tight: in tight culture people are expected to follow the norms and they would be punished if they do not follow the norms. In loose culture, people have more freedom to behave differently from the norms. This syndrome is very similar to Geert Hofstede's (1983a) *'Uncertainly avoidance'*

What makes these syndromes and dimensions more important is that they highlight differences in cultures, which can be the reasons behind why people from different cultures find learning new cultures or mixing in a new culture particularly stressful and difficult. This also explains the potential reasons that the host cultures have difficulties accepting 'cultural travellers'. In addition to these cultural differences could be additional reasons for misunderstandings between cultures (Ward et al., 2001).

Similar to Hofstede and Triandis, several other anthropologists tried to conceptualise culture for example Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961) introduced the Five Value Orientations, Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) introduced a framework with

seven dimensions, S. H. Schwartz (1994) who identified seven cultural values to investigate the cultural differences across societies.

House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta (2004) identified nine cultural dimensions by conducting a comprehensive research based on G. Hofstede & Bond, (1984) and Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961) and McClelland (1987) and E T Hall (1959) who identified context as the connection of social and cultural conditions which impact on life of society, organisation and an individual.

Halverson & Tirmizi (2008) summarised some of the cultural frameworks in the Table 2.2-1. The table shows that some dimensions like collectivism/individualism are repeated between frameworks but some like gender egalitarianism or uncertainty avoidance are fully or partially present across the frameworks.

Kluckhon & Strodbeck (1961)	Hofstede (1980,1991,2001)	Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998)	Schwartz (1994)	House et al. (1999,2004)	Hall (1990)
individualistic/groups	Individualism/collectivism	Individualism versus Communitarism	Embeddedness	Collectivism I (Institutional collectivism) Collectivism II (in-group collectivism)	Association
Relationships: Hierarchy	Power distance	Achievement versus Ascription	Hierarchy	Power distance	
Activity oriented Being, Being in becoming, Doing	Uncertainly avoidance	Universalism versus particularism		Uncertainly avoidance	Defense
	Masculinity/Femininity			Gender	Bisexuality

				egalitarianism	
Time orientation Past , Present, Future	Long term orientation	Attitude towards time		Future orientation	Temporality
Relation to nature: Subjugation and domination		Internal versus external control	Mastery harmony		Exploitation
			Egalitarianism	Human orientation	Play
Human nature: Good, Evil, or mix		Neutral versus affective	Affective autonomy	Performance orientation	Learning
			Intellectual autonomy	Assertiveness	Subsistence
		Specific versus diffuse			Interaction and territoriality

TABLE 2.2-1   SUMMARY OF CULTURAL FRAMEWORK (HALVERSON & TIRMIZI, 2008, P.34)

2.2.4. DEEP CULTURE

The different definitions of culture and also its dimensions and syndromes suggest that different aspects of culture cannot be easily defined. Also, the ways in which culture manifests itself, are not simply observable or tangible, meaning that there are several aspects of culture that are difficult to observe. Shaules (2007) suggested that to understand the cultural differences firstly culture should be divided into two categories: objective culture which is the more explicit side of culture such as food, clothes, dance, ceremonies and subjective culture which is more implicit side of culture such as values, norms, beliefs and etc.

To illustrate these aspects he used the deep culture iceberg (Figure 2.2-1)

Religion
Dress/fashion
Language   Arts

Educational system
                    Folklore
Access to world wide web   Food & drink

Beliefs and assumptions   Family values
    Academic attitudes   Leisure activities
                            Body language
        Interpretations
Work ethic   Competitiveness
Respect for rules/   Humour   Body language
academic hierarchies
                        Approaches to
    Concept of justice   health & medicine

                        Parenting styles
        Attitude to seeking
        help & support   Thought
                            patterns

FIGURE 2.2-1 THE CULTURE ICEBERG ADAPTED FROM (TERRENI & MCCALLUM, 2003)

This diagram illustrates there are many elements in human life which are part of deep culture. As such, they can be easily ignored or overlooked and some of these elements could cause conflicts or misunderstanding in cross-cultural interactions. Shaules (2007) believes this list can be indefinite as each of these elements can also divide into subcategories. Also he adds that not all of these elements have been studied so we have little understanding of all aspects of deep culture. However, one of the most studied aspects is language and the way language and culture are linked.

2.2.5. CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Language plays a vital role in cross-cultural communication and is linked to culture in many ways. People learn their culture through language and also communicate with others using language. They use language to express their ideas, beliefs, knowledge and etc. Words and sentences are used to reflect individuals' ideas, their worldview and understanding of their surrounding environments. As such, as Kramsch (1998) mentioned "language expresses cultural reality" (p.3)

Language is a 'system of signs', which on its own has cultural value. Individuals see their language as a 'symbol' for their social identity. It can also be said that "language symbolises cultural reality" (Kramsch, 1998).

When people from different cultures communicate there can be a high possibility of misunderstanding or miscommunication. Also, it should be emphasised that speaking the same language does not necessary guarantee that an individual with the same language and different cultural background (e.g. American and British) would not experience any misunderstanding. As previously mentioned, culture also manifests itself in language (Ward et al., 2001).

Shaules (2007) explains this further by identifying that different languages classify relationships, meanings and objects in different ways. As such, an individual's worldview is the reflection of perceptual classifications, which are acquired when learning the native language. Or as Sapir & Mandelbaum, (1985) explain:

"Human beings do not live in the objective world alone, nor alone in the world of social activity as ordinarily understood, but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society. It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is merely an incidental means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the 'real world' is to a large extent unconsciously built upon the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached... We see and hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation….we may think of language as symbolic guide to culture." (p.162)

So for cultural travellers what makes communication difficult is not the ability to classify the physical object, but the interpretation of the physical object as language is a 'symbolic system' which characterises individuals' 'social reality' (Shaules, 2007). In many cultures for example, people wear black to express mourning but in other countries like China white is the colour of mourning. As such, someone from China may not associate black clothing with mourning.

2.2.6. MULTICULTURALISM

Culture has been studied in the different perspectives from how people define their identity according to their cultural heritage to the way people live, communicate, work and educate in a society. The rise in immigration rate in the western countries created the need to define multiculturalism and the specific characteristic of a multicultural society. These definitions are beyond the simple understanding of the multiculturalism, which are people from different cultural heritage living in one society they actually aim to provide some information and guideline of how societies should and could accommodate different culture while maintaining the equality across the society and in different context such as education.

One of the main theorist in this area is Will Kymlicka, his definition of culture focuses on the "social culture" which he describes as: "a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres. These cultures tend to be territorially concentrated and based on a shared language."(Kymlicka, 1995, p.76). He sees culture and cultural membership as important elements in people's self-identity and creation of the self-belonging. He believes people self respect is affected by the way their culture is perceived by other members of the society, meaning if their culture is not respected members' dignity and self respect is threatened (p.89).

Kymlicka developed the liberal theory of multiculturalism, he believes that the common understanding of the multiculturalism which is celebration of ethnocultural diversity (such as different clothing, food, etc) is misleading as it ignores the economical and political inequality issues and encourage shallow cultural understanding also potentially cause more prejudice by illustrating minority as 'others' and different (Kymlicka, 2013). As such he defines multiculturalism as *"models of democratic citizenship, grounded in human rights ideals, to replace earlier uncivil and undemocratic relations of hierarchy and exclusion...multiculturalism is precisely about constructing new civic and political relations to overcome the deeply entrenched inequalities that have persisted after abolition of formal discrimination."*(Will Kymlicka, 2013, p.76)

Kymlicka believes freedom in a multicultural society means people should have sufficient options to choose from, and societal culture provides these meaningful options for members of the society. Meaningful here means the options available to people compliments their cultural heritage.

However, the liberal view has received some criticism, as its main focus is more on the individual rights rather than community and society as whole. Communitarian theory adopts holistic view of multiculturalism, which means looking beyond the individuals' culture and considering the society as a whole. This off course does not

mean in this theory cultural differences are ignored or there is an attempt for homogenising the society. But what the communitarians believe is:

"That we all *recognize* the equal value of different cultures; that we not only let them survive, but acknowledge their *worth*."(C. Taylor, 1992, p.64)

What is apparent in both views is the importance of culture and identity on how people live in a multicultural society and also the way this multiculturalism viewed and managed in modern societies.

As education is one the main elements of each society, potentially education institutions would reflect the society multiculturalism and inherits its issues. Also, in addition in most western countries HE also includes international students, which makes them even more divers.

So similarly, multiculturalism in education is also concern with inclusivity and equality.

There are two main views towards multicultural education, first: some theorist such as Glazer (1998) believe students' national identity is greater than their ethnic identity and educators should focus on developing the former. The second view is opposite to this, theorist like W. Kymlicka (1995) and Banks (2012) claim if the nation-state culture does not reflect students' cultural identity, they find it difficult to develop commitments with it and they feel isolated and outsider. However, these two views are mostly concern with multicultural citizen of one society and overlook the international students' population.

In addition, in most of multicultural education second-generation migrant students or hybrid students are not considered to have different culture from the dominant culture. Scholars like (Halualani, 2008; Karen Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Popov et al., 2012) simply divided the students body into home and international students assuming home students share similar culture. This claim is more apparent in the research on internationalisation and equality for Equality Challenge Unit (ecu) as they state:

"Universities are effectively communities within communities and recruitment of international students alters their demographic, increasing structural diversity. If internal cohesion and balance is to be maintained this … requires a shift from being a monocultural to becoming a multicultural institution."(Caruana & Ploner, 2010 p.7)

However, the term mostly used to describe the mixed body of home and international students is *international* education. Bennett & Bennett (1994, p.148-149) explain that internationalist focus on more global vision with 'intercultural understanding' to make the world a better place however, multicultural perspective is focused on equality and sharing privilege.

Although, these two terms carry different meanings, in most of the educational research, when the main focus is on the education aspect rather than the cultural aspect, they are used interchangeably mainly to highlight the diversity (e.g. (Ippolito, 2007).

2.2.7. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION THEORIES

In both international and multicultural settings, individuals from different cultures are required to communicate with one another in a non-typical setting and this process of communication is not always easy and straightforward. There are several theories which attempt to explain why people find cross-cultural contact uncomfortable and why some are reluctant to engage with it.

One of the main theories used in this field is social identity theory by H Tajfel & Turner (1979). This follows similarity attraction theory by D Byrne, (1961). These two theories are used extensively in multicultural and cross-cultural research (Arasaratnam, 2013; Guan et al., 2011; N. Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Osbeck & Moghaddam, 1997; Ward et al., 2001) to justify people's behaviour and attitudes when encountering other people from different cultures. However, these theories are not limited to cross-cultural psychology but to a broader field of

human psychology and the way human beings live in a society and interact with other members of the society.

2.2.7.1. SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

Social identity theory was proposed by H Tajfel & Turner (1979). These authors claimed that people tend to categorise those around them into different groups - these groups could be categorised according to race, occupation, age, nationality, language, appearance, etc. such as students, black people, British, mature students, accent, social class and more (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008).

This categorisation would help people to understand and identify those around them. Similarly, each individual categorises or identifies themselves with these groups and they can be a member of many groups like student and British. According to H Tajfel & Turner (1979) these individuals then try to behave in a way which is acceptable to the group they belong to. For instance, when one identifies oneself as a mature student, one acts in the way that one believes is acceptable for mature students and one has specific expectations related to the role or identification one chose.

H Tajfel & Turner (1979) identified three main principals for 'social identity' which are a) all individuals aim to achieve a positive 'self-concept' and as such they would try to maintain positive social identity b) to achieve positive social identity, the group which the individual identified itself with has to be perceived positively. In order to achieve this, the individual constantly compares its group to other relevant groups. If the comparison shows its group is positively different from others, it would boost the individual's self-esteem or vice versa. This process is called 'social comparison'. c) if the individual is unhappy with the result of the comparison, it either changes its group or makes efforts to be perceived more positively.

H Tajfel & Turner (1979) suggest the pressure on the individual to perceive their group positively through social comparison encourages people to differentiate themselves from others. As such, members of one social category would be regarded as 'in-group' and others would be 'out-group'. Stephen Bochner (1982) points out

members of the in-group or 'us' may discriminate against members of the out-group or 'them' even if they do not gain anything from it. This discrimination also creates biases. As such, in-group members may see out-group members as being less trustworthy, cooperative or honest (Brewer, 1979; Henri Tajfel, 1982). The more in–group members feel sense of belonging to their group the more bias they feel toward the out-group members (Henri Tajfel, 1974). The social comparison could also be named as one of the reasons for racism or sexism as members of different groups discriminate against other relevant groups. Also, as Kudo & Simkin (2003) and Hogg & Turner (1985) suggest the way people choose their friends has links with social identity theory.

Social identity is also valid within an education context: students from different disciplines form different identities regarding their discipline, or as Becher & Trowler (2001) state, their academic tribes. They argue that academic tribes are very similar to society tribes as they have their heroes, rituals and also enemies from rival tribes, which are those tribes from which they wish to distinguish themselves.

Academic disciplines are like any groups which feature membership; in order to become members of an academic tribe, students need to acquire both cognitive and social elements of the discipline and this membership shapes students' social identity in the academic environment (Ylijoki, 2000).

As such, it can be concluded that the feeling of 'us' and 'them' can be present when students from different disciplines (such as IM and Librarianship) are asked to work together. To be a member of a tribe, students need to follow the rules and morals of the academic discipline's culture. If students do not follow those morals, they should be able justify their behaviour by providing an explanation which is socially (for the specific discipline) acceptable (Ylijoki, 2000).

Ylijoki (2000) examined different disciplines in a Finnish university using Becher's framework. Ylijoki investigated librarian and information science 'tribes' and discovered that students view the information world differently according to their discipline - librarianship students are more focused on practice and build their social

identity based on this practice, thus some of them believe information science courses are not as practical and vocational as desired and may not actually be needed. As such, they look down upon the information science discipline. Similarly information science students stated that their course has better future prospects and they build their social identity based a on commitment to information science and its brighter future. Ylijoki, (2000) also adds that this division between the library and information science disciplines is not limited to students - academic staffs also follow similar patterns.

2.2.7.2. SIMILARITY ATTRACTION

A similar theory to social identity theory is similarity attraction theory. This theory was introduced by D Byrne (1971). Montoya, Horton, & Kirchner (2008) explain that Byrne based his theory on social comparison theory and cognitive dissonance. D Byrne (1971) believed any similarities between people would increase the mutual liking for each other. However, this attraction is stronger if the similarity is between the salient characteristics. However, this characteristic priority could be different in different situations, meaning one individual may be drawn to be friends with another individual because they are both female and of the same age, but in academic group work the same individual may be attracted another male individual as they both have the same academic attitude. In addition, the liking or attraction is greater if individuals find more similar characteristics in each other. For example, one student would be more attracted to another student who shares the same academic attitude and speaks the same language than to a student who only speaks the same language as them. D Byrne (1971) explains the reason behind similarity attraction by noting that individuals have a vital need to have a logical view of the world. This need or motive is called '*effectance motive*'. Individuals seek validation for their opinions from others and those who hold similar opinions to each other validate each others' opinion and support the logic of their world (Montoya et al., 2008). Palmer cited in Singh et al. (2015) explain the '*effectance motive*' has two dimensions: first *need for evaluation* which is checking the correctness of an opinion or view regardless of an individual current view and opinions. The second is the

'*need for vindication*' which confirms the current view or opinion of the individual. When individuals share similar political, moral, or social views the similarity effect can be stronger. However as mentioned earlier, individuals tend to prioritise these similarities according to the situation they are in.

What makes similarity attraction an important factor in group work as Sherif (1958) suggested is that individuals are more likely to work with people who are similar to them because in doing this they can reduce potential conflicts in their groups. Also, people tend to interact with those who they believe share a greater similarity with themselves and also they tend to hold more positive views towards them (and vice versa). As such, the more dissimilar people find themselves to other members in their groups, the less likely they are to interact or work with them (Williams, Parker, & Turner, 2007), These dissimilarities (as mentioned previously) could be nationality, religions, language, etc. This phenomenon also extends to friendship. As Brown (2009a, 2009b) points out, international students tend to try to form friendships with students with whom they share the same language and nationality as this may help to reduce the anxiety of being in a new environment and help them to feel relatively safe.

2.2.7.3. HOMOPHILY

Homophily is another theory, which is used to explain human interaction and especially cross-cultural interactions. Homophily is based on self-categorisation and similarity attraction theories (as they explained above 2.2.7.1 and 2.2.7.2) (Monge & Contractor, 2000, 2003). Homophily theory suggest individuals are more likely to choose to interact with other individuals if they share similarities and categorise themselves in the same category. For instance, in the case of multicultural group work at university, individuals who are enrolled on the same course and also are home students are more likely to interact. Different dimensions of homophily are discussed in the literature such as attribute characteristic like race, ethnicity, sex, or age and gained characteristics like religion, behaviour pattern, occupation, and education (Mcpherson, Smith-lovin, & Cook, 2001).

As J. R. Lincoln & Miller (1979) suggested, race and sex similarity can have significant impact on the way employees shape their friendship network. This can also be extended to students' friendship networks as was suggested also by (Hinds, Carley, Krackhardt, & Wholey, 2000; Strauss, U, & Young, 2011). These authors believe students tend to form their friendship network with students with whom they have more attributes in common especially ethnicity and language.

As March & Simon (1958) also suggest, people with similar demographic or ethnic backgrounds have more "language compatibility" than those who have different backgrounds.

Hinds et al. (2000) suggest the reason for people to be 'homophilous' is to reduce the risk of conflicts as they feel people who share similar characteristic with them are more predictable and consequently safer to be with.

Homophily theory is extensively used in multicultural group work and student interaction in higher education (Dunne, 2009; Gareis, 2000; N. Harrison, 2015; Ippolito, 2007; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Strauss et al., 2011). Also, social categorising and similarity attraction theory are used to justify students' preference in intercultural interaction and also choosing group members in multicultural universities (D. A. Harrison et al., 2002).

It should be emphasised that social identity, similarity attraction, and homophily theories are not only used in cross-cultural study but in the broader context as well, like human interaction and sociology.

2.2.8.   CONCLUSION

Different definitions of culture show human culture and the way it impacts on human life is a very complex phenomenon. However, researchers attempted to communicate their understanding with providing different frameworks and comparison between different cultures present in people from different countries or

regions. So to some extend it is understandable that people with different cultural background would potentially experience difficulties when communicating or working. It is also discussed that culture influences different aspects of human life which is not limited to the way people dress or their food but to deeper aspect of their life such as body language, team work etc. in addition, literature highlighted that language is influenced by culture and even when people speak same language when they have dissimilar cultural background there is a possibility that they experience some misunderstanding as they have different world view due to their cultural background. There are several theories aiming to explain cross cultural communication and the factors affecting it. These theories include similarity attraction, social identity and homophily but it should be noted that these theories are not merely used to explain cross cultural communication but to explain human communication in broader sense as well.

2.3. MULTICULTURAL GROUP WORK

Different aspects of multicultural group work have been studied in both contexts of organisation and higher education. Researchers investigated many aspects of multicultural group work such as **team formation** (Bacon, Stewart, & Anderson, 2001; Bacon, Stewart, & Silver, 1999; Cathcart, Dixon-Dawson, & Hall, 2006; Chapman, Meuter, Toy, & Wright, 2006; Hinds et al., 2000; Ippolito, 2007; K. Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Karen Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Bart Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Strauss et al., 2011; Volet & Ang, 1998), **culture** (T. H. Cox et al., 1991; Halualani, 2008; Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008; Geert Hofstede et al., 2010; Ippolito, 2007; Mittelmeier, Heliot, Rienties, & Whitelock, 2015; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Popov et al., 2012; Summers & Volet, 2008; W. E. Watson, Kumar, & Michaelsen, 1993), **communication and language** (Devita, 2000; Gu & Maley, 2008; Ippolito, 2007; K. Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1994; Montgomery, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Popov et al., 2012; Strauss et al., 2011), and

contribution and performance (Cathcart et al., 2006; Cragan, Wright, & Kasch, 2008; Kerr & Tindale, 2004; Popov et al., 2012; Underwood, 2003). The majority of these studies agree on their findings, meaning there is a widely shared consensus regarding the subject. However most research concerning multicultural group work in a higher education context uses a quantitative approach (De Vita, 2002; P. Kelly, 2008; Karen Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Littlewood, 2000; Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003; Popov et al., 2012; Bart Rienties & Nolan, 2014; Strauss et al., 2011). Additionally, as Popov et al. (2012) emphasise, the majority of research has been conducted in the business and marketing field. As such, the context in which group work occurred has not been investigated thoroughly or as K. Kimmel & Volet (2012) termed this, the "context was never unpacked". As such there is little evidence on how factors identified in the research would change if the context changes. For example, there is not much evidence to highlight the importance of language skill changes in group work in different discipline or tasks.

In this section, some of the common issues regarding the multicultural and monocultural group work will both be reviewed as some issues are independent from cultural issues and potentially can emerge in both types of group work (Behfar, Kern, & Brett, 2003).

Popov et al. (2012) identified two group level challenges focusing on culture-based challenges in the literature: group membership and group process. Group membership includes all aspects related to members of the diverse group including age, culture, characteristic, personality, social identity, etc. and group performance includes group dynamics, performance and all elements which have impact on these such as communication, language, performance, decision making, etc. However, it should be considered that some of these issues are not limited to monocultural groups but rather all groups may encounter them.

These two levels will be considered in this section however they will be expanded using the literature to cover more issues related to each level.

2.3.1.   GROUP WORK ISSUES

2.3.1.1.   GROUP MEMBERSHIP

The formation of multicultural groups has been cited as one of the factors, which potentially can impact on group dynamics and group performance. There are differing views toward group formation in general. Some educational researchers believe that by allocating students to their group they can simulate workplace teamwork as employees are not usually allowed to choose their teammates (Chapman et al., 2006). However, some believe that when students are allowed to select their group mates this choice will improve the group's performance (Strauss et al., 2011).

The advantages and disadvantages of self-selection strategy have been extensively discussed in the literature. Researchers such as Bacon et al. (2001), Bacon, Stewart, & Steward-Belle (1998), Borges, Dias, & Cunha (2009) Chapman et al. (2006) Feichtner & Davis (1984) and Strauss et al. (2011) argued that self-selected groups have better group dynamics and students usually have better group work experience. This is because students who usually choose to work with their friends or those individuals with whom they are more familiar find their levels of anxiety during the group process to be lower (Strauss et al., 2011).

However, it has also been noted that self-selected groups may suffer from weaker time management skills (Bacon et al., 2001). As Chapman et al. (2006) suggest, in randomly assigned groups the members use time more efficiently and meetings are more task-oriented. However, self-selected groups members have stronger initial cohesion which makes self-selection strategy better for short term group work (Bacon et al., 2001). Also, self-selected groups have higher levels of trust, commitment and enthusiasm (Myers, 2012; Bart Rienties, Héliot, & Jindal-Snape, 2013).

In multicultural settings, students tend to choose group members from the same nationality. As such, they miss out on the multicultural experience (Bacon et al., 1999; Jalajas & Sutton, 1984; Strauss et al., 2011; Volet & Ang, 1998). Mello (1993)

also suggests that self-selected groups lack skills due to lack of diversity. This might be because as Bacon et al. (2001) suggested students tend to select other students who have similar abilities. As Abrami (1995) mentioned, students who know each other potentially benefit more from group work as they are familiar and aware of their group mates' skills. However, as Slavin (1990) points out, students who have lower-level achievements would not be chosen as group mates and as such they would have less interaction and fewer opportunities to take major roles such as leadership in groups. And also, as Mitchell et al. (2004) found, when students are given the chance to choose their group mates they feel obligated to pick their friends to maintain their friendship even though they might not happy to work with them.

There is also the possibility that even in self-select groups some members feel excluded as the rest of group can be closer to each other (Bacon et al., 2001).

Tutor-allocated groups can help to resolve some the disadvantages of self-selected groups. However, in some situations this can potentially create more challenges for students. As many researchers highlight, the main advantage of tutor allocation is maintaining the diversity of the groups. This diversity includes cultures, skills, gender, age, etc. also it would encourage students to get to know each other and potentially make friends (P. Kelly, 2008).

As has been shown, most of the reasoning behind the advantages or disadvantages of different group formation strategies are similar between homogenous and heterogeneous groups. However, regarding multicultural classrooms the main issue of self-selection is lack of diversity and students' resistance to work in more diverse groups. This is due to various reasons such as lack of familiarity and similarity, and language barrier.

Moreover as mentioned earlier, the timing of group work and students' familiarity at the point of formation have impact on the success of the group formation methods. As such, giving students tasks and time to become accustomed with each other before the task starts may reduce some of the negative aspects of tutor allocation or even encourage students to choose potentially more diverse groups (Bacon et al.,

2001, 1999; D. A. Harrison et al., 2002; Strauss et al., 2011). Baldwin, Bedell, & Johnson (1997) also argue students with better social network perform better in the group.

2.3.1.1.1. AGE, BACKGROUND

Another issue which is discussed regarding group member characteristics is age, background and gender. 'Background' here refers to factors of social, cultural and academic background. However, in most research it is also indicated that age and gender do not have major impact on group experience or success (Gatfield, 1999; Mills, 2003).

Nonetheless, age has impact on students' academic attitude. As Kevern & Webb (2004) Ofori (2000) and Peacock & Harrison (2009) claim, mature students are more committed to their study. They take academic work more seriously and are more likely to commit to theoretical study and take part in discussion and debates. As McCarey, Barr, & Rattray (2007) suggest, this can be due to their views toward the course as they see it as a way to better career. Also, Payne & Monk-Turner (2006) add that some mature students believe that in group work younger students can learn from them. However, they also suggest younger students are more likely to believe they contribute something meaningful to the group.

Nonetheless, age has some negative impacts as well. Mature students may feel they do not fit-in or find it difficult to blend-in as they see themselves as being different to younger students (Dunne, 2009). This may result in all mature students (mostly from same nationality) in a course tending to form their own group (both group work and friendship) (Peacock & Harrison, 2009).

Another issue regarding mature home students according to Peacock & Harrison (2009) is they may have different perspectives regarding multiculturalism and as a result they might have resistance toward multicultural group work.

Group members' academic background also has an impact on the subject knowledge. As such, they may have less knowledge than other group members

which may create challenges for group members (Popov et al., 2012; Zhang, 2000). Summers & Volet (2008) suggested when allocating students to the groups their academic background should be considered as students may have different level of skills and knowledge. However, McCorkle et al. (1999) finds even more diverse (in terms of skills) groups may not perform very well and still some members may not get the chance to develop their skills.

Cultural background is also considered as one of the main issues regarding multicultural group work. As the dominant culture of a country has a direct link with its educational system (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997) it can be reasoned that some international students may have experienced educational systems which are significantly different to that of the UK (for instance behaviourist systems) and therefore may hold contrasting understandings of the concept of education in general. Brown (2007) adds that students who have experienced a different educational system are likely to have different attitudes towards learning and knowledge. As a result of these differences they would therefore have different approaches to their studies (Samuelowicz, 1987). Or as Peacock & Harrison (2009) noted, they might have little or no understanding of the host country's pedagogy. Brown (2007) adds that these students are very likely to experience high levels of stress while adjusting to the new educational system. Ballard & Clanchy (1997) also argue that some of the difficulties and misunderstandings that students face in multicultural groups are considered to be the result of the language barrier or communication difficulty but these are actually due to students' differing cultural and educational backgrounds.

In addition, according to E T Hall (1959) and Geert Hofstede et al. (2010) people from different cultures potentially approach group work differently and hold different perceptions toward group work. As Halverson & Tirmizi (2008) suggest, culture has impact on various different aspects of group work from communication, conflict management to the approach to the task. As such Behfar et al. (2003) identified some of the different challenges between heterogeneous and homogenous groups which are caused by different cultural backgrounds such as: different

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communication style, problem solving, time given and views toward deadlines, different work norms, in-group prejudices, communication (including respect, explicit or implicit communication, language (including fluency). T. H. Cox et al. (1991) however identified groups of students who have knowledge of different cultures would perform better and feature more cooperative skills. This is similar to Strauss et al. (2011) who believed students that spend more time together are more likely to have better group work experience as they get to know each other. As such it can be assumed students learn about different cultural differences by spending more time together.

Students from the same culture tend to work together. This is partially because of speaking in their native language and also due to familiarity, which helps them to reduce or eliminate the challenges of group work (Bacon et al., 2001, 1999; N. Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Volet & Ang, 1998). Taha & Cox (2016) explain a shared language can give students a sense of similarity and having something to share about their country of origin. As such students are more likely to choose their friends or group mates from those students who speak similar languages to their own.

However, the majority of literature mentioned home students do not like to work with international students mostly because of their low level of English language (K. Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Catherine Montgomery, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). In addition, stereotyping regarding students from one culture is considered as one of the reason that students may avoid working with them (L. Brown & Holloway, 2008; L Brown & Aktas, 2011; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Volet & Ang, 1998).

2.3.1.1.2. Social identity and personality

Something that should be considered related to the characteristics of group members is that it is not only age, gender or cultural background which make people different. People also have different personalities and behaviour according to their social identities. This means that in this context, group members within the same

nationality may have similarities or contrasts in their education, social class, religion, locality, etc. Significantly, these characteristics could potentially cause contrasting behaviour (Brannen, 1994; Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008).

One of the theories which explains this phenomenon is social identity theory, which is discussed in more detail earlier in this chapter section 2.2.7.1.

Personality is defined by Funder, (1997) as "an individual's characteristic pattern of thought, emotion, the behaviour, together with the psychological mechanisms (hidden or not) behind those patterns" (p.1). Personality is shaped by two main factors: genetic characteristics or 'nature' and consequences of social interaction, or 'nurture'. Personality can be shaped by culture, education, family values and etc. as such it is not valid to conclude people from similar cultural background have similar personalities, however they may share similar characteristic in their personalities which is shaped by their shared culture (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008).

Many psychologists studied personality in order to find a formula, which helps to indicate people's personalities. This potentially would assist other researchers to understand human interaction patterns. There are two famous personality type theories here: The Myers-Biggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and The Big Five Factor Model (Big 5/FFM).

MBTI was introduced by Katherine and Isabel Myers. In this model there are four sets of preference, which by combining them, means 16 personality types will be created. These four sets are: Extraversion/Introversion, Sensing/Intuition, Thinking/Feeling and Judging/Perceiving (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008).

Big 5/FFM was created by Costa who developed the Five Factor and Goldberge who developed Big Five which is similar model to Five Factor (Cattell, 1996). This model is widely used by psychological researchers. As these two models are closely related and similar measurements are used to determine them, they are mostly used together. Big Five includes Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability,

Surgency and Intellect. FFM includes Agreeableness, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and openness (to experience).

By combining these types, large numbers of personalities can be understood. Halverson & Tirmizi (2008) adds these traits are dimensions rather than types and most people are in the middle range. As for the MBTI, Big 5/FFM indicates people from same culture are more likely to have similar personality traits. Or in another work some personality trait are dominant in one society but not the other (Geert Hofstede & McCrae, 2004; McCrae et al., 2004).

Personality could potentially impact different aspect of people's social life such as their communication style, time management, and problem solving. As such, it also has a direct impact on group work and group performance (Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2003; Kichuk & Wiesner, 1997; Jeffery a Lepine, Buckman, Crawford, & Methot, 2011; Mann, 1959; Noftle & Robins, 2007). In the context of education, it is also highlighted that people with certain personality traits potentially have particular academic attitudes (Nguyen, Allen, & Fraccastoro, 2005; Noftle & Robins, 2007)

Mann (1959) also found that when people with different personalities work in a group it is not only about how their personalities impact on their performance but also about how other people perceive them because of the specific personality. For instance, someone who has more agreeable personality traits may be perceived as passive or as one who is not contributing to the task.

Nguyen et al. (2005) confirm personality is linked to academic performance; they also highlight that the conscientiousness trait plays a vital role in academic preference among students. Noftle & Robins, (2007) highlights the role of personality in academic achievement, for instance they mention students who score high on Openness to Experience are more successful in presentations and verbal assessment.

2.3.1.1.3. ACADEMIC ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION

Students have different learning approaches. When they work in a group, these approaches may cause conflicts and challenges.

These different approaches are identified by J. B. Biggs (1987) drawing on the phenomena graphic work of Marton & Säljö (1976)are deep, surface, and achievements or strategic approach.

J. B. Biggs (1989) explains that students have different study motivations and to satisfy their motivations they adopt various strategies. The combination of the motivation and strategy is called the 'approach'.

- Students who adopt a deep approach usually interested in the subject and do not limit themselves to the basic understanding of the task and try to expand their understanding by engaging in more reading or discussion with others. Regarding to the grade they usually aim for higher grade rather than pass. This approach is linked to intrinsic motivation.
- Surface approach is usually when students do not prioritise understanding of the task. They aim for the minimum engagement with the task and they usually aim to pass the module with minimum effort. Extrinsic motivation is linked to this approach.
- The achieving approach or 'study skill' is when students aim for higher grade. They use their time, effort, module materials, study space and etc. in 'cost-effective' way. They plan ahead and allocate their time to ensure the maximum grade, which is part of the characteristic of achievement.

Turner (1995) defined motivation or 'cognitive engagement' as "voluntary uses of high-level self-regulated learning strategies, such as paying attention, connection, planning, and monitoring." (p.413)

The main difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is in the factors, which trigger them. In intrinsic motivation, the factors are more internal to the learner such as personal enjoyment, pleasure or interest. However in extrinsic

motivation, these factors are external such as reward, grades, punishment, better job and money, and etc. (Guay et al., 2010).

Students might adopt different strategies for different tasks as they may have different motivations in different situations. Also, according to Holmes (2004) and Niles (1995) students from different cultural background potentially adopt different strategies accordingly with their culture. For instance, in some cultures achieving higher academic grades is more important than gaining deep understanding, so students from that specific culture are more likely to adopt a surface or achieving approach. J. Biggs (1996) suggested that as Chinese education is based around memorising material its students mostly adopt surface learning approaches and in Western education, students are encouraged to solve problems and develop critical thinking; as such, these learners may adopt a deep approach. Nevertheless, it should also be considered individuals are different and this assumption might not always be correct (J. Biggs, 1996). In addition, gender, academic background, social class and age play roles in students' learning motivation and approaches (Zhang, 2000).

In addition to the link between learning strategies and culture, Joy & Kolb (2009) emphasised that culture has impact on individuals' learning style.

By considering the above statement, it can be concluded that (as mentioned earlier) students working in groups may face challenges due to variations in motivation and learning approaches in the group. Also, these challenges may be greater when working in a culturally diverse group, as the chance of having a mix of approaches is greater (Popov et al., 2012). When students have different attitudes toward grades, these challenges may be especially greater, meaning that in a group of students who are more laid-back, those who are more concerned regarding their grades may get stressed or have an unpleasant experience (Zimmerman, 1990). Taha & Cox (2016) claim, students who have similar academic attitudes to one another are more likely to work together regardless of their cultural background, meaning that these students are more likely to prioritise the outcome of the task over language or cultural similarity.

Also many research studies indicate students' views toward group work can be influenced by their motivation, as some students prefer to work on their own to make sure they get the maximum grade. Bacon et al. (1999) and Lemanski (2011) generally suggest student performance is linked to the reward - which in educational setting is the grade they receive - and students are more likely to perform when they receive rewards.

In some cases, learners avoid working with international students as they believe the language barrier or learning style and approaches differences may impact their grade in a negative way (Bacon et al., 1999; Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003; Strauss, U-Mackey, & Crothers, 2014; Strauss et al., 2011). However, W. M. Davies (2009) suggest to manage group of students with mixed motivations it is better to allow students to develop long-term commitment to the group. By doing so, students would form some sense of belonging and are more likely to place their self-interest (extrinsic motivation) aside for the sake of the group.

2.3.1.2. GROUP PROCESS

2.3.1.2.1. COMMUNICATION

Communication is another issue in group work for both heterogeneous and homogenous groups. Communication is a vital element in collaborative learning as Rose (2002) emphasises: *"The approach relies upon mutual engagement of learners to jointly clarify their reasoning process and construct common meaning primarily through dialogical discourse."* (P.6)

Paulus (2005) adds dialogue is a key element of collaboration as it is the primary mechanism for individuals to share their thinking process and also group members' views are shared via dialogue. Nonetheless, it is more apparent in homogenous groups as the language barrier also adds to the difficulties. As E T Hall (1959) and Edward T Hall & Hall (1990) state, culture has links to communication, meaning people from different cultures have different communication styles. Halverson &

Tirmizi (2008) adds that individuals with different intellectual and emotional or cultural backgrounds communicate differently. As such, when working in a diverse group, communication may cause challenges or conflicts to the extent that Halverson & Tirmizi (2008) state these challenges which are caused by cultural differences add layers of complexity to the group work. However they suggest when individuals have an understanding of their own culture and how it impacts on their communication as well as other peoples' cultural norms, they develop intercultural communication skills and potentially are able to minimise communication challenges.

Popov et al. (2012) add that home students find communication with international students frustrating, as they do not say much. They suggest home students sometimes believe a lack of communication means lack of competence in the subject knowledge, even though it may be caused because of low English language skill.

2.3.1.2.2.   LANGUAGE AND ACCENT

Language is one of the key issues (if not the most common and important issue) in multicultural group work. Many researchers have identified the language barrier as an issue in multicultural group work (Devita, 2000; Ippolito, 2007; Karen Kimmel & Volet, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Popov et al., 2012; Strauss et al., 2011; Volet & Ang, 1998). Devita (2000) claims language is the most important factor as it is the main medium for communication and also source of misunderstanding in intercultural communication. Furthermore, Devita states language and culture are closely linked together as language is the most noticeable feature of culture. This is explained further by Kramsch (1998) as she states people express their beliefs, facts, ideas, etc. with words which are known to other people. These expressions refer to the knowledge which is shared by people, and words show the individual views and beliefs. As such, 'language expresses cultural reality'. Language is a system of signs, which communicates cultural values on its own. Language is a symbol of individual social identity - people who speak similar language are more likely to see themselves

as being similar. As such, it is also claimed by Kramsch that 'language symbolises culture'.

As suggested above, language is not simply a communication medium but a factor, which links individuals. In addition, misunderstandings do not only happen due to cultural differences (as discussed in the culture chapter). However, most literature does not separate the conflict caused by language into cultural and language skills. In most research such as Popov et al. (2012) or Montgomery (2009) the main focus is on English language skills. However Cathcart et al, (2006) mentioned that home students are mostly unaware of the difference between language difficulties and cultural differences.

English language skill is mentioned as one of the main reasons for students' reluctance toward working in culturally diverse groups. As Strauss et al. (2011) find, students are concerned they might achieve lower grades due to communication difficulties in diverse groups. However, this concern works both ways as international students have also been found to prefer working in monolingual groups as doing so makes communication easier (N. Harrison & Peacock, 2010). However, Volet & Ang (1998, p.13) find the major concern to be "the extent to which communication problems are real or whether they are impeded by a lack of goodwill from either side to make an effort to understand each other and to tolerate a degree of broken English."

This issue is not limited to group tasks. It is also reported by B. Rienties, Alcott, & Jindal-Snape (2014) that communication difficulties do affect the possibility of forming friendships between home and international students.

Nevertheless, the issue with language also includes different accents: both home students and international students could potentially have difficulties understanding different accents even if their English language is sufficient (Holmes, 2004; Popov et al., 2012; Spencer-Rodgers & McGovern, 2002; Volet & Ang, 1998). Some international students are more familiar with specific English accents e.g. American or Australian, which causes difficulties in understanding other accents (Volet & Ang,

1998). This issue is not limited to communication with other students - international students may experience same difficulties during their lectures due to different accents or use of idioms (Holmes, 2004; Volet & Ang, 1998).

Another issue regarding to language is 'language-switching' and 'code-switching'. Code-switching refers to when students use more than one langue during one communication (Ramirez, 2012). Language-switching means that international students tend to switch between their first and second language during communication. Qi (1998) suggests the extend of 'language-switching' varies depending on the level of demand posed by the task. Students are more likely to switch when the tasks which require more knowledge demand this. This is because in a bilingual memory knowledge is linked to a shared rather than separated conceptual store. In other words, bilingual individuals store new knowledge in both languages. However, when more cognitive processing (like processing new information) is needed individuals are more likely to switch to their first language.

Language barrier-related issues do not only apply to group work, as Devita (2000) states international students who are not confident in their language skills are less likely to contribute to class discussion as well. Peacock & Harrison (2009) also maintain that low-level English skills can cause low confidence and shyness in international students, and as such they are less willing to work with native speakers and also less likely to be chosen as collaborators by home students.

2.3.1.2.3.   CONFLICTS

Conflicts arise from bad meeting management, confusion about roles, conflicting personalities, personal interest (Levi, 2013). Jehn (1995) identifies two types of conflicts: relationship related and task related conflicts. Relationship conflicts usually happen when there are incompatibilities between group members such as tension, annoyance, dislike and mistrust. Additionally task related conflicts happen when there is disagreement about the task mostly due to different viewpoints, ideas and opinions or different attitudes towards the submission deadline (Popov et al., 2012).

Williams, Parker, & Turner (2007) state 'dissimilar' groups are more likely to experience conflicts. This dissimilarity can refer to differences in gender, ethnicity, language, age, etc. Similarly, Ungerleider (2008) adds that in multicultural groups conflicts happen due to fundamentally different cultural norms, needs, interests and perceptions. Bacon et al. (1999) suggest conflicts also happen when the group task is unclear and students have to make sense of the task themselves. Kerr (1983) also adds unequal contribution from group members may also cause conflicts. Volet & Ang (1998) suggest communication breakdown can be a cause of conflicts.

C Montgomery (2009) identifies differing subject discipline backgrounds between group members as one the cause of conflicts - this is because students from different disciplines may not value input from students from a similar discipline as they might have different perception toward the task. She also discusses other causes of conflicts which were discovered in previous research studies, such as cultural differences, stereotyping and prejudice. However, she emphasises the reason different research might identify different causes of conflicts is that these studies are conducted in different contexts; for instance, in one study, the assessment task was high stakes and the other one low stakes.

Ahmed, Nawaz, Shaukat, & Usman (2010) identified that different personalities (referring to the Big 5) have different approaches to managing conflicts in groups. For instance, the researchers identified students with extroversion and openness to experience generally prefer to compromise when facing conflicts, these types like to maintain good relationships with other group members. As personalities to some extent are linked to culture (Geert Hofstede & McCrae, 2004) it also can be assumed that individuals from different cultures potentially manage conflicts differently.

As Peterson & Behfar (2003) state, group conflicts can result in poor group performance and group dynamics. So it is understandable when students tend to avoid working in multicultural groups in order to reduce conflicts and maintain their grade.

2.3.1.2.4.   DECISION MAKING

Decision making is identified as one of the issues in group work. It is been also argued the ways individuals make their decisions have links to their cognitive style and as Vygotsky (1978) stated, the way individuals manage and process their knowledge has a direct link to the cultural context of their cognition. Or in other words, the way individuals process information and make decisions is linked to their cultural background.

According to Popov et al. (2012) both members of heterogeneous and homogenous groups should acquire a set of skills which enable them to make appropriate decisions and solve the group disagreements. However, diversity adds more complexity Behfar et al. (2003) to the group since as has been mentioned, for individuals from different cultures the decision making process differs as well.

2.3.1.2.5.   CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROUP

In order for groups to function effectively, group members take different roles consciously or unconsciously). These roles can be positive or negative, meaning they may support the group performance or challenge it. Belbin (2012) suggests that team rules are necessary for the teams functioning. He believed some human behaviour can be effective contribution to the team's performance. he categorised these behaviours in nine categories. These categories are Plant, Resource investigator, Co-ordinator, Sharper, Monitor Evaluator, Teamworker, Implementer, Completer Finisher, and Specialists (Belbin, 2012).

Belbin (1985) identified five essential principals for the successful team performance.

- All members contribute to the group task by using their knowledge and skills (functional role) and a team role
- There should be a balance between team roles and functional roles

- Group would perform better if the members identify their strengths within the group both in performing their functional role and team role
- Group members' personality and qualities make them more suitable for some team roles while limiting them for others
- Groups can perform more efficient when they have sufficient range of team roles within the groups

Prichard & Stanton (1999) state that Belbin was inspired by work of Benne & Sheats (1948), even though it is never directly cited or acknowledged.

Benne & Sheats (1948) identified three main categories for these roles:

1. Group task roles: these roles are related to the task that group has to complete.
   The initiator-contributor, The information seeker, The opinion seeker, The opinion giver, The information giver, The coordinator, The elaborator, the orienter, the evaluator-critic, the organiser, the procedural technician, the recorder.
2. Group building and maintenance roles: these roles support functioning of the group. The encourager, The harmoniser, The compromiser, The gatekeeper and expediter, the follower, the group-observer and commentator, the standard setter or the ego ideal
3. Individual roles: these roles are all about satisfying the individuals' needs. The aggressor, the blocker, the recognition-seeker, the self-confessor, the playboy, the dominator, the help-seeker, the special interest.

Negative roles like the dominant role can impact upon group performance and dynamics and result in group failure. It should also be considered that Individuals may take more than one role in groups. Also, they may take different role in different groups depending on the task and other circumstances surrounding group work such as group members (Cragan et al., 2008). As such, one member may play the dominant role in one group and information seeker for another. However, as Karen Kimmel & Volet (2010) mentioned, each student's reputation as a group

member has impact on being selected as a group member in the future, meaning if they are dominant in one group there is a possibility that course mates would avoid working with them in other groups.

Among all of these roles, leadership is the most discussed role in the literature, especially concerning group work in organisations such as Walumbwa & Schaubroeck (2009). However, it is not commonly discussed in multicultural research. Nevertheless, leadership is mentioned in Cathcart et al. (2006) who finds that that most multicultural groups in their study did not appoint a leader at the beginning of the process, but later on they chose a leader who was usually a British (home) student.

2.3.1.2.6. FREE-RIDING

Free riding is also one the most common problems in group work and appears in both homogenous and heterogeneous groups. Free riding usually refers to the situation whereby one group member does not contribute or 'pull their weight' (McCorkle et al., 1999). Kerr (1983) states that free riding has a negative impact on group motivation. For instance, when free riding happens it is possible that the 'sucker effect' happens. This occurs when students do not make an effort, as there is a free rider in their group; the feeling is articulated as such, 'why make an effort when others do not?'

Kerr (1983) also discusses another issue relating to group member contribution as social loafing. This happens when individual input is not identifiable in the group outcome, for instance, when the group is assessed as a whole rather than for individual assessment or peer assessment. Kerr (1983) adds that social loafing has an inverse relationship with motivation and group size, as in bigger groups it is more difficult to differentiate individual input. As such, it is suggested that peer evaluation should be used to reduce free riding or social loafing (Bacon et al., 1999). Kerr & Tindale (2004) adds that social loafing is linked to cultural background and gender by stating that a male member from an individualistic culture is more likely to loaf than such an individual from a collectivist culture.

According to Popov et al. (2012) free riding is one the greatest challenges in multicultural groups. Cathcart et al. (2006) findings shows that the majority of home students believe international students free ride during group work. However they also add international students feel their contribution is not appreciated: as such they lose motivation in contributing more.

Pfaff & Huddleston (2003) state experiencing free riding in a group can change other group members' views toward group work. This issue is widely discussed in multicultural group research and researchers have offered some solutions such as peer evaluation (Bacon et al., 1999; Cathcart et al., 2006; Chapman et al., 2006; Maiden & Perry, 2011; McCorkle et al., 1999; B. Rienties et al., 2014).

2.3.2. TASK AND CURRICULUM DESIGN

In group work research it is frequently mentioned that particular teaching techniques potentially have impact on students' willingness to work in multicultural groups and also on intercultural communication (Bacon et al., 1999; Devita, 2000; D. A. Harrison et al., 2002; Catherine Montgomery, 2009).

It is generally believed that by altering the teaching material and techniques accordingly, intercultural communication would be improved (Carroll & Ryan, 2007; De Vita, Carroll, & Ryan, 2005; J. Ryan, 2012). There is research and advice advancing the case to internationalise the curriculum such as (Demir & Yurdakul, 2015; J. Ryan, 2012). These guidelines usually include increasing interaction between home and international students in the classroom, speaking clear English and avoiding idioms, providing help and support for students, etc.

Different aspects of group work have been considered in the literature such as the task, the group formation, and the support. However, there is no certain solution, which guarantees a positive group work experience and dynamics.

Group formation and time:

For example regarding the group formation, researchers such as Volet & Ang (1998) believe that by working in diverse groups students can improve their intercultural communication skills. But as mentioned earlier, students would rather work with coursemates from the same culture where possible (Peacock & Harrison, 2009). As such, it is suggested that it would be better to assign students to their groups (Volet & Ang, 1998) to force students to interact with individuals from other cultures. P. Kelly (2008) claims that this course of action also would help students to make friends. However, assigning students to their group can cause anxiety and it may have negative impact on group dynamics (Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Strauss et al., 2011).

One thing is similar in most research however - the more contact home and international students have, the greater the possibility of cross-cultural communication. As Strauss et al. (2011) suggests, the more time and interaction students have before group work the greater possibility for a positive experience. However, they also add that even if students experience positive diverse group work, it does not mean they would try to work in a diverse group again. In similar findings N. Harrison & Peacock (2010) suggest that during group work taking place over a longer period, students can potentially form various levels of friendship and in doing so overcome their differences and experience fewer challenges. Or as D. A. Harrison et al. (2002) states, the more time members spend together, the more demographic differences lose their significance. Taha & Cox (2016) explain this further by claiming the more time students spend in their friendship or work group the stronger their relationship is, and additionally the work group could potentially form a friendship group.

These research show cultural differences potentially can be reduced by increasing interaction between students, as members get to know each other and gain some sort of cultural awareness.

2.3.2.1. TASK

The group work task also influences the nature of the conflicts in the group (Catherine Montgomery, 2009), students' effort and motivation (Rust, 2002), performance (Gibson, 1999) and group work success (Davies, 2009) etc.

C. Montgomery (2009) believes high stakes task potentially cause more conflicts in group (both heterogeneous and homogenous) however because of the language barrier the conflict can be greater in heterogeneous groups. Rust (2002) adds the main aim for students is to achieve higher marks and as such they are less likely to make effort when the task is unassessed. As Bacon et al. (1999), Maiden & Perry, (2011), Popov et al. (2012) and Strauss et al. (2014) claim, students are grade-oriented meaning they would rather have control over their final grade and thus avoid working in group work, which makes their grade dependant on others' contribution. It can be concluded that, for the same reason, students experience more conflicts when the task is high stakes or complicated in nature as members become anxious regarding their final grade.

However, Davies (2009) argues the impact the complexity of the task has on group performance has not yet been proven as in the literature there is lack of consensus over this issue. He adds that some scholars believe loafing occurs when the task is too simple and some believe free riding occurs when the task is too difficult. Davies, (2009) then explains the reason for disagreement could be rooted in misunderstandings of free riding and loafing, as he believes these two terms are used synonymously even though they differ in meaning. As such, it causes confusion when a researcher debates the impact of task on group performance. Davies (2009) then comments on the task measurement by dividing the measurement in to two forms measured by optimising the outcome or maximising the outcome.

 In optimising the outcome, group work success is assessed by the comparison of finished product with desired outcome. These tasks are potentially ambiguous as defining the ideal product is problematic. However, in the latter more quantitative aspects of the outcome would be measured such as speed attained to produce the

final product, etc. As such, it is less ambiguous and potentially less problematic. Free riding is less likely to happen during maximising tasks. However, as Davies (2009) also acknowledge, most of the tasks in higher education are measured by optimising the outcome. But what could be understood from these statements is the more the tasks are clear in terms of what outcome is expected, the less problem might happen.

It is also highlighted that the group work task should have understandable aims and objectives and the group work should clearly link to the modules aims and objectives and also the whole course. As it mentioned earlier, the task description should be very clear and teams should be aware of what they are asked to do and produce. If any of these elements are not understood, students may have to spend more time to make sense of them and from this may arise conflicts as members may have different understandings resulting in a waste of their time and this possibly can have a negative impact on their motivation (Bacon et al., 1999; Davies, 2009). Another aspect to consider is that students' individual effort should be measured, otherwise when it is not obvious who did what, the chance for free riding and social loafing would increase (Davies, 2009).

Another method which is suggested to help improve students' engagement with their learning process is reflective learning. Reflective learning helps students to take charge of their own learning and construct their knowledge; this method of learning is aligned with constructivism (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). According to Kolb (2014) students learn from their experience, and reflection upon their learning is one of the vital components of their learning process. Brockbank & McGill (2007) emphasise that students should be trained to develop reflective thinking and this can be achieved by facilitated seminars, group activities and discussions. In student collaboration, reflection plays an important role to encourage learners to engage with the task and also helps them to improve the way they communicate and collaborate within their group (Schulz-Hardt & Brodbeck, 2012). However, reflective skills are not only important as an aid to deep learning, but also because reflection is one of the main skills that learners need to acquire during their professional degree

courses in order to make themselves employable. As Sen (2010) explains students gain awareness of themselves, of their situation and of others which library organisations can benefit from. This means that students with reflective skills are potentially more beneficial for the organisations and consequently they are more employable.

Additionally, it is also cited as one of the main skills for information science students by QAA (2015). Also CILIP, requires reflective writing as part of process to achieve CILIP qualification (M. Watson, 2012). As such Pegg, Waldock, Hendy-Isaac, & Lawton (2012) suggest that 'metacognition' (the capacity for reflection) and the opportunity for students to reflect should be included in curriculum design and embedded in student assignments.

Ruth-Sahd (2003) states that reflective practice can help to close the gap between theory and practice and increase the quality of practice, this can potentially help students to gain deeper understanding of their learning processes and be able to apply the theory in practice. One of the most common ways of encouraging students to reflect on their learning is by asking them to produce reflective writing. Reflective writing has been used in the Information School for several modules, as the School and The University of Sheffield maintain that reflective skills play a vital role in students' professional and personal development (Sen & McKinney, 2014). McKinney & Sen's (2012) research in the Information School on undergraduate students who were enrolled in the Business Intelligence module demonstrated that reflective writing can potentially help students to meet the module outcomes. Also, Johnston & Webber (2003) add that student reflection in the Information Resources and Information Literacy module can help students to develop more advanced IL skills.

However, it should be noted that students need training and support to learn reflective skills and tutors could play an important role in encouraging deep reflection (Sen & McKinney, 2014).

2.3.2.2.   HELP AND SUPPORT

Adding help and support for multicultural groups is another element suggested in the literature to improve multicultural group dynamics and encourage students to interact.

De Vita et al. (2005) suggest providing guidance throughout the group activity would help students to eventually understand each others' culture and define some group work strategies to reduce conflicts. Also, Bacon et al. (1999) and Baker & Clark (2010) consider group support as one of the key element for successful group work.

Something which can be understood from these research is groups potentially perform differently in different tasks and modules as not all group work tasks share similar criteria. This is also noted by Kimmel & Volet (2012) who studied multicultural groups in two different contexts by believing that context has impact on group performance and students' attitude toward the group work

2.3.3.   CONCLUSION

In this section, common issues that may potentially affect both multicultural and monocultural groups and also those which are specific to one kind of group are discussed. These issues are divided into two levels, 'group membership' and 'process'. Group membership includes issues associated with the group members. As such, the different ways which groups are usually formed are discussed. The literature highlighted that group members' characteristics such as age or experience have impacted on the way students communicate and approach their group task. In addition, the way students view and define themselves has a direct link to their expectations and performance. This also applies to students' personalities, meaning that group members' personalities have impact on their performance and potentially their academic attitudes. Similarly, those groups which consist of students with contrasting academic attitudes and motivations are more likely to experience difficulties. Group process is concerned with issues occurring during the group

activities, such as communication, language and accent, conflicts, decision making, contribution and free riding. These issues do not solely concern multicultural groups, however they are more prominent in this context. These issues could potentially seriously affect the group dynamics and performance.

In addition to these two levels, it is also highlighted that the group work task itself and the support students receive may affect the group dynamics and performance.

2.4. CONCLUSION

This literature review provides a route towards understanding multicultural group work with the focus on higher education. Similar research in this field is used to illustrate the current issues concerning multicultural group work.

The literature review has provided a holistic understanding and timeline of the existing learning theories such as objectivism, behaviourism, cognitive theory, constructivism and social constructivism. It is also stated that social constructivism and social constructivism are the primary theories used in UK higher education institutions (Biggs, 1999). Collaborative learning is known as one of the main elements in social constructivist theory. As such, educational institutions such as The University of Sheffield (2011) greatly value it.

The literature review has illustrated that potentially all groups of students experience the specific stages introduced by Tuckman & Jensen (1977). These stages include forming, storming, norming, and performing. It is also highlighted by the literature that multicultural groups may potentially experience different group dynamics due to the cultural differences present in the group (Snow et al., 1996).

Furthermore, this section has also identified the main issues which may occur in multicultural groups - these issued are discovered by researchers such as Ippolito (2007), Kerr (1983), K. Kimmel & Volet (2012), C. Montgomery (2009), Peacock & Harrison (2009) and Popov et al. (2012) who studied different aspects of

multicultural group work such as group formation, culture, communication and contribution and performance. Some of the most cited issues are categorised into two levels - group membership which includes group members' personalities, academic attitudes, and characteristics like age and experience, and group process which includes communication, language, conflicts, decision making, contribution, and free-riding.

In addition, external factors affecting the group were also highlighted by the literature. These factors include the curriculum and task design and the help and support students receive during their group work. The literature review has shown that the more time students spend together the probability of a more positive group work experience is higher (Strauss et al., 2011). The group work task is also considered as one of the main factors and the role of assessment in students' performance was highlighted, meaning as Rust (2002) claims, students are more likely to invest greater effort when the task is assessed. The importance of task clarity and complexity is also shown in the literature, for instance: the more complex and vague the task is, the more likely groups are to experience potential conflicts or misunderstandings. Additionally, the support provided to student groups during the activity could significantly improve learners' experience.

However, the literature review also highlighted that the majority of research in this area adopted quantitative approaches and was conducted in the business and marketing departments at different universities. As such, there is little evidence of the context in which the group work occurred and its impact on the activity.

As several multicultural group work studies highlighted, culture plays a key role in the way students view the world and their communication style, academic attitudes, personalities, etc. As such, it was necessary to understand what culture means in the literature. The literature has shown culture has been viewed in different ways, meaning there is no universally agreed understanding of the concept (Keesing, 1974). However, the literature has shown that all cultural theories agree that people from different cultural backgrounds are potentially different in one or more aspect in

their life (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008). Furthermore, some of these differences may not be seen as cultural differences but are nevertheless influenced by the specific culture, such as a preference for cooperation (Shaules, 2007). It is also highlighted by the literature that language (which is the main tool in communication) is heavily influenced by the culture; here language does not refer to the English language skill level, but the way people use it to communicate. These differences in the use of language are sometimes mis-identified as low level of language skills rather than cultural differences (Shaules, 2007; Ward et al., 2001).

Also, the literature has highlighted the reasons people might find cross-cultural contact challenging or uncomfortable. Three main theories in this field are reviewed: similarity attraction theory, social identity and homophily. These theories explain the reason why people may prefer to avoid contact with those they think are different from them. Also, the literature highlighted that these theories are not limited to cross-cultural contact but in all forms of contact that humans make in their life.

This literature review has provided essential knowledge for the research project and also the knowledge needed to design the research interview questions. However, more importantly it has highlighted existing gaps in the knowledge. The literature review has shown that there is little research on how students form their groups and also that the majority of the related research in this field has been conducted in business and marketing schools using more quantitative approaches.

3. CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

This methodology chapter explores the epistemological and ontological considerations of the research, its approach, methodology and design and also the data collection and analysis method.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

What are the most important challenges, issues, conflicts, tension and benefits encountered during multicultural student collaborate in blended learning higher education?

a. What are the challenges, issues and benefits in multicultural group work?
b. What factors impact upon multicultural group work performance?
c. When do challenges and issues occur in multicultural group work?
d. How do cultural differences affect group performance?
e. What are the factors causing the conflicts?
f. What is the role of cultural differences in multicultural group work?
g. How does multicultural group work influence students' experience and satisfaction?
h. How does the information science context impact on group work?

In order to answer the research questions, an inductive approach and qualitative research methodology are adopted. Also, an interpretivist position was chosen as the epistemological theme of the research and constructivism as its ontological theme. The data was collected by using interviews and observation and thematic data analysis was used to analyse the data from interview transcriptions and observation notes.

3.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND APPROACH

Every researcher has to consider a few significant questions before commencing any research. Remenyi et al. (1998) believe these questions include "how to research?", "what and where to research?" and most importantly "why research?" The answer to 'what to research' is usually embedded in the researcher's academic or personal interest. Also, researchers commonly know what methodology (qualitative or quantitative) they wish to use. Remenyi et al. (1998, p.27) argue that the nature of research is unstructured and also unpredictable. It is important for the researcher to convince his or her peer group that the research approach is comprehensive. To achieve this, the researcher must have an understanding of the "nature of the process required to create the knowledge".

To ensure the research reliability, integrity and reproducibility, the researcher should follow a *scientific* method or approach. It should be considered that the word *science* and its definition has remained vague, but this does not mean there is no guideline for the researchers to follow. Holden & Lynch (2004) add that the process researchers go through to choose their methodologies involves a deeper element than merely the practicalities - it provides a "philosophical solution" to the question "why research?" In order to shape their philosophical views, the researcher may need to adopt new schools of thought regarding their views toward the nature of society and the nature of science (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Burrell & Morgan (1979, p. 1) argue that in social science research there are assumptions regarding the fundamental ontological question which is "whether the *reality* to be investigated is external to the individual or the product of individual consciousness; whether reality is of an *objective* nature, or product of individual cognition...".

In addition to ontological assumptions, there are *epistemological* assumptions; these assumptions concern the researcher's perception toward knowledge. They are

about how an individual interprets the world and communicates this perception as *knowledge* to others. The epistemological assumptions are to explain: what kind of knowledge can be absorbed by an individual and what can be labelled as *true* or *false*. These are based on the view toward the nature of knowledge itself: whether it can be learned or it should be experienced. The third set of assumptions according to Burrell & Morgan (1979) contrast with the first two in terms of the view toward human nature, especially regarding their surrounding environments. One sees individuals being trained or shaped by the external conditions, and the other view the individual is the creator of their surrounding environments.

The assumptions which should be made by researchers have a direct impact on the choice of methodology (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Holden & Lynch, 2004). Different ontologies, epistemologies and views towards human nature may lead researchers to different methodologies, for instance, researchers could choose the methodology that serves an objective or subjective view towards the natural world. By making the choices, researchers are able to evaluate if the chosen research approach is appropriate and if it will serve their assumptions or not. This would help them to convince others that their research approach is comprehensive.

"Research methods and concepts cannot be divorced from theory as well as research tools because they are operated within a given set of assumptions about the nature of society, the nature of human behaviour and the interactions between these two where philosophy simply aims clarifying the obstacles in obtaining knowledge as true and logical". (Uddin Mohammad Nashir, 2009)

3.1.1.   THE NATURE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

As mentioned earlier, science has not been defined clearly. As Burrell & Morgan, (1979) state, all scientists approach their research with explicit or implicit assumptions regarding the social world they intend to investigate

As such, researchers tend to explain the nature of social science, they use two philosophical positions, which reflects in their choice of ontology and epistemology

stands and their research methodology: objectivism and subjectivism.

Burrell & Morgan (1979, p.3) define objectivism as a:

"view which treats the social world as it were a hard, external, objective reality, then the scientific endeavor I likely to focus upon analysis of relationships and regularities between the various elements which comprises. The concern therefore is with the identification and definition of these elements and with the discovery of ways in which relationship can be expressed."

They define subjectivism as:

"a view that stresses the importance of subjective experience of individuals in creation of social world, then search for understanding focuses upon different issues and approaches then in different ways. The principal concern is with an understanding of the ways in which an individual creates, modifies, and interprets the world in which he/she finds himself."

Objectivism has been successfully and broadly used in the natural sciences, but when social science researchers have applied objectivism to their research to study social science phenomena, they have been criticised as the nature of these disciplines is different. These criticisms though, have actually helped increase the popularity of subjectivism in social science research (Holden & Lynch, 2004).

However, when speaking of objective and subjective views towards the nature of social science, these authors refer to a broader view which guides the researcher to adopt their ontology and epistemological philosophy in relation to their view towards the social science. This means when a researcher has subjective approach towards the social world, they mainly adopt a constructivism position as their ontological view, and an anti-positivism approach to epistemology and qualitative methodology.

3.1.2. ONTOLOGY

Crotty (1998 , p.10) defines ontology as the study of being concerned with answering the question *"What is"*. Lincoln & Guba (1985, p.37) define ontology as the nature of reality. Nashir Uddin Mohammad (2009) explains this further in these terms: "the theory of reality what reality generally looks like regardless of our precise knowledge of it". Remenyi et al. (1998, p.286) define ontology a philosophy that concerns nature and the relationships of being.

Davies (2007) argues since everyone perceives their surrounding environment according to their gender, age, and experience in unique ways; it is necessary for social science researchers to have clear ideas how they perceive the social world. This enables them to remain neutral throughout the research process (from choosing the topic to drawing the conclusion). As Mason (2002, p.154) emphasizes, no research can be ontologically neutral.

There are two positions in ontology: *objectivism* and *constructivism*:

Lakoff (1987, p.158) defines the position of *objectivism* in ontology as "one version of basic realism". This view is similar to the objective view towards the nature of social science (which is defined in section 3.1.1). In the objective view, social phenomena and their meaning are external to individuals. This means that individuals do not interpret the world's meaning, but rather the meaning is independent from the human mind (Bryman, 2008; Lakoff, 1987).

Lakoff (1987, p.163) states:

> *"Knowledge consists in correctly conceptualizing and categorizing things in the world and grasping the objective connections among those things and those categories"*

Some of the assumptions of objectivism are: (D. H. Jonassen, 1991; Lakoff, 1987).

(a)   There is a real world consisting of entities structured according to their properties and relations. Categorisation of these entities is based on their properties

(b)   The real world is fully and correctly structured so that it can be modelled

(c)   Symbols are representations of reality and can only be meaningful to the degree that they correspond to reality

(d)   The human mind processes the abstract symbols in a computer-like fashion so that it mirrors nature

(e)   Human thought is symbol-manipulation and it is independent of the human organism

(f)   The meaning of the world exists objectively, independent of the human mind and it is external to the knower

Constructivism can challenge the objectivism standpoint that organisations and culture are modelled and individuals are external entities to them and have no input on them (Bryman, 2008). Constructivism asserts that "reality" is in the mind of the individual, and it is the individual who builds the reality upon on his/her interpretation (D. H. Jonassen, 1991). It suggests that social interactions shape social phenomena, and these phenomena are constantly changing (Bryman, 2008).

In the constructivist view, each individual creates their knowledge or understanding based on previous experience, beliefs and mental structure, which they use to perceive their world and interpret events. Constructivists believe each individual shapes their reality through understanding experiences of the *external world* (D. H. Jonassen, 1991).

According to Dewey (1938) and Vygotsky (1978) interaction can play a critical role in individuals' learning experience. Social constructivists believe knowledge is created in communities of practice within social interaction (Brown, et al.1989). Constructivism does not claim that there is no real world, but it believes the world cannot be seen in a single way by everyone. Each individual constructs and negotiates their understanding of the physical world within its boundaries; as a result, several perceptions towards the world can be shaped (Vrasidas, 2000).

Learning in constructivism is constantly making meaning of surrounding environments. Blumer (1969) believes people create meaningful interpretation when they start to reinterpret the world. As a result, human actions are the result of this interpretation.

There are two similar but different views toward learning in constructivism: social constructivism and cognitive constructivism. Cognitive constructivists believe knowledge is *constructed* in individuals within their personal process whereas social constructivism argues knowledge is created within interaction between social actors (Powell & Kalina, 2009). Cognitive constructivism concentrates on individual learning: "all forms of obtaining knowledge from oneself by use of one's own mind" (Bruner, 1961, p.22). Piaget (1953) who has developed cognitive constructivist theory believes learners cannot instantly understand the information they receive; rather they must construct their own knowledge. There should be different ways to help learners to understand the information here, as cognitive constructivism suggests that learners learn by problem solving (Driscoll, 2000).

This research aims to conceptualie cultural conflicts, tensions, issues and challenges in group work within higher education. A social constructivist view toward learning is the appropriate philosophical approach for this study since UK higher education is based on constructive learning in addition to being massively multicultural. As discussed above, social constructivism values the impact of group activities and culture on learners' learning process.

3.1.3.   EPISTEMOLOGY

Crotty (1998, p.10) claims epistemology is the understanding of "*what it means to know*".

Hughes and Sharrock (1997, p.5) ask "how is it possible, if it is, for us to gain knowledge of the world?" In other terms epistemology is considered as the *"theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the*

methodology" (Crotty, 1998:3)*.* Epistemology concerns how an individual knows what they know also how they test the validity of their knowledge.

Like ontology, there are two approaches to epistemological objectivism and subjectivism .There are two main epistemology strands: positivism (serves objectivism) and anti-positivism or interpretivism (serves subjectivism) (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Positivists believe that only true knowledge is the one, which is based on experience, and it is under control of scientific knowledge. They believe the clearest idea of knowledge only can be achieved by using scientific approaches (Cohen et al. , 2007). In this view, knowledge is created strictly from theories supporting it. Also, they argue the methods used in natural science research can be used in social science research. They believe researchers in social science research need to construct very general theories that explain the regular relationships to create descriptive and predictive knowledge of the external world (Bryman, 2008; Uddin Mohammad Nashir, 2009).

Positivism has been widely criticized - one shortcoming identified is that the quantification of data and subsequent use of mathematical tools to study individuals risks dehumanising the research sample. Remenyi et al. (1998) believes the positivist approach in social science will not create interesting or deep understanding of complicated phenomena. Also, it has been argued that positivism can potentially marginalise the views of humans by excluding the subjective world. Furthermore, scientific explanation ignores morality, by explaining behaviour to the extent that makes humans human. Some of the criticisms are actually because of the characteristics that positivism inherits from objectivism, such as failing to acknowledge that an individual is able to interpret and synthesize their own experience.

But the most significant shortage found in positivism is viewing human behaviour as passive and controlled and fundamentally ignoring individualism and freedom in human beings. This view is similar to the behaviourist view (Cohen et al., 2007). By acknowledging positivism's criteria and views, it can be concluded that positivism

does not serve the aim of this study since the study is based on constructivism and each example of how individual interpret and understand and their perception of the group activities is in the interest of the research.

Interpretivism counterpoints positivism as it places emphasis on interpretation and observation in order to understand the social world. Natural science approaches are unsuitable for social studies because the social world is not ruled by *law-like* conventions but facilitated through meaning and human behaviour (Snap & Spencer, 2003). Interpretivism has a subjective view toward social events and so does not see people as objects for natural science. As a result, studying social science requires a completely different set of logic – one which is able to distinguish human from natural science.

Thomas (2010) states that the basic assumption of interpretivism is that the social world is constructed by each individual differently. Understanding and explaining human behaviour are the main elements of interpretivism (Bryman, 2008). Weber, (1947, p.88) defines sociology (study of human society) as "science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order to arrive at a casual explanation of its course an effects". Bryman (2008) argues that the Weber definition highlights both understanding and explanation and he adds 'casual explanation' in the definition only happens by interpretive understanding of social action, not by external forces that are meaningless for actors participating in social action. In this view, findings are influenced by the researcher's perception as they all depend upon the researcher's interpretation thus it is not possible to conduct objective research. Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p.22) argue that "all research are interpretive they are formed and ruled by the researcher's perceptions and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. Each interpretive paradigm needs specific activities including the question researcher asks and the interpretation they make.

In the interpretive view, the researcher not only studies physical events as well as the sequence of the behaviour taking place, but also the participants' understanding of those behaviours and the way they make sense of them. Additionally, the way this

understanding impact on their behaviour is also studied (Maxwell, 2005). Thomas (2010) adds on a similar note that in the interpretivist view, words and events have different meaning for each individual in different situations.

The main aim of this research is to study multicultural group activities and interaction in order to understand how group members interact and also their experience in multicultural groups regardless of any negativity or positivity. Also, it is very important to understand how students from different cultural backgrounds interpret their experience in working with others. As Angus (2006) argues "interpretivism is concerned with the investigation of ways in which human actors themselves construct the social world through the interpretation of and interaction with other human actors" it can be concluded that interpretivism best serves the aim of this research.

3.2. RESEARCH APPROACH AND STRATEGY

3.2.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

There are two approaches toward research theory. Firstly, theory can be seen as something that guides the research and research is being conducted in order to answer the questions which arise from theoretical considerations. Secondly, it may be concluded after the research data collection and analysis. The deductive approach demonstrates the first view; a hypothesis is deducted by the researcher with a comprehensive understanding of the domain and theoretical consideration related to the domain. This hypothesis should be subjected to empirical scrutiny. Then the concept in hypothesis will be translated into researchable entities. Social science researchers need to identify how the relevant data should be collected in order to serve the hypothesis. This approach is mostly used in quantitative research (Bryman, 2008). Cohen et al. (2007, p.6) explain that the deductive approach maintains that valid conclusion can be drawn from valid statements.

In contrast with the deductive approach, in the inductive approach the researcher

concludes the relationship of their findings to generate the theory, which is prompted by the whole process. In the inductive approach, theory would follow data rather than vice versa as with deduction (Saunders et al., 2009, p.20). The findings are organized to form the theory. This approach is mostly used in qualitative research (Bryman, 2008). Cohen et al. (2007, p.6) defines inductive approach as "the study of a number of individual case [which] s would lead to an hypothesis and eventually generalization". This definition is very similar to Hyde (2000) who defines the inductive approach as a research approach which starts with studying a phenomenon in order to create generalization related to that phenomena. This means that the specific theory generated by an inductive reasoning is for that specific situation which may not be true for all similar situation.

The inductive approach has been chosen for this research for several reasons: first the research philosophy is based on social constructivism and interpretivism; also, the research has a descriptive and exploratory nature (Robson, 2011). Additionally the research concern is the context in which challenges, issues and tensions occur (Saunders et al., 2009). this means that as the research intend to interpret the collected data in order to identify themes and categories which demonstrate these issues and challenges, inductive approach is the most suitable approach for this research.

3.2.2. RESEARCH STRATEGY

This research adopts a qualitative research strategy to study cultural conflicts, tensions, issues and challenges in multicultural group work. In order to answer the research questions, the researcher must comprehend students' experiences in multicultural group work and also their perceptions toward working with people with different cultural backgrounds. As Merriam (2009, p.5) states *"qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences."* By considering the philosophical stance of the research, a qualitative strategy has been chosen.

In addition, the literature review revealed a lack of qualitative studies in existing

research; as such this highlights the importance of adopting a qualitative approach in order to study the subject using different approach to achieve a richer and more in-depth result.

3.2.3.   RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to achieve the aims of this research, it is necessary to choose a research design which enables the researcher to investigate multicultural group work in real time and in a real setting to identify how culture may impact on students' perceptions and group performance. There are two main designs which are useful for studying cause and effect: case study and experimental research. Experimental research mostly uses quantitative methods unlike qualitative case studies. A case study enables the researcher to observe and study the subject in real time, while in experimental research the subject is studied in artificial conditions and the effect is caused by variable manipulation (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998).

As has been discussed above, the epistemological research view is interpretivism and it is essential to observe students in real life in order to produce transferable findings, so case study design is chosen here as an appropriate research design.

The diagram below shows this research design:

The diagram illustrates four phases of the research. These phases are separated by different colours. The initial stage (blue) is mainly about designing the research. This stage includes selection of the cases and designing the data collection and interview questions.

The second phase (red) is mainly data collection for both cases. C1 refers to the IL case, and C2 refers to the KIM case.

The third phase (green) is data analysis, and the final phase is discussion and developing the model.

The Literature review was updated in phases two and four.
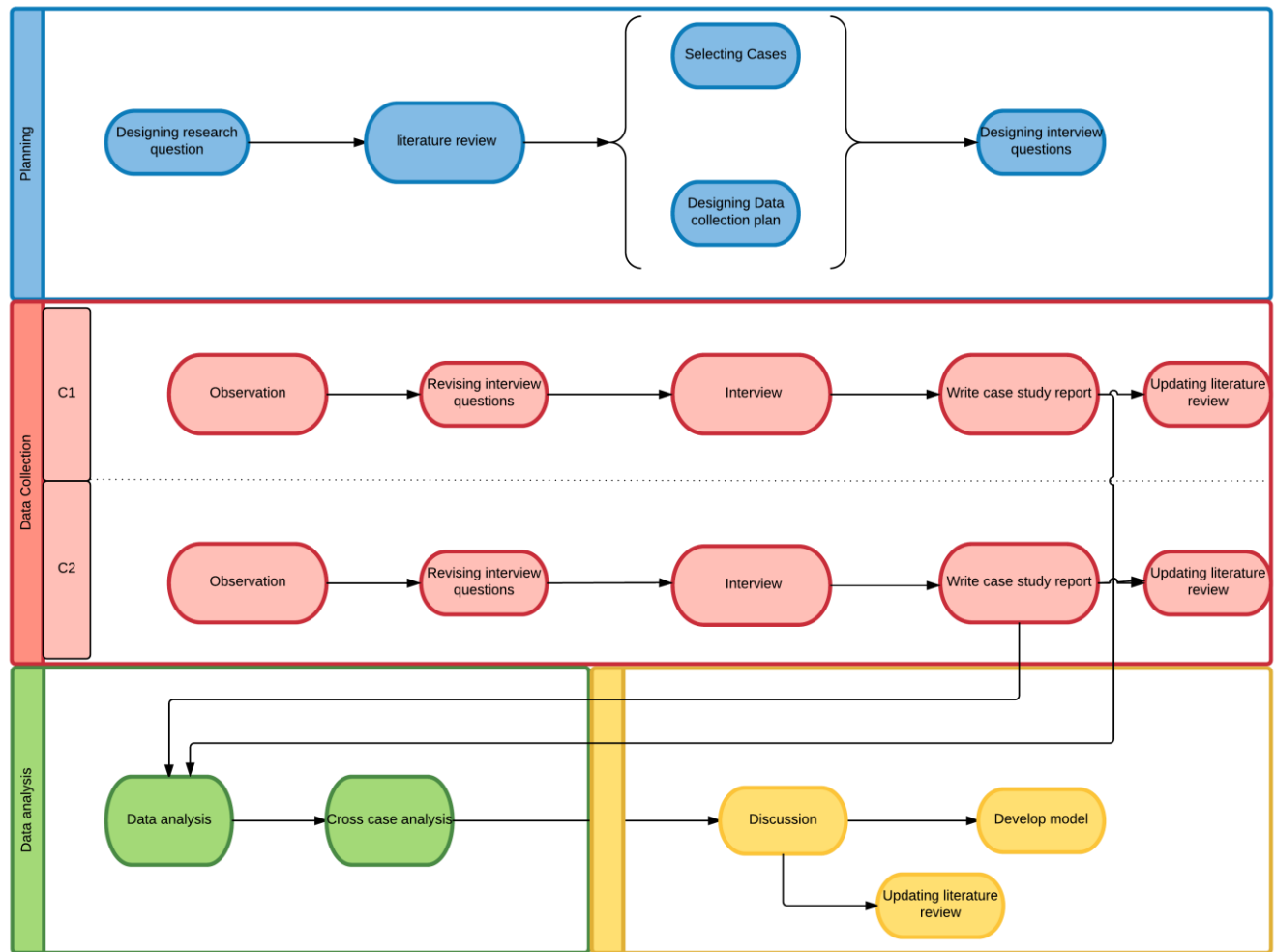
FIGURE 3.2-1 **RESEARCH DESIGN**

3.2.3.1. CASE STUDY

The case study is one of the main qualitative research approaches and has been commonly used across different disciplines. Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) noted that different people have different understandings of the concept 'case study'. In this research, case study is seen as per the below definitions:

> *"Case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evidence"*
> (Yin, 2009, p.18)

> "Case study research always involves "*the study of an instance in action*"(Adelman et al., 1976, p.141) *or in another word "case study research is also good for contemporary events when the relevant behaviour cannot be manipulated*"(Rowley, 2002, p.17)

Merriam (1988, p.21) defines the qualitative case study as:

> " *An intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon or social unit. Case studies are particularistic, descriptive and heuristic, and rely heavily on inductive reasoning in handling multiple data sources.*"

Cohen et al. (2007) explain further by claiming that case studies can establish cause and effect by observing the effects in a real context by considering that the context is the source of both cause and effect. This 'context' is unique and dynamics and therefore the case study examines it and reports the dynamic and complex nature of the phenomena by describing human relationships, event interactions and other factors in a unique case. In this way of studying the situation, the case study can have the following characteristics, which have been introduced by Hitchcock & Hughes, (1995, p.317):

- A concern with the rich and vivid description of events within the case

- The chronological narrative of events within the case

- An internal debate between the description of events and analysis of events

- A focus upon particular individual actors or groups of actors and their perceptions.

- A focus upon particular events within the case

- The integral involvement of the researcher in the case

- A way of presenting the case which is able to capture the richness of the situation

There are several types of case study. Yin (2009) identifies variations depending on its nature: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. Yin (2009) argues that the type of research question is one of the important elements that can have a critical impact on the choice of research methods. Yin's categories support Merriam (1998) who identified different disciplinary-oriented fields of case studies: ethnographic, historical, psychological, sociological, and education; and each of these case studies could be interpretative, descriptive or evaluative.

Merriam (1998, p.38) defines the interpretive case study as a:

> *"case study, which contains rich, thick description. This descriptive data would be used to develop conceptual categories [...] the level of abstraction and conceptualization in such case studies may range from suggesting relationships among variables to constructing theories"*

This primary research question for this project is "What are the most important challenges, issues, conflicts and tension encountered during multicultural student collaborate in blended learning higher education?" And as Yin (2009, p.9) states, "this question deals with operational links needing to be traced over the time, rather than by mere frequencies or incidence." The research question therefore has an explanatory nature.

In addition to each of these three types of case studies, there can be "single case" or "multi case" varieties depending on the nature of study (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 2009). Or as Robson (2011) emphasizes 'case' in the term 'case

study' refers to a *situation, individual, group, organization*, or anything that the researcher is interested in. Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) add the nature of the research's aim influences the study of a particular situation.

For this research an inductive approach with an interpretivist philosophical stance is adopted. As research aims to identify and conceptualize the issues, challenges, and tensions in multicultural group work, the interpretive case study is the most appropriate research method. Also multiple cases are studied in order to strengthen the validity of findings as (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.29) describe the benefit of using multiple case sampling as such:

> "multiple-case sampling adds *confidence* to findings. By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying *how* and *where* and, if possible, *why* it carries on as it does. We can strengthen our precision, the validity, and the stability of findings"

Using multiple case studies is also useful to compare or contrast different situations (Remenyi, 2012) or as Sharan B. Merriam (2009) states the data interpretation is more convincing when more distinctive cases are included in the study. This is because studying a range of different cases enables researchers to understand their findings better and also be able to explain the specific phenomenon by specifying how and where and possibly why it happens/act as it does (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The importance of cases and the units in case study research stresses the importance of case selection in addition to the sample (people, documents, and etc.) within each case. Sharan B. Merriam (2009) discusses two types of sampling: *probability* and *nonprobability* sampling. She explains probability sampling, such as random sampling is extensively used in research, which aims for generalisability. As generalisability is mostly associated with statistics, it is mostly used in quantitative research. She expands this logic to justify nonprobability sampling as one of the most used sampling methods for qualitative research. The most common form of nonprobability sampling is '*purposeful*'. As Merriam (2009) explains, purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the researcher intends to identify,

understand and gain insight into specific phenomena and as such they must select their sample in a way that means the most can be studied and learned. Creswell (2012) explains that purposeful sampling in the case study research would enable the researcher to choose the diverse cases in order to provide multiple perspectives. This purposeful sampling for the case study includes both selecting the cases and as mentioned above selecting the participant, documents or etc. within each case.

In addition, there are different sampling strategies in purposeful sampling such as: maximum variation, homogenous, critical case, theory based, snowball or chain and more on which are according to Creswell (2012) are used in different qualitative research according to the research questions an approach. However, maximum variation sampling is the most popular sampling approach in qualitative research. Creswell (2012) explains the maximum variation strategy:

"This approach consists of determining in advance some criteria that differentiate the site or participants, and then selecting sites or participants that are quite different on the criteria." (p.157)

He adds this approach is used widely as it helps research findings to demonstrate different perspectives, which is an ideal situation in a qualitative research. In addition, Glaser & Strauss (2009) expand the explanation of purposeful sampling further by adding that purposeful sampling is designed to be conducted parallel with data analysis with the theory building, meaning that the researchers have control over their data collection to ensure the data is most related to their emerging theory.

Lincoln & Guba (1985) used Glaser & Strauss' (2009) definition and introduced the characteristic for purposeful sampling: (p.201)

1. *Emergent sampling design: there is no prior specification of the sample*
2. *Serial selection of sample units. To ensure maximum diversity, it is best to select next the set of samples after the previous one has been analysed. This enables the researcher to extend on the data which is already collected or data which contrast the previous set of data, or fill the gap in the data.*

3. *Continuous adjustments or "focusing" of the sample. Initially any sample unit will do as well as any other, but as insights and information accumulate and investigator begins to develop working hypotheses about the situation, the sample may be refined to focus more particularly on those units that seem more relevant.*

4. *Selection to the point of redundancy. The size of sample is determined by the amount of information needed. If the purpose is to maximize the information, sampling will continue until there is no new information is generated from the new sample. In this stage sampling is terminated therefore "redundancy is the primary criterion." (pp.201-202)*

Even though generating theory is mostly associated with qualitative research (especially in grounded theory, whereas Glaser & Strauss (2009) highlight, the main aim is to generate a hypotheses or theory) in some qualitative research such as case study theory it is not always generated. As Simons (2009) explains generating theory from case study data could potentially lead to distinctive understanding of the case as it is grounded in the participants 'lived' experience. However, she emphasises that generating theory from case study research is not always feasible as it may require a long time study in addition to generating theory from complex qualitative data, so is not easy. She suggests, instead, it is possible to produce something in between such as using existing theory to explain part of the data or a theoretical statement which could make sense of the data but does not establish a general theory.

As such for this research, the aim was to produce a model or an explanation of students experience in multicultural group work rather than building a theory.

3.2.4. OTHER POSSIBLE APPROACHES

In this section two other possible methodologies are reviewed and compared to the adopted methodology for this research and reasons for choosing case study approach are discussed and justified.

3.2.4.1. ETHNOGRAPHY

Ethnography is one the most commonly used methodologies in social science research. However it is frequently referred to as 'case study', 'interpretive method', or 'qualitative inquiry' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007,p.1; Yin, 2009, p.12). Walters, (2007) believes the confusion in labelling - especially between case study and ethnography - may be the result of using these terms to describe the strategy, focus, or methods relating to research and also the final product of a research study.

Ethnography is a systematic and scientific approach which describes and interprets the social and cultural life of a group of people, an organisation or a similar subject.

Ethnography is also described as the art and science of describing a group or culture (Fetterman, 1999, p.11). In ethnography, the researcher is the tool for data collection and observes and understands the phenomenon which is being studied. This usually relates to the behaviour, language, and communication of the group with a shared culture (Creswell, 2012).

The perspectives of the people in the study are generally emphasised and built upon by ethnography. This research method values the importance of the uniqueness of particular meanings and behaviours of a variable in a specific location. The study focuses upon people's daily lives: their routines and thoughts and beliefs in their environment. This means that ethnographic research is based on the belief that the way people behave and communicate with their surrounding environment and make meaning of their world is greatly variable depending on their environment (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

In ethnographic research, the researcher attempts to understand what people do and their justifications for that specific act before trying to make sense and interpret the act by comparing it to their personal experience or available theories. As a result,

researchers play a critical role in ethnographic research and their observation provides the main part of the research. Throughout the research, the researcher learns the meaning and significance individuals attribute to their actions and outputs (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Ethnographic research, like many other research approaches is conducted with underlying theory which it can be researcher's personal model and understanding of a phenomenon or even a fully formed, explicit theory which the research is based upon. Fetterman (1999) adds, that each theory is suitable for specific topic as such theories with little or no explanatory features are not usually appropriate for the majority of topics. He explains that most ethnographic researchers tend to use two main categories of theories - these are materialist or ideologist (which is similar to cognitive theory). Ideologists believe the mental process or cognitive process can result in fundamental changes in human beings. Contrastingly, materialists see these changes as consequences of ecological resources – money, etc. Fetterman, however (1999) claims neither of these approaches can explain and answer the problems solely, but rather they need to be used together. Ethnographic researchers choose their approach by considering their research questions and its needs. Researchers who adopt their particular ideology believe people's thoughts can be described by observing and listening to them and by using different technique the researcher can create a taxonomy which can explain how people interpret their world. In contrast, ethnographic researchers who adopt materialist theories believe the world can be described by using patterns of behaviour which can be observed and interpreted.

Zaharlick (1992) states there are two main branches of ethnographical research. The first is when the researchers collect data from the same social group or a few similar groups and the end product has descriptive nature - either a description of the society's culture or people's culture within the society. The second one alternatively, is when the ethnographic research aims to test a hypothesis.

FIELDWORK

Fieldwork is the most important ethnographic research characteristic. Ybema et al. (2009) define fieldwork as combination of observation, interview and document reading.

Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) cite fieldwork as the simplest type of social science research. Some ethnographic research starts the exercise with basic investigation methods such as a survey in order to gain a general understanding of the environment, language, relationship etc. which in turn informs the design of the research. Fieldwork can sometimes take two years or more to complete, but such preparation not always possible to do as some researchers may have to finish field work earlier due to different reasons such as lack of funding or strict time limitations. Interviews can help the researcher to cross check, compare and ensure that the information collected in the fieldwork is accurate before generating theory or new knowledge (Fetterman, 1999).

After fieldwork, researchers analyse the data and write the report to create a picture to show and explain how the specific system works.

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH CHARACTERISTICS

Zaharlick (1992) identified ethnography's essential characteristics as:

- Social relationship: researchers have a close relationship with participants and other people involved in the research. Through this relationship they exchange knowledge.
- The researcher as learner: the ethnographer aims to learn and gain the knowledge that they did not possess before the research, especially at the early stage of the research exercise. This learning usually includes understanding the way that participants interpret their surrounding environments.
- First-hand observation: in ethnographic research, researchers are involved in a close and direct contact with participants and this is essential for learning the subjects' complicated patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and etc.

- Long-term observation: as mentioned above, fieldwork can take a significant time to complete. Zaharlick argues that a year of observation can provide the opportunity for the researchers to the whole pattern of the participant life as people usually go through all of their routing during a year.

- Participant observation: as discussed earlier, observation is an essential element of any ethnographic research

- The ethnographer as research instrument: ethnographers observe, listen smell, hear, and feel. Through these senses they collect the information and these senses would give the data greater depth.

- Naturalistic observation: ethnographers observe people in their own environment and in their daily life.

- Eclectic approach: ethnography is eclectic in its use of data collection and analysis. As discussed earlier, different data collection methods will enable the researcher to cross-check the accuracy of the collected data.

- Interactive-reactive approach: ethnography is dynamic and Interactive-reactive approach this would enable researchers to review their initial research question and modify them if necessary as it is not always possible to foreseen specific question before entering the field.

- Holistic perspective: when ethnographers discover something new they try to link it to others aspect of the culture, beliefs, social position and etc. holistic perspective means that the isolated observation is insufficient without studying its relationship to other aspect of culture.

- Humanistic: a good ethnographic report is similar to novels. It makes the reader to feel part of the environment. It provides enough information for reader to understand how it feels to be part of the culture studied.

- Cross-cultural frame of reference: researchers compare the new culture studied with previous ones. It would help to use the existent knowledge to add the depth of the interpretation of new data.

Additionally, Ybema et al. (2009) identified seven characteristics for ethnographical research in organisations which are mostly similar to Zaharlick (1992) however, some

of the characteristics are somehow different. She also added that in the ethnographic research, researchers mostly use combined field work methods. She emphasised how ethnography is concerned with context and centres upon actors, also it is the ethnographic researcher who makes sense of their observation and they analyse their data using their own interpretation.

WHY NOT ETHNOGRAPHY FOR THIS RESEARCH?

As mentioned earlier, there exists a confusion between case study and ethnography Hammersley & Atkinson (2007) Walters (2007) and Yin (2009) or as Cresswell (2012) states, the two overlap. In order to choose between these two research approaches, it is important to identify their differences.

Ethnographical research is used to study a system but the case study is to study a bounded system. The whole culture sharing system may be seen as a case in ethnography but it is not for in depth investigation or using the case to explore an issue. Ethnography studies people's routine (culture), what they do and what they say to illustrate their culture. However, the case study focuses on a bounded system, which can be a problem, event, issue, group of people, organisation or an individual. The case study focuses on the case within the context. In a case study, the case is being investigated by considering its context. Also ethnographic research almost always focuses on the social group and culture, which is not necessarily the focus for a case study research (unless a group is the case) (Walters, 2007).

Walters, (2007) illustrated this difference in the below diagrams (Figure 3.2-2):
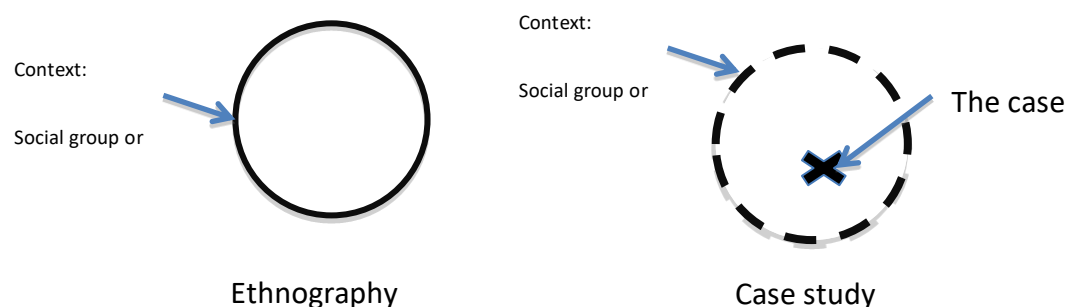
FIGURE 3.2-2 DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ETHNOGRAPHY AND CASE STUDY (WALTERS, 2007)

The aim of this research to identify cultural issues and challenges for Masters students at the University of Sheffield. As such, the interest is placed upon specific aspects of group work and it is not studying the whole group work culture and as discussed above, it is considered as defined or bounded system within a context. Also, the end product of this research is a contextualisation of these issues and challenges and the research is not aiming to produce a descriptive report of how students work within a multicultural groups.

3.2.4.2. GROUNDED THEORY

Grounded theory (GT) has been used as a research design, method, technique and outcome of the research.

GT research usually begins with set of questions and provides an answer to these. Bryman, (2008) defines grounded theory as "an approach to the analysis of qualitative data that aims to generate theory out of research data by achieving a close fit between the two." Data gathering and analysis is an iterative systematic process in GT research.

According to Charmaz & Smith (2003), in a GT research the researcher builds theoretical categories which are directly grounded in their data. The researcher is directly involved in the meaning making of data. Data analysis is interactive process which involves developing concept by synthesising and conceptualizing collected data. As mentioned earlier, the data collection and analysis is an iterative process in which the researcher identifies the categories in their data which elucidate the information and help the researcher to discover patterns in the data. After this, they may collect more data to develop these patterns and explain their categories.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GT

Sarantakos (2005) claims as GT follows an interpretive paradigm, it inherits all of the properties of interpretivism such as:

- It is subjective

- Meaning is created by people and their interpretation of the world

- The researcher looks beyond the subjective meaning of the phenomena and they explore the process of constructing the social situation which explains people personal views and opinions

Pfeifer, (cited in Sarantakos,(2005), p. 119) identified 10 basic principles for GT:

- It questions the notion of starting research with an already established perspective guideline

- It aims to develop theory through the research, not to subject research to theory.

- It is most suitable in areas where theories are not available or the field is dominated by many contradictory theoretical positions

- It follows a qualitative paradigm and is almost exclusively employed by qualitative researchers, but can equally be employed within the quantitative model.

- It is applicable to any field and any setting being equal suitable and effective.

- The research design is not direct one-way path but a circular one, which allows moving back and forth between data collection and analysis

- It employs a purposive sampling procedure (theoretical sampling) guided by the information collected during the study, and completed when theoretical saturation is reached

- It employs a variety of methods, from observation to interviews and documentary analysis.

- Analysis proceeds from coding to axial coding, and to selective coding which produce concepts, categories, typologies and theory.

- The characteristic of this research design is that it is guided not by the researcher or other general professional practice and standards but by the theory that emerges during research.

WHY NOT GROUNDED THEORY FOR THIS RESEARCH?

For this research, it is argued that GT can be identified as the second-best approach - due to the nature of the research questions, this research intends to study the phenomenon in its own real-life context rather than studying the context itself, as grounded theory does. In addition, this research it is not trying to generate a theory from data. As such grounded theory was deemed less suitable for this research.

3.2.5. CASE STUDY DESIGN

3.2.5.1. CASE SELECTION

For the purpose of this research, purposeful sampling was selected with maximum variation approach. As was explained above, this would enable the researcher to collect more diverse data and as such demonstrate different perspectives.

Thomas (2010, p.76-77) identifies three tactics or as he calls it, "the origin of the case" to select the case/s for the case study research. These three tactics are:

- ➢ 'key case' which is a classical or exemplary case which reveals something from in-depth study
- ➢ 'Outlier case' which shows something interesting due to its differences and specialness
- ➢ 'Local knowledge case', the case is the researchers 'special knowledge, they have intimate knowledge about and something in their personal experience which they want to find out more about it. Also, the case may be chosen because the researcher may not have access to 'anything other than their own situation'. Also, when researchers choose local knowledge case/s they

have access to richness and depth that may not be available to them otherwise.

For this research, cases are chosen based on the researcher's local knowledge. She completed her IM Master's degree in the same department and as such was familiar with the course. In addition, she also worked as a tutor for all three modules. As such, she had thorough knowledge about each case and she 'more insider than outsider' during participants' observation. In addition, her knowledge enabled her to spot nuance and details which a relative stranger (someone who was not as familiar with the cases) could miss.

Moreover, as the researcher spent more time with students due to her tutor role. Students trusted the researcher and they developed more close relationship which later helped the researcher to collect more in-depth and richer data.

For this research two main cases were initially selected: 'Information Resources and Information Literacy' (IL) and 'Knowledge and Information Management' (KIM). Both modules were offered for Master's degree programmes in the Information School at The University of Sheffield. Both were core modules for Information Management students and the IL module was also a core module for Librarianship students.

In addition to the researcher's familiarity with the content, another reason to choose these specific modules was that they both include group work tasks, which were different in nature; this would enable the researcher to compare findings from each module.

The IL module was offered in the first semester and the group work was formatively assessed with students being assigned to their groups.

The KIM module was offered in the second semester and the group work was weighted at 30% of the students' final mark and students were able to choose their group mates (however, in the last year of data collection the module was moved to the first semester.)

In addition, as one of the module coordinators was the researcher's supervisor and the second coordinator has worked with the researcher previously, it also made it easier to access to the group compositions beforehand and arrange the observations.

During the initial stage of the data analysis for interviews, it became apparent that students talked a great deal about the group work assignment for a third module (MINICASE). As the ethics approval for this research also included any related modules, the researcher decided to include this third module as a MINICASE. Although she did not conduct observation for that module, she did however have comprehensive knowledge of the module as she was previously a tutor for it in addition to passing the module as part of her Master's studies. This module was offered as part of the Master's degree programme for Information Systems students and IM students in the first semester and included 60% of students' final marks; students were also able to select their own group mates.

The diversities between cases provide an opportunity to compare how students' perceptions and experiences are different in first and second semester, how they choose their group mates, their view towards assessments and also their views toward group work in general.

3.2.5.2. PARTICIPANT SELECTION

In each module students who worked in a multicultural groups were selected as participants and as the researcher worked as a tutor, she was able to approach them during class and explain her research and ask if they agreed to take part, requesting they to sign the consent form if they agreed to do so.

Almost all multicultural groups were approached, but not all groups agreed to participate. Additionally, some group members later did not attend the interview.

Participants were mostly IM students because the number of IM students was greater and also Librarianship students mostly agreed to be observed but did not attend the interview. These individuals explained that as they were working and

some were not living in Sheffield, they found it difficult to allocate 2 hours to the interview.

As mentioned earlier, in purposeful sampling each new set of samples should be selected after analysis, this would enable the researcher to adjust them in order to collect the best possible data to answer research questions. In this research also, new sets of samples were collected mostly after the previous one was analyzed - this was not only due to the adjustment purpose, but as the researcher was only able to collect data in academic years and there were gaps between years in which she had time to transcribe and analyse the data. However, this definitely enabled her to choose the best possible next set of participant samples according to data to ensure she is able covers most aspects of the phenomena under study. Nevertheless, as there were few multicultural groups, she had limited options but tried to optimize the data by adjusting the interview questions.

3.2.5.3. SAMPLE SIZE

As mentioned above regarding purposeful sampling, there is no prior specification of the samples (Yvonna S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Also, as Joffe (2011) states, the sufficient number of participants in a qualitative research depends on the research questions and what the research aims to discover. This means there is no formula or system to define the sufficient number of participants for the research and furthermore, a 'primary number of participants is not desirable'. Resultantly, for this research no primary number of participants was considered. Data collection and data analysis were conducted in parallel, so when data saturation was achieved, data collection was stopped. This will be discussed further in the data analysis section 3.2.5.7.

3.2.5.4. PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Participants for this research were from the IM and Librarianship courses at The Information School at The University of Sheffield. The age range of participants was from 23 to the mid-thirties, **11** participants were mature students (for the purposes of this research, student older than **29** were considered to be mature students).

Excepting two individuals, all participants were full-time students. **45** students took part in the research, of whom **16** were male, **15** home students, **20** Chinese students, **3** EU students, **6** Librarianship students, and **42** IM students. Languages spoken by participants included English, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, Norwegian, Zambian and Malaysian.

Out of all participants, only **26** students took part in the interview.

For the IL case, **26** students were observed, of whom **9** were male students. **19** participants were interviewed, of whom **10** were male students and **5** home students. Also, in IL case the module coordinator was interviewed.

All Librarianship participants only took part in the IL interview and observation as the KIM module is not available for them.

In the case of KIM, **28** students were observed of whom **11** were male students, and **22** students were interviewed of whom **8** were male and **6** were home students.

The profile of research participants can be found in Appendix I.

3.2.5.5. DATA COLLECTION

This research aims to identify cultural conflicts, tensions, issues and challenges within multicultural groups. To achieve the aim, rich and deep data needs to be collected (Bryman, 2008) therefore, qualitative data related to students' experience in working within multicultural groups is required.

As mentioned above, in order to answer the research question, multicultural groups are chosen as research samples from both cases. Patton (2002, p.4) introduces three qualitative data collection methods that are relevant here: in-depth open-ended interviews, observation, and written documents. For this research, qualitative data is mainly collected in two ways: firstly by observation and then through semi-structured interviews. Initially it was intended to conduct focus groups, but students did not agree to take part when this was proposed.

3.2.5.6. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.2.5.6.1. OBSERVATION

During observation, the researcher attempts to participate fully in the life of the research participants and seeks immersion in their group, organisation or communities. Doing so enables the researcher to not only understand participants, but to also attempt to feel what they do. Researchers may be able to collect in-depth data as observation allows one to acquire substantial access to the phenomena (Gill & Johnson, 2010). Douglas (1976) believes that participant observation enables researchers to tackle different and complex forms of 'misinformation, fronts, evasions and lies' which he believes are common in the social world.

Participant observation seeks to uncover, make accessible and reveal the meaning (reality) people use to make sense out of their daily lives (Jorgensen, 1989). It also enables the researcher to examine whether participants do what they claim to or not (Mintzberg, 1973).

Saunders et al. (2009, p. 342) believe that understanding people's symbolic world is vital to understanding the identity of an individual. They evidence their statement by defining symbolic interaction:

> *"In symbolic interaction the individual derives a sense of identity from interaction and communication with others. Through this process of interaction and communication the individual responds to others and adjusts his or her understanding and behaviour as a shared sense of order and reality is 'negotiated' with others."*

Patton (2002) states that data collected from observation includes people's activities, behaviour, interaction and communication in detail.

OBSERVATION IN THIS RESEARCH

For the research aims, it was very important to observe participants' behaviour in their groups and see how they adjust to operating in the group and also how participants interact and communicate with fellow group members. Their body language, the way they look at each other, participation in the discussion, smiling,

body language and any kind of interaction were the focus of observation as such data would enable the researcher to tailor her interview questions for each individual in order to achieve a more holistic understanding of the group work, inter-group communications and relationships.

In the case of IL, groups were observed during the poster exhibition. To provide a more complete picture the summary of group activity is provided here, and the full detail will be discussed in sections 4.2, 5.1 and 6.1.

In the IL module, students are assigned to their groups by the module coordinator. From the first week in the first semester students start undertaking small group activities like inter-group discussions and later in the semester, they are asked to produce a poster that illustrates the role of information literacy in their future careers. Groups are asked to present their poster in an exhibition, which is only for students, academic staff and tutors involved in the module. Groups were asked to at least have one member standing next to their poster in order to explain the work and answer questions. In addition, they were asked to look at other posters and vote for the best one. As such, students needed to decide on how they would divide the time between them.

It was not possible to observe students during their group work after lecture hours. Firstly they did not feel comfortable being observed when working in the group and secondly it was very complicated to set the time for observation. As such the researcher decided (in consultation with her supervisor) to observe the groups during the poster exhibition. All groups and their members had to be present and also needed to communicate during the exhibition.

In the 2012-13 academic year the exhibition took place in one of The University of Sheffield's buildings (a flat-floored hall with moveable seating (LocationA)). There were boards upon which to affix the posters and each board could hold up to four posters - two on the front and two on the back.

Each group had two weeks to complete their poster but also had one hour before the exhibition to make finishing touches. Groups had different approaches toward

this activity, with some finishing their poster prior to the exhibition whereas others left work to do in the final hour.

Groups were required to have someone by their poster all the time; but other group members could view other posters and vote for the best poster.

The researcher started observing the participants from when they arrived. Group activities were audio and video reordered. As Bryman (2008) highlights the importance of field notes, the researcher narrated whatever she saw or heard on a voice recorder attached to her collar.

Since groups were able to choose which board they wanted to use, it was almost impossible to observe and record every participant all the time, but the researcher tried to move to different places in the hall in order to observe and record the greatest amount of data. The researcher aimed to observe how group members assign the time standing next to their poster between themselves, how they answer other students' questions and how they interact with each other and other students in the class. It was also valuable to see view participants' body language and expressions: whether they were relaxed, frustrated, happy or sad during the exhibition since such information informed the design of the interview questions.

The next year observation was carried on again during the poster exhibition for the same reasons. However, the location was different and smaller than the year before. But the procedure was very similar again students had one hour to complete their poster and put them up. There were a few boards that they could use to attach their poster to.

It was still complicated to observe all groups all the time, however. This situation was the same as the year before the researcher video and audio recorded the groups and narrated whatever she saw or heard on the voice recorder attached to her collar. Some examples of field notes listed in Table 3.2-1:

The Chinese member of group [x] is playing on his phone
The girls are giggling
The majority of Chinese students are gathered in the corner
Two Chinese members from group [x] are not talking to the other members
One of the members of group [x] is sleeping
One of the Librarianship student members from group [x] was so frustrated about the copyright issue they had, she started telling me without me any prompting

TABLE 3.2-1 EXAMPLES OF THE FIELD NOTES

In the case of KIM, during the 2012-13 academic year groups were asked to produce a diagram or rich picture to illustrate knowledge and information management strategies in organizations. They almost had two months from when they were briefed about the course work until the tutorial sessions.

The second case observation was different from the first, groups were observed during the tutorial sessions. The tutorial sessions were in the iLab, which is equipped with video and audio recording facilities. There are four cameras to record from four different angles. The aim of session was to answer questions related to the group assignment and this involved group members sitting around the table with the researcher. Each group had a 30-minute tutorial, which was recorded. In this scenario, since the researcher was also the tutor she was unable to take any field notes or narrate what she saw, as was the case previously. However, having four cameras was useful since it ensured all participants could be seen and heard in the recorded videos.

In 2013-14 and 14-15 were exactly same as the year before. Only in 2014-15 was there a change as the KIM module was moved to the first semester. However, the observation was conducted exactly as it had been in previous years.

These two observations were very different in their characteristics. In addition to the difference in the nature of each assignment, groups were observed at different stages of the module. In the case of IL, when students were observed they were nearing the culmination of their group task. However, KIM groups were observed in the middle of their group task. At this point, KIM groups were still working on the

task or were trying to make sense of it. With regards to the group dynamics stages, the IL groups were at the end of the 'performing' stage, but the KIM groups were still experiencing the 'storming' and 'norming' stages. As such, these differences contributed to different kinds of findings.

3.2.5.6.2. SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

DeMarrais (2003, p.54) defines the interview as:

> *"The process in which the researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related a research study"*

Patton (2002, p.341) describe the purpose of the interview as:

> *"To allow us to enter the other person's perspective. [...] any interview faces the challenge of making it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world"*

Saunders et al. (2009) identify different categories of interview according to their level of structure and formality such as: structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, unstructured or in-depth interviews, standardised interviews, non-standardised interviews. To this, Robson (2011) also adds focused and non-direct interviews. Each kind of interview is appropriate for one or more specific research approach and aim of interviewing. In each kind, the interviewer adopts different strategies for interviewing and interacting with the participant/s.

Cohen et al. (2007) believe that open-ended questions in interviews enable researchers to go into more depth by asking probing questions in addition to enabling the researcher to challenge the interviewee to assess what they really believe.

INTERVIEW IN THIS RESEARCH

The semi-structured interview has been chosen for this research. This type of interview enables the researcher to maintain the basic line of inquiry followed with all interviewees (M. Q. Patton, 2002). The flexibility of semi-structured interviews

also allows the interviewer to respond to new ideas and situations during the interview and as a result the researcher is able to collect in-depth and perhaps more relevant data (Merriam, 2009).

For this research, interview questions are designed according to the research questions and observation data (see Appendix II). Most of the interview questions aim to understand participants' perceptions, feelings and experience of working in multicultural groups and also seek to inform general questions concerning participants' approaches toward group work and their personalities.

In the first case, most participants were contacted to participate in interviews after both observations had taken place. In the first year this was due to it being a highly busy time for students who generally did not have time to allocate to the interview so this was postponed to the second semester. As the number of multicultural groups was limited, most of the members of multicultural groups for KIM were the same as those for IL. As such, it did make sense to conduct the interview for those participants after the KIM observation. However, those who were not in both observations were interviewed in the first possible time.

Interviews were conducted in the meeting rooms within the iSpace, located in the University of Sheffield Information School. The iSpace is the common area for Information School students and features meeting rooms and space for socialising. Each interview took an average time of 50 minutes. The researcher took notes during interviews in addition to audio recording the interviews.

During the first case, all interviews started with general questions such as those concerning participants' academic backgrounds and whether they have any experience working in multicultural groups. This decision was made to make the participants feel more relaxed.

 These questions were followed by a question regarding their feelings when they realised they were assigned to their group and eventually their experiences and opinions about their group activity as a whole.

Each group member was asked to explain the stages they went through to produce their poster as this would help the researcher to compare their views toward the activity and how they see themselves in their groups.

Questions such as 'What would you have changed about the activity?' and 'What would you have done differently?' helped the researcher to understand if there was anything that the participant disliked in addition to providing an opportunity for participants to reflect on their attitude toward the task and other group members.

Participants were asked about other group activities they had during semester one, if they were allowed to choose their group mates and (if applicable) why they decided to choose specific group members to work with. These questions helped the researcher to understand how students choose group mates and if their previous experience has an impact on their decisions. At the end of the interview, participants were asked some questions regarding their opinion about the role of multicultural group activity in their future life and what advice they would give to someone about to engage in multicultural group work.

Interview questions for the second case were mostly similar to the first with some specific questions related to the module. For those participants who featured in both modules, the researcher also asked some questions to compare their experience in both group work activities since in the second case they chose their group mates. These questions started with 'How did you choose your group?' and were followed by questions which depended on their responses.

Interviews for both cases included same basic questions in addition to some specific ones (see Interview Questions Appendix II). Also, the researcher asked further questions related to participants responses in order to gain a more in-depth understanding of their perceptions, experience and opinions. After each interview, she revised her interview questions to ensure she had covered all areas. Also, the questions were updated after the initial transcriptions for similar reasons.

Participant responses to interview questions (especially the questions regarding other multicultural group work experience they had during the course) highlighted

significant information regarding the third module. As such, the researcher - in consultation with her supervisor - decided to include that module as MINICASE. This approach is also due to the relationship between researcher and the participant to an extent. As the researcher was involved in 3 or 4 modules as a tutor, the students felt close to her and trusted her to discuss their feelings resulting in generating more information than was initially intended or foreseen. Consequently, interview questions were updated in order to gather more data regarding that module. One of the elements which made it more important to include the module in the interview, was that many of participants worked together in that module group work or their experience from the module influenced the way they chose their group members for the subsequent module in the second semester.

As was mentioned, there were several group members that agreed to be part of observation but did not participate in the interviews.

3.2.5.7. DATA ANALYSIS

This section provides an overview of data analysis techniques used in this research. Three main types of data were used in this research documents, observation data, and interview data. Module documentation mainly used to provide more understanding of modules (cases), the group work tasks, and in case study report. The observation data was used to understand the group dynamics, and also customising the interview question for each participants or group if necessary.

3.2.5.7.1. DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Documents primarily used for describing the case and factual information include module outlines, assignment specifications, group activity guides and FAQ documents. These documents were used in the case study report (sections 4.2,5.1, and 6.1). They provided additional information to describe the cases and the group tasks. Also, documents were used to gain a better understanding of the interview data. For example, when students referred to specific aspect of the task or an

activity during a particular week, the researcher referred to module outline or assignment specification to gain a better understanding of the situation. This also enabled her to present the narrative of each group when producing the case study report.

Module outlines also assist the researcher to have some understanding of the module's timeline. For instance, in the case of MINICASE when students were relating that their group mates went back home for the Christmas holiday and that this caused some issues, the researcher referred to the module outline to understand the situation fully and identify if there was any guideline regarding this issue provided by the module coordinators.

All documents were stored in NVivo (qualitative data analysis software which can store audio, video and text files) in the module folder. The software has various tools for coding, categorising, creating diagrams, etc. For this research all data was stored and analysed in NVivo.

3.2.5.7.2. OBSERVATION ANALYSIS

Observation data was primarily used to develop the interview questions. However, the observation videos were also coded similarly to the interview data as shown below (Figure 3.2-3):
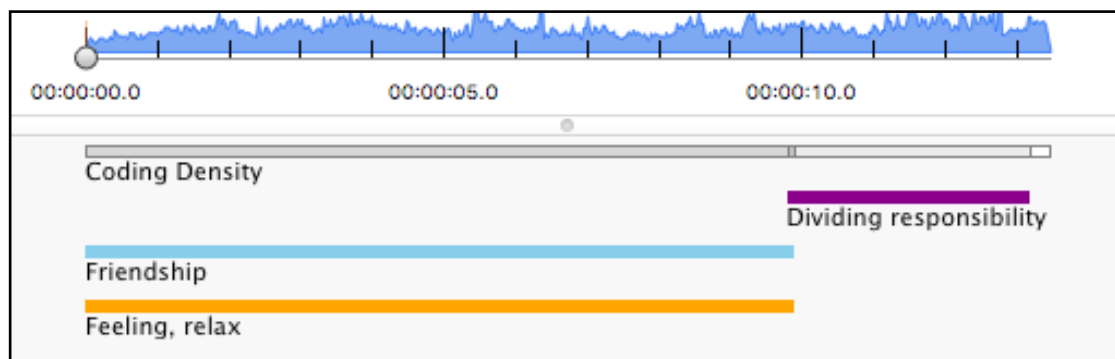
FIGURE 3.2-3 EXAMPLE OF OBSERVATION ANALYSIS

However, these codes were mainly used to gain more understanding of the groups'
dynamics and their observable issues. The information was later used in the
interview to obtain more in-depth data.

In addition to coding, to analyse the observation data the researcher stored the
observation videos in NVivo and watched back the recorded videos alongside the
narrative data from the observation (mentioned in 3.2.5.6.1.) and took notes in
NVivo. An example of the notes is shown below (Figure 3.2-4):

When I observed this group, it did not look like they had a close relationship.
Although, when I asked ▮▮▮▮▮ where other members were he had some ideas but
it didn't seem like he was aware of what others were doing. I noticed they didn't
have much conversation together and ▮▮▮▮▮ and the other Chinese girl went
around together and they joined to the bigger Chinese group but they didn't spend
much time with▮▮▮and ▮▮▮▮▮, also I did not notice if▮▮and ▮▮▮▮ try to join
them. ▮▮▮▮▮ and ▮▮ had some conversation.

FIGURE 3.2-4 EXAMPLE OF NOTES

In addition, the researcher took some screenshots from the parts that she wanted to
use in the interviews. For instance, some participants were shown the screenshots
and were asked to elaborate.

Also, relevant parts of the videos from the observations were played for participants
during the interview in order for the elicitation of further information. This means
participants were asked to talk about their group work experience, and were also
asked to tell the story of their group work from the beginning to the end of the task.
If the researcher observed some behaviour or issues which they did not mention
during the interview or what they mentioned contrasted their view, she played the
observation video and asked them to reflect on it and elaborate. By doing this, the
researcher was able to collect more in-depth data and more comprehensive
understanding of their group work process.

Observation data also used in case study report to produce a full detail story of the
groups' group work process.

3.2.5.7.3. INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

"Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, Boyatzis (1998) believes thematic analysis is not a qualitative method but is a process which is used with qualitative information. Similarly, Attride-Stirling, (2001, p.386) defines it as *"Thematic networks, as an analytic tool, draw on core features that are common to many approaches."*

Bryman (2008) argues even though thematic analysis is one of most used approaches in qualitative data analysis, it is not an identifiable approach. However, searching for themes is one the most popular approaches in qualitative data analysis – examples include grounded theory and content analysis.

> *Thematic analysis can be used as a realistic method, which reports experiences, meanings and the reality of participants, or as a constructionist method, which examine the ways in which events, realities meaning and experiences are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society* (Robson, 2011, p.474)

Thematic analysis enables researchers to use a range of information in a *systematic manner* in order to increase their accuracy in interpreting their observation of people, events and situation (Boyatzis, 1998).

Braun & Clarke, (2006, p.79) define some fundamental terms for thematic analysis which are: *data corpus,* which includes all data collected for the research regardless of the data collection method and *data set* which includes the parts of data corpus that are being used for a particular analysis. In this particular research data corpus and data set are the same. *Data item* refers to each individual part of data collected that together make up the data set or corpus. In this research 'data item' refers to an individual interview or a group observation. An individual coded portion of data that has been identified and extracted from data item is called a *data extract*. Codes have been defined as a concept from interview or observation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008)

and can be created by breaking data to components (Merriam, 1998). In inductive analysis, codes are independent from pre-existing frame or the researcher's theoretical perceptions.

A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set. With an inductive approach, themes are strongly related to the data themselves rather than to the specific questions or the researcher's theoretical view in the specific area (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Taylor & Bogdan (1984, p.131) find that themes and patterns that emerge from data that could be conversation topics, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, vocabulary or folk sayings and proverbs.

Braun & Clarke (2006, p.84) identify two types of themes by expanding Boyatzis's (1998) view; semantic or latent. In the semantic approach, themes are defined from the surface meaning of the data – here the researcher is not looking for meaning beyond what participant said or being written. The analysing stages are from *description* (when data being organized to show patterns in semantic content (M. Q. Patton, 2002) then summarizing and at the end interpretation (that is developing a theory from significance of the patterns and their broader meaning and implication (M. Q. Patton, 2002). In contrast, the latent approach goes beyond the surface and examines the meaning behind ideas. In latent thematic analysis, theme development needs *interpretive* work and the analysis is descriptive and theorised. Latent thematic analysis is constructionist. Latent thematic approach has been chosen as the research has a constructivist stance and it is important to analyse the data in greater depth in order to answer the research questions.

Most of the phases in thematic analysis are similar to other qualitative analysis methods. The process starts with analysis, looking for patterns and meaning from the data collection and progresses to writing the report, this process is not linear but rather is more recursive - it goes back and forth between phases, writing is the integral part of analysis which does not happen at the end of analysis like quantitative data analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Robson, 2011).
Phases of thematic analysis introduced by Braun & Clarke (2006) and Robson (2011)

1. Familiarizing yourself with your data

2. Generating initial codes

3. Searching for themes

4. Reviewing themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing the report

Weiss (1993) identifies the four stages of issue-focused analysis which are mainly used as thematic analysis in Hübner (2007) as: Coding, Sorting, Inclusive integration, Visual display. Finch & Fafinski (2012) identify three stages: coding, identifying themes, and reviewing and refining themes.

Six phases by Braun & Clarke (2006) and Robson (2011) are chosen as main data analysis stages for this research as these steps have one the most complete and clear guidelines.

FAMILIARIZING YOURSELF WITH YOUR DATA

"Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

For this research, data was collected by the researcher herself and this has given her the opportunity to start the analysis process with some prior knowledge of the data. During interviews or observation, the researcher develops initial thoughts and identifies areas of potential interest. For example, she may note some potential cultural challenges in the groups. During the interviews and observation, the researcher takes note of her thoughts in order to refer to them in the data analysis.

After each interview, the researcher listened to the recorded dialogue and then transcribed it. The transcription process was time-consuming, however listening to the recording several times did help the researcher to familiarise herself with the data - Riessman (1993) states that the transcription process helps researchers to understand their data better. During the transcription process, the researcher takes

notes of her initial ideas for the possible codes. This is intended to help her later in the coding phase.

For the aims of this research it was very important to note all of the participants' reactions, emotions and expressions both during interviews and observation. As Mishler (2003, p.300) believes, the meaning in the speech can be changed in the transcription process as "entextualization of speech" may result in changing the meaning. As a result, it was very important to attempt to include anything which creates meaning in the interview transcription (such as: "…she pauses for few seconds"). Braun & Clarke (2006, p.88) emphasize that transcription should stay true to the original nature. In this case, the researcher tries to note how participants react during interview or their reactions to specific questions such as if they look relaxed or are annoyed when they speak of their experience. Later, these notes are used to interpret the meaning of data in the transcriptions.

Each transcription was read and re-read several times to better understand the data and each time the researcher took note of her thoughts or ideas regarding the initial codes.

However, after the first set of transcription, due to the researcher's wrist problem, the interviews were given to a professional transcriber to be transcribed following all University's data confidentiality guidelines. The transcriber was asked to include absolutely everything in the audio file meaning if the participant paused, laughed or even said "mm" the utterances were all included in the transcription. To ensure familiarity with the data, the researcher still listened to the interviews and took notes. Also, she read the transcription several times, adding the notes taken during the interviews.

GENERATING INITIAL CODES

"Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

This phase starts after familiarisation with the data - initial codes are generated and codes from the last phase are developed too. As Braun & Clarke (2006) state, even

small segments of the data can be meaningful, so for this research each transcription has been read and coded several times to ensure all data is coded. All data was coded even if they did not appear to be directly related to the research questions. This was to ensure there is no information lost in the coding which may directly or indirectly be related to the research questions. And as Braun & Clarke (2006, p.89) note, "you never know what might be interesting later"!

To perfrom coding, the researcher adopted Corbin & Strauss' (2008) analytical strategies. These strategies were included:

Asking questions: Corbin and Strauss maintain that if researchers ask questions and brainstorm regarding their data, not only do they get to know the data better, but the process helps them to think 'out of the box'. These questions also enable researchers to understand the phenomena from the participants' perspective. As such, for this reseach the researcher constantly asked questions like "what does she mean by…" "what would happen if the lecturer did …." Or questions like "what happened in that meeting?" "how this behaviour is related to other group members behaviours?" And similar questions. These questions not only help her to code and analyse her data but also assisted her in writing the case study report.

Making comparisons: Corbin and Strauss introduced two different types of comparisons: constant comparisons and theoretical comparisons. They believe comparision strategies have advantages such as:

- ✓ Help the researchers to identify the meanings which could potentially seem obscure
- ✓ Help the researchers to understand their data in greater depth
- ✓ Encourage researchers to challenge their assumptions, biases, and perceptions
- ✓ Help the researchers to identify the pattern in their data

These two types are usually used together as they provide different levels of comparision: one between code and one is making sense of the data by comparing with exsiting knowledege.

Constant comparisions: when coding, each piece of data is compared with another piece for similarities and differences. Those which are similar are grouped together. They may have same code or a different code, however they usually are included in the same theme. Each statement or sentence has the potential to bring out different aspects of each code.

In this research, the researcher regularly compared the data. All data caregorised under the same codes were compared to ensure they all carry similar meanings.

theoretical comparisons: Corbin and Strauss explain that theoretical comparisions are used when one is confused about the meaning of an incident or event in the data. it may also be used, when one wants to view the data from different angle to provide a range of possible meanings. In this type, researchers use literature or their past experience to make sense of their data. They explain the method as a similar method to that which people apply in their day-to-day life whenmaking sense of their surrounding environment. They also add "in analysis we draw upon what we know to help us understand what we don't know."(p.75)

For this research, the researcher used both the literature and her experience to make sense of the data. However, she was aware of the potential danger of bias.

Various Meanings of a Word: is another analytical strategy introduced by Corbin & Strauss (2008). They suggest that as words could have different meaning, people also potentially can understand words or sentences in different ways. It is important that the researchers consider different meanings when interpreting their data.
For this research, even though the research is interpretive the researcher did not rely on her interptation soley. If she felt a sentence or a word may have different meaning she read the surronding section or whole transcription again to understand what was said and possibily the meaning behind it. If still in doubt she discussed it with her colleagues (if this could be done whilst preserving anonymity and confidentiality of participants). On some occasions when she was able to ask participants to elaborate or explain further, she did so. However, language also was another issue in this process as some of the participants and and also the researcher were speaking in their second language (English). This meant that occasionaly the

researcher doubted her understanding of a word or sentence said by a participant, and so in this situation she contacted them to clarify her understanding to avoid mistakes. Also, to ensure her understanding was correct she checked the words/sentences with her supervisors or colleagues as well (if this could be done whilst preserving anonymity and confidentiality of participants).

Drawing upon Personal Experience: Corbin & Strauss (2008) claim that since it is possible that the researcher has a similar experience to the participants, it is possible that they use this experience to make sense of the data and obtain insight into what their participant is describing. This prior knowledege should not be imposed into the data which would create bias but it should be used to bring up other possibile different meanings. They suggested these prior knowledge and experience potentially could help the researchers to think closely about what the data means. For this research, the researcher also used her experience to understand the data. For example, in case of MINICASE when studnets were describing their group work experience the researcher was able to remember her own experiences of working on this particular task as a studnets which helped her to better understand participants' accounts. However as mentioned, since she was aware of the process she was careful to avoid imposing her previous experience into the data. This enabled the researcher to gain deeper understanding of the participant accounts.

DATA CODING STAGES

The researcher initially started to use numbers for each code and finding this confusing, moved to use colour coding by using different colours to indicate potential patterns, but later as the number of codes increased she started using NVivo to assist her in this stage. In order to avoid losing the context (Bryman, 2008) some or all of the surrounding data is kept with the code. This will also help the researcher to revise and update the codes.

The researcher made a note for every new code which explained what that code meant. After the first few interview transcriptions, all codes were reviewed and if they were similar, were merged. If there were related categories such as those

concerning participants' feelings, the code 'feeling' was created and other related codes were nested under feeling. For instance 'stressed', 'sad', or 'happy' were in the feeling-related categories. These later helped the researcher to identify the themes.

Every time a new code emerged, all data was reviewed to ensure consistency. Some sections were coded many times and codes were revised or decoded. Also, if one sentence covered more than one issues, it was coded with different codes.

The coding evolved during this process: although the researcher did not use any pre-existing 'coding frame' or 'coding manual' (Joffe, 2011). This was because as Braun & Clarke (2006) emphasised, thematic analysis is a flexible approach and should be flexible in every aspect. As such it was appropriate to adopt a flexible coding approach too. This flexibility enabled the researcher to strenghten her codes by reviewing and revising them (see Appendix IV) .

Coding continued until data saturation was achieved. Saturation was identified when the number of new codes reduced to less than 4 in the later intervews, as opposed to the 50+ codes that emerged in the initial transcipts.

Data saturation can be used to indicate whether or not sufficient data has been collected. As Lincoln & Guba (1985) explain 'selection to the point of redundancy' is a charachteristic for purposeful sampling:

"In purposeful sampling the size of the sample is determined by informational considerations. If the purpose is to maximize information, the sampling is terminated when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled unites; thus redundancy is the primary criterion." (p.202)

However, Patton (2002) emphasises that saturation can occur prematurely when the sampling frame is too narrow, the researcher's analytical perpective is limited, the wrong choice of research method is chosen, or the analysis is limited to the surface. He also adds that another aspect that should be considered when saturartion occurs is to check whether the interviewees are similar or not. If the research population share significantly similar characteristics the possibility of reaching premature

saturation is high since their point of view may be similar and no further data would be created. To avoid this, it is vital to review the population to ensure the saturation is not due to participants similarities. Another important aspect according to Patton (2002) is when reaching saturation, it is important to ensure the area in which that saturation occurred is the area which is related to the main purpose of the study.

For this research, saturation due to similarity between participants did not occur, as the students were characteristically different: they had different backgrounds, age, level of English etc. Perhaps due to this they mostly had different views towards group work, multiculturalism and higher education. Also, at every step the researcher discussed her codes with her supervisors and colleagues to ensure she is considering all aspects and the analysis is not only on the surface. It was ensured that the saturation achieved in the area of the data which was the main focus of the research.

A. THEMES

There are several techniques suggested by researchers like Ryan & Bernard (2003) to identify themes in data. These strategies are mostly proposed for grounded theory (GT) studies, however some have been used beyond GT as well. Ryan & Bernard, (2003) explain that in identifying themes, researchers mostly look for repetition, indigenous typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data or theory-related material in their data. They review their data many times looking for links and relationships between their data as this enables them to see the emerging themes in the data.

Ryan and Bernard (2003) explain different processing techniques to use in the theme identification process such as: cutting and sorting, word lists and key words in context (KWIC), word co-occurrence, or metacoding. They emphasise that researchers may use one or a combination of different techniques to identify the themes.

Cutting and sorting has been cited by certain researchers such as Yvonna S. Lincoln & Guba, (1985) and Simons (2009) as one of the useful techniques. In this technique,

similar quotes are cut and piled together and each pile is given a name, which suits idea or the subject of the quotes in that pile. This name will be the name of the theme (G. W. Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Interestingly, this process is also similar to the coding process and neither Ryan & Bernard (2003) or Simons (2009) clarify how this technique is different from coding. But, Yvonna S. Lincoln & Guba (1985) clarified it in their explanation -instead of cutting the quotes, they use cutting units or writing units on index cards; 'units' in their definition are the codes. As such it can be also assumed 'quotes' in the previous definition means coded quotes and 'similar quotes' means similarly coded quotes. The definition could be seen as cutting codes and classifying similar codes in the same pile and then giving this pile of codes new name which represents those codes.

This process is similar to categorising codes (or nodes as it called in NVivo) in NVivo software.

For this research combination of Braun & Clarke's (2006) strategy and an adaptation of 'cutting and sorting' by (Yvonna S. Lincoln & Guba, 1985) using NVivo, was used to identify themes in the data.

B. SEARCHING FOR THEMES

"Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

After the initial analysis of the first set of data, the researcher decided to divide the transcription into three cases and general statements. This means that in one transcription, all the responses to questions regarding each specific case and whenever the participant mentioned about that case were copied/pasted in new document in NVivo. When a sentence's content related to more than one module, that sentence was copied/pasted in all related documents.

Each document was named in terms of each individual participant and case. As such, for each participant who was involved in the three modules, four documents were created.

All transcriptions related to each case and its observation and module documents

were put in a folder for that module in NVivo. At the end of this stage four folders (KIM, IL, MINICASE and General) were created in NVivo (see Figure 3.2-5).
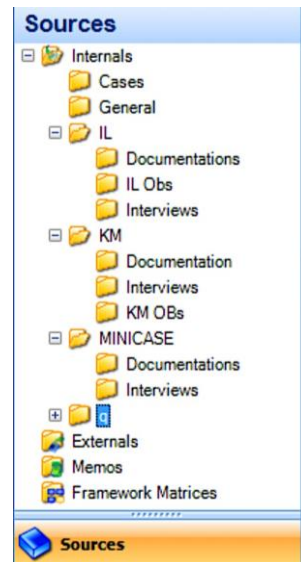
FIGURE 3.2-5 CASE FOLDERS IN NVIVO

This decision was made as when the researcher started looking into themes she found it confusing separating the cases. And also it was not possible to use NVivo's 'explore' feature for each case. By breaking the transcriptions, the researcher was able to analyse and the 'query' or 'explore' feature for each case.

To start searching for themes, all codes for each case were reviewed and compared and if possible the relationship between codes was identified. These relationships were effectively cause and effect (see Appendix IV). When simply two codes were related (or 'associated' as it called in NVivo) like the code 'Fear of being alone' is related to code 'Age', similar codes were categorized together and each category was given a suitable name which covers the meaning or ideas of the codes included. For instance, all codes related to the design of the assignments were grouped in the 'Assignment design' category. Or 'module design' includes codes related to the including help/support, time they had to finish the task and etc. and 'assignment design' was sub category for module design. This process helped the researcher to see any existing patterns and themes. For example, one of these patterns was how students Age and past experience impact on their performance and their view

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toward group work and the task.

Also, the NVivo diagram 'Tree Map' which illustrates the codes featuring more references (meaning most used codes) helped the researcher to identify the patterns in the data (see Figure 3.2-6). The size of the shape refers to the number of times that the code was used. For example, the green square on the left refers to 'choosing group mates', which meant participants discussed this issue very frequently.
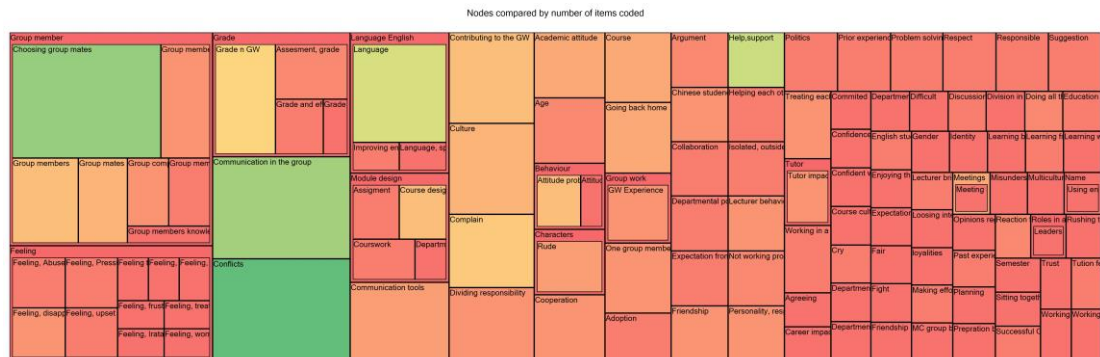
FIGURE 3.2-6 TREE MAP

Mind mapping was used to illustrate the link between themes and this help the researcher to see the overlaps between themes. After identifying the relationship and links between codes the initial themes started emerging. Some of the themes were also included sub themes. In the process some themes were merged or formed sub themes. And again after reviewing some themes were discarded.

As mentioned earlier in 'Searching for themes', each case was analysed separately and themes for each case were created separately. This helped the researcher to be able to subsequently compare the cases as the differences and similarities between cases were highlighted.

It should be noted that this was not a linear process - it was more like an iteration which involved revising the relationships, categories codes and initial themes many time to achieve the most suitable themes.

C. REVIEWING THEMES

"Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

As Braun & Clarke, (2006) state, this stage involves two levels of reviewing. These two levels of reviews are adopted from Patton's (1990) 'internal homogeneity' and 'external homogeneity'. In the first level, all themes are reviewed according the coded data extract. All data related to each theme should be read to ensure they form a coherent pattern; if so, the researcher should move to second level otherwise the theme is revised or discarded until it is ensured that the themes represent the coded data.

In the second level the process is similar to that of the first, but rather than reviewing the themes regarding the coded data, themes are reviewed in relation to the whole data set. The aim here is to ensure the thematic map created reflects the meaning in the data set and all themes and their relationships are an accurate representation of the data set.

For this research, in this stage all themes were reviewed in relation with the codes and quotes to ensure every theme truly represents the data it is associated with. All quotes related to the themes were read again to ensure they are related and the theme is correctly created and they are coherent. If the theme did not fit with the codes and quotes, they were all again reviewed to indicate whether this is because the data within the theme is not coherent and properly related or the theme is weakly defined. In this situation again the data was reviewed new themes were defined or some themes were discarded.

This process was done a few times to achieve a satisfactory set of themes. Then the whole set of themes and every individual theme, was reviewed in relation to the data set. All the data set was read again. All codes were reviewed to ensure they are correctly associated to the data and if any part of the data was not coded they were coded and also some codes were revised or merged as well. Questions like those below were asked to ensure 'external homogeneity' and changes were made

accordingly.

- ✓ Do these themes reflect the meaning in the data?
- ✓ Are all data coded correctly?

This process was undertaken separately for each case and later a set of themes which includes the most important aspect of data related to the research question was also created.

As Braun & Clarke, (2006) points out, this stage could continue 'ad infinitum' as it is only complete when the researcher was satisfied with her set of themes. She discussed them with her supervisor and colleagues and when they also confirmed or advised that the themes were defined satisfactory she moved to the next stage.

D. DEFINING AND NAMING THEMES

"Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

In this stage all themes are refined and it is explained what aspect of data each theme represents. As Braun & Clarke (2006) state, at this stage the researcher ensures that the themes are not too complex or diverse. All data associated to them are coherent and organized in a way that tells the story of the theme.

For this research, the researcher categorized all data related to each theme. All quotes and codes were categorized, and then she went through them and chose the best quotes, which could contribute to the story and highlight why this specific theme is important and has emerged from the data. Also, it was important to choose suitable quotes, which also highlight the differences and similarities between cases. These quotes were not only chosen to indicate what is interesting about the themes, but also show how these themes are related. The aim was to minimize the overlaps between themes; however, in some aspects it was very difficult, as some issues such as 'language' influenced on different aspects of multicultural group work as such caused overlap between several themes. In the process, the researcher tried to

avoid using the same quotes, which were coded with different codes for different themes to provide a more diverse illustration of the data. However, in some parts, as the quotes were interesting or important it was more suitable to repeat the quotes.

Also as Braun & Clarke (2006) recommended for this research, all themes and quotes were reviewed to identify whether they contained sub-themes or not, especially for the more complicated themes. Furthermore, those sub-themes which were identified before were refined.

When themes and quotes were put together, they were reviewed as whole to ensure the most suitable quotes were chosen and themes are coherent and tell the data's story.

E. PRODUCING THE REPORT

"The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis." (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

The final stage is to compile sections together and produce the report. For this research, findings were presented for each case in sections 4.3, 5.2, 6.2, and 6.4. Then they were compared and contrasted, aiming to answer the research questions and demonstrate how students' experience differs in the different cases.

All chosen quotes were reviewed again; if they did not fit, they were replaced. And if the themes were not strongly explained, more quotes were added.

For the discussion, the themes and sub-themes were discussed together, also if themes had similar meanings or overlap they were brought together too.

The results of these stages are presented in chapters 4, 5, 6,7, and 8.

3.2.5.7.4. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

After analysing the interview data and identifying the themes for each case, the data analysis and the themes were compared across the cases in order to identify similarities and differences between the three cases. It was especially important, as

the cross-case analysis would demonstrate how group task could impact upon students' attitudes and the group dynamics during the group work process.

Initially themes and factors from each case where put in a table to understand the similarities and differences. See Figure 3.2-7 for an example.

FIGURE 3.2-7 EXAMPLE OF CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

After identifying similarities and differences they were reviewed and categorised. The result of this process is presented in section 6.5.

3.2.5.7.5. TRIANGULATION

Triangulation is considered as one of the main aspects of case study research. Norman K Denzin (1973) states that four types of triangulations are commonly used by researchers. These types are data, investigators, theory and methodology.

As Thomas (2010) argues, in case study 'research triangulation' means looking at the subject of study from different points of view. He adds something can only be thoroughly understood when it is scrutinised from different angles using different methods. He explains this further by claiming researchers can use interview data in one part of study, observation in another (and in some cases) an experiment in another part - the collection of these methods is called triangulation.

Sarantakos (2005) explains some of the benefits of triangulation as:

- Being thorough in addressing all possible aspects of the subject of study

- Increasing the knowledge by increasing the amount of data

- To enrich the nature of research data

- Allowance for comparison

- Achieve higher validity, reliability and credibility

As mentioned earlier, various types of data are used in this research; these data include module documents, observation data and interview data. To employ triangulation, the researcher followed the S B Merriam (1998) definition of data triangulation. Merriam (1998, p. 216) suggests social science researchers can employ triangulation by using three methods of data collections such as interview, observation, and documents. She adds triangulation here means 'comparing' and 'cross-checking' the data.

In this research, all three types data were compared and cross-checked in order to produce a comprehensive view of the group work process. The researcher used the module documentation to understand module timelines and the task specification thoroughly. For each case, the researcher looked at each group separately, she reviewed all of the group members' interview transcriptions and compared their views and the story of their group process. She then compared and checked their views with her observation.

To understand the group members' individual viewpoints regarding the same phenomenon, the researcher printed the relevant interview transcriptions and cut out their responses/views and where they were talking about a common issue, event, or experience. She compared their accounts and placed these opposite each other on a canvas (see Figure 3.2-8). At the end of this process, she had a sequential narrative of each phenomenon displaying the different perspectives held. As such, the narrative of each group was told using members' own perspectives.

Afterward, these narratives were compared with the observation data to produce more comprehensive narrative.
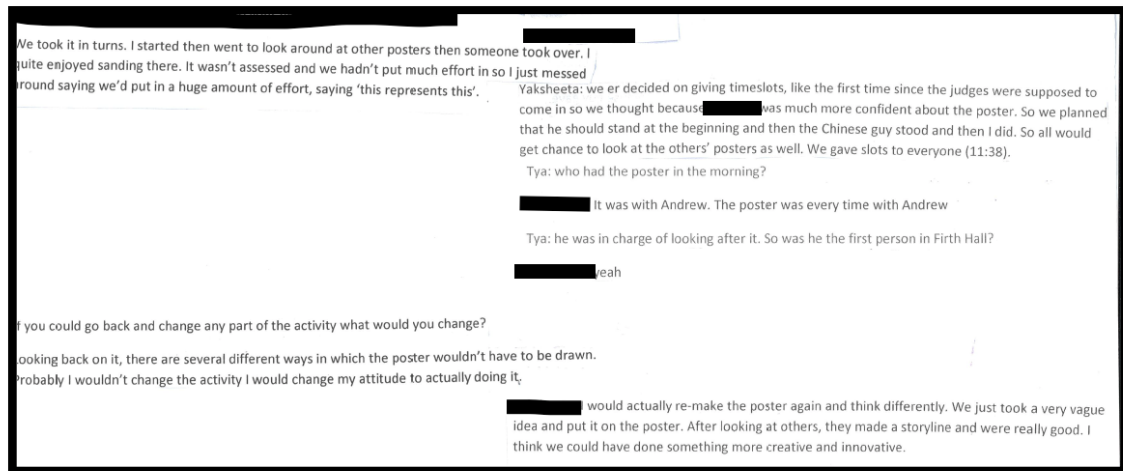
FIGURE 3.2-8 EXAMPLE OF AONE OF THE STAGES OF DEVELOPING THE GROUP NARRATIVES PROCESS

The result of this triangulation is presented in sections 4.2, 5.1, and 6.1 as the case study report.

3.2.5.7.6.   DEVELOPING THE MODEL

After discovering all themes and factors which impact upon multicultural group performance, a model was developed to demonstrate the links and relationships between these factors and themes - this model is presented in chapter 8. A description of the model development process and its stages can be seen below.

In order to initially identify the links and relationships between factors and themes, NVivo was used as all links between codes were defined by the software when coding. After this, those initial relationships (along with themes and factors) were reviewed in order to identify further relationships between factors or eliminate those which are not useful for the model. To do so, all themes where analysed, and factors related to each theme were identified and the relationships between factors were reviewed or identified.
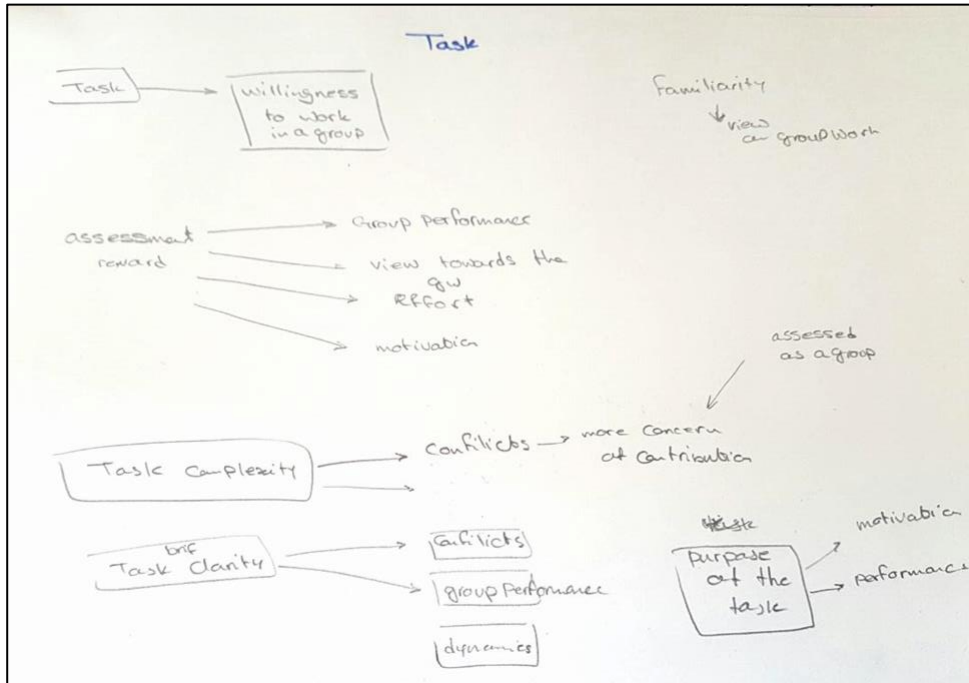
FIGURE 3.2-9 EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE STAGES OF DEVELOPING THE MODEL

After this stage, all themes, their relationships and related factors where brought together to produce a single diagram. At this stage, all factors and their relationships were once more reviewed and modified where necessary (see Figure 3.2-10).
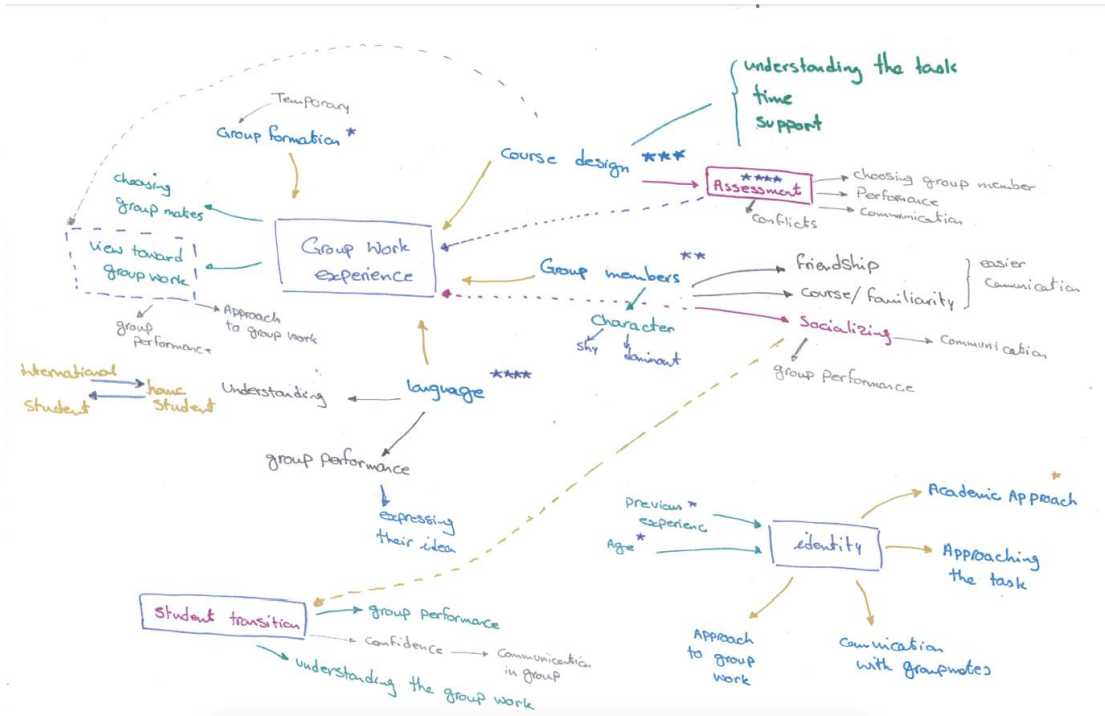
FIGURE 3.2-10 EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE STAGES OF DEVELOPING THE MODEL

After reviewing factors again, comparing them with the findings, and discussing this with the project supervisor, the model was modified and designed using Lucidchart web-based software (see Figure 3.2-11).
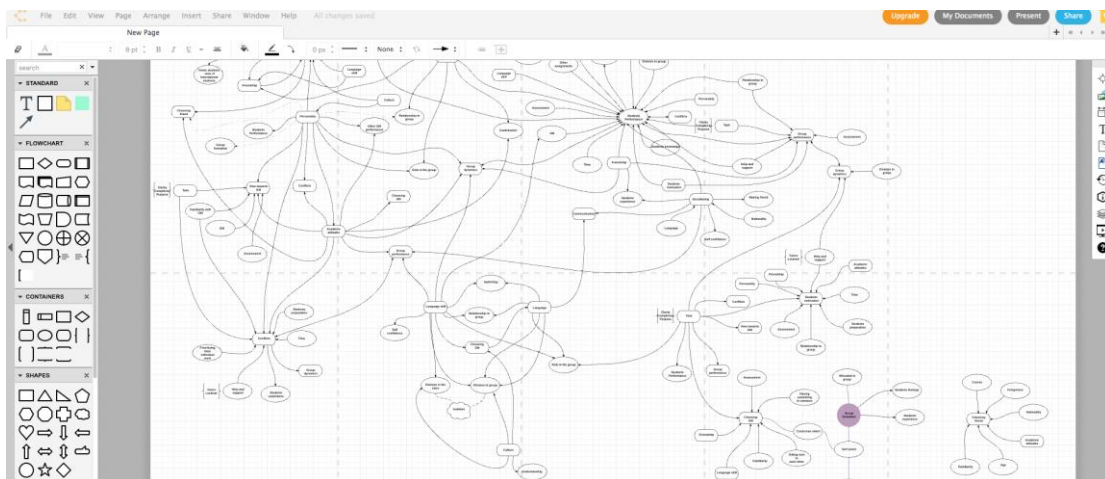
FIGURE 3.2-11 EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE STAGES OF DEVELOPING THE MODEL USING LUCIDCHART

After this stage, the model was again reviewed in terms of accuracy relating to the findings.

During observation of the groups (see section 2.1.2.2 for group dynamics) the dynamics for each were observed by the researcher. This resulted in the portrayal of

each of Tuckman & Jensen's (1977) group dynamics stages (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing) in the model. Factors were categorised to demonstrate at which stage they are present or more keenly felt by students in addition to showing their relationships. The final model and its explanation are presented in chapter 8.

3.3. CHANGE IN THE APPROACH

Initially it was intended that the study would use a deductive approach and quasi-experimental methods. However after two years, the direction of the research changed to an inductive approach and case study methods were applied.

Starting with a deductive approach also means that the researcher adopted a more positivist and objectivist approach. As such, she started with reviewing the literature in a more deductive approach to base the research on a theory. As such, the approach to the literature review and the aim of it was different from inductive research literature review.

In addition, the research aims and objectives were different; for instance, it was more concerned about the cultural impact on conflicts in multicultural group work. As such the researcher was asked to define culture using more anthropological literature.

However later when the approach was changed, the researcher had to discard some of the literature review and consider the literature in more inductive manner. And also, it was necessary to redesign the research meaning the research questions, method, methodology, etc. were revisited and changed, *so that they were more compatible with an inductive approach.*

However, in some part of the research she did experience some challenges due to the change in her philosophy as well, as she needed to adjust to more interpretivist (rather than objectivist) approach. To ensure she was on the right track, the

researcher discussed her approach to data collection, interviewing, and analysis and later in writing discussion with her supervisors.

3.4. SECONDARY DATA

3.4.1. SEARCH STRATEGY

ScienceDirect, Eric, SAGE publications, Elsevier, and Google Scholar were used as the main databases. In addition, references in the related literature were reviewed. Features in the databases such as related articles (ScienceDirect), citations (Google Scholar) etc. were utilised to identify other related areas.

Keywords used for the initial search include general terms like multiculturalism, multicultural group work, internationalisation, issues in multicultural education. After initial review when other terms were identified (for example, when realising that multicultural group dynamics is potentially different from monocultural one) search terms such as multicultural group dynamics, or culture and group dynamics were used. In addition, when a source was closely related, its allocated keywords also were used to discover more sources.

When subsequently analysing the data, different aspects of data were investigated and new keywords emerged from the data such as language switching, similarity attraction, and social identities which they were used to identify literature which later were used in the discussion and updated literature review.

However, features in Mendeley and Readcube (both of which are reference management software) are also used. This feature is similar to ScienceDirect's 'more related articles' feature but the former platforms search within their own dedicated database.

3.4.2.   USE OF THE LITERATURE

Literature was used in the three main sections of this research: literature review, methodology chapter and discussion.

As mentioned earlier, there was a change in the philosophical view toward research, which as a result meant that the initial literature review had to be revised.

For the methodology chapter, most related academic literature regarding research and research design was used to justify the choice of methodology and guide the researcher throughout her research.

Below is a detailed explanation of the use of literature in this study.

As mentioned above, the change in the philosophical view meant the literature review strategy had to be adapted to meet the needs of the new philosophical view. After this, the initial stage of the literature review was used to help the researcher to gain an overall understanding of the available research in this field. In addition, as presented in the literature review chapter, detailed explanations of existing definitions for the concepts of culture and learning were reviewed. These definitions not only provided base knowledge for the researcher but also helped her to expand her understanding and decide upon her definition of both learning and culture which represent the basis of this research.

The initial literature review was also used to design the research questions. Questions aiming to investigate the challenges and issues in the multicultural groups were specifically designed with the purpose of identifying the similarities and differences between this research and the available literature. Also, as was suggested by the majority of cultural theorists, culture impacts on various aspects of human life including dynamics when people work in a team. As such it was essential to investigate how culture impacts on student group work performance. In addition, as most literature in this field emphasises the conflicts in group work and also the greater conflicts that occur in multicultural group work, it was decided to investigate the cause of conflict and its consequences.

To design the interview questions, the research questions and literature were used. The researcher reviewed questions which were used in previous research studies such as (Popov et al., 2012) with consideration of the differences in the research approach, but the questions also assisted her in designing her interview questions.

Further in the research process during the data analysis stage, the literature helped the researcher to understand her data better. When the research identified important sections of the data, she identified related literature to expand her knowledge of that specific phenomenon such as potential links between personality and academic attitudes or with culture. In this stage the literature review was updated where required.

Finally, one of the most and perhaps challenging uses of the literature was when discussing the findings.

After themes were discovered and findings were discussed to strengthen the main findings it is necessary to use similar (in terms of topic, research field, research question or etc.) previous research findings to strengthen the findings and validity.

When themes were discovered, it become apparent that most research with similar focus discovered somewhat different factors affecting students' performance and experience in multicultural group work. This was mainly due to a different research philosophy and approaches. As the majority of previous research in this field adopted a more deductive approach and, the way those research were conducted and the way the problem was investigated was different. This resulted in having a different research outcome. For instance, one of the main findings for this research is that the group work task has an impact on student experience and the group performance. This factor was discovered as this research adopted an inductive approach using case study method which enabled the researcher to investigate the phenomena in its context and as it included three different cases there was an opportunity to compare the cases and discover the factors influencing students' experience and performance in group work.

However, due to these differences it was not as straightforward to compare the result with previous research. So instead of limiting to the research in this specific area (multicultural group work) the researcher expanded her literature search to psychology, linguistics and neurology; this enabled her to discuss her findings in relation to other fields. For instance, one of the findings for this research is language switching, meaning during group meetings, students may switch to their first language to discuss the issue with students who share the same first language. This phenomenon was not discussed in the literature related to multicultural group work. However, after discussing this issue with her second supervisor the researcher was guided to consider the linguistics literature. She was also was assisted in defining her keywords.

After finishing the discussion chapter, the researcher updated her literature review, including the new sources of literature and research in the work.

This whole process demonstrates that the researcher understood her research philosophy and its impact on the different research results.

3.5. RESEARCH RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

The primary aim in social science research is to describe the social world, but the associated portrayal and interpretation should stay true to the social world. The value of scientific research depends on the ability of the researcher to demonstrate the credibility of their findings. As a result, in all scientific research reliability and validity are critical elements as "reliability is concerned with the replicability of scientific findings, validity is concerned with the accuracy of scientific findings." (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982)

There are different criteria to measure reliability and validity in quantitative and qualitative research, Bryman (2008) believes reliability and validity in qualitative research are similar to qualitative research by a slight difference in meaning. But

Merriam (2009) argues that as reality and world views are different in qualitative research, reality and validity should also be defined from the research's philosophical view. Lincoln & Guba (1985) believe that even the naming for these criteria should be different so they have suggested credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability instead of internal validity, external validity, reliability, objectivity or construct validity.

Merriam (2009) believes these differences are not limited simply to quantitative and qualitative approaches, but in qualitative research reliability and validity need to be defined for each type of qualitative research. Maxwell (2005) adds that in many research projects validity has been discussed in general terms which appear to be "boilerplate" without demonstrating how the researcher applied these strategies into the actual research. As a result, Riege's (2003) guide to test and techniques for validity and reliability in case study research has been used to ensure the research reliability and validity in addition to demonstrating how these strategies are applied in this research.

However before this, it would be helpful to start with the general view toward internal and external validity and reliability.

Internal validity is required to ensure the researcher's findings are consistent with the theoretical concept they developed (Bryman, 2008).

External validity is concerned with research generalisability. LeCompte & Goetz, (1982) argue external validity could be a weakness of qualitative research as it may use small samples or case study, but still it does not mean qualitative research cannot be generalized.

External reliability is concerned with whether other researchers would be able to discover the same phenomenon and generate the same theory in the same or similar setting (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982).

Internal reliability can be achieved by when more than one researchers can agree what has been observed or heard (Bryman, 2008).

Construct validity is the process of formally specifying the meaning of the measured attribute or quality (Rudert, 1993, p.22)

3.5.1. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY IN CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Below are explanations of the methods used in this research to ensure validity and reliability.

Credibility is used instead of internal validity in qualitative research, which is concerned with establishing a creditable phenomenon (Riege, 2003).

A case study aims to find generative mechanisms in order to deduct the real-life experiences confidently. So in case study research, researchers not only examine the patterns of similarities and differences between the data but they tend to identify the main components in those patterns and the way they are produced (Riege, 2003, p.81).

The different methods used in this research can increase the credibility of the case study research diagram in internal validity pattern matching:

Triangulation, which is the use of more than one method of data collection in the study of a social phenomenon which findings can be compared (Bryman, 2008). Maxwell (2005) notes triangulation reduces the risk of biases associated with a particular data collection method.

In this research, module documents, observation and interview data collection are used. This is to enable the researcher to compare both data sets and result in a greater confidence in the findings. This research triangulation is discussed in sections 4.2.2, 5.1.2, and 6.1.2.

Also, presenting the research findings to colleagues, also termed "peer debriefing and support" (Robson, 2011, p.158) would also help the researcher to avoid researcher bias and increase the credibility of the findings.

Finally Maxwell (2005) and Merriam (1998) argue that explaining researcher bias increases the credibility of the research and this is declared during the research design stage and also it is discussed in section 3.2.5.7.3

Transferability is similar to external validity but generalisability in the case study is concerned with if the research findings are generalized to some broader theory.

As Lincoln & Guba (1985) suggest, 'thick description' can facilitate transferability developing as a result for this research a case study database which is developed during the data collection phase and includes thick description.

The case study database is a way of organizing and documenting the case study's data. This database usually includes the collected data, case study notes and researcher's report (Yin, 2009). For this research, the researcher used NVivo to store all interview data (transcripts and audio files) observation videos, audio narratives, and module documents, in addition to the researcher's notes and thoughts. Figure 3.2-5 shows the folders, which include these files. In addition Mendeley and Readcube (both reference management software) were used to organise the literature and manage referencing.

In the data analysis phase - as Yin (2009) - suggests, using systematic coding and analysis system would help to increase the validity. As a result, the thematic analysis which is used as the data analysis method in this research would strengthen the transferability.

In addition, the findings are compared with the available literature in another way (Riege, 2003) which will be used in this research to ensure the validity.

Dependability is similar to reliability but in case study research in can be argued that since people are not similar and they are not as static like quantitative research even if similar research may not produce the same result. Even data collected by different researchers in same environment may not be similar but these differences can be used as additional information for the research. The aim of dependability is to ensure the research process is stable and consistent throughout.

To ensure dependability in the design phase, a case study protocol has been created and refined and a case study database has been developed throughout the research process. Also, the codes and themes have been checked with the supervisors and colleagues.

Conformability is similar to construct validity, it concerns whether the process of the interpretation of data is logical and neutral.

In the data collection phase, multiple data sources (observation and interview) are used in addition to establishing a *chain of evidence*, to increase the conformability as Yin, (2009) believes several data sources would increase research reliability.

In the data analysis phase, codes and themes were checked with the supervisors in addition to colleagues, this act is called an 'audit trail' which Lincoln & Guba, (1985) believe can increase the conformability.

In addition, cross-case analysis (as mentioned in 3.2.5.7.4) adds to the validity. Amongst these three cases as presented in 6.5 there are similar patterns which also validate the findings.

3.5.2.   RESEARCH REFLEXIVITY

Social researchers are part of the setting world that they study (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In case study research, the researcher spends significant time with participants, as he or she becomes part of his or her group. As a result, the researcher could have impact on the data; in order to understand and note this direct or indirect impact, Merriam (2009) states researchers must clarify their research-related biases, disposition, and assumptions. Doing so would help other researchers to understand how a researcher's values and expectations have influenced the way that researcher conducts the research and interoperates data (Maxwell, 2005). This clarification would increase the credibility of the research.

Bryman (2008, p.698) defines research reflexivity as *"a reflectiveness among social researchers about the implication for the knowledge of social world they generate of*

their methods, values, biases decisions and mere presence in the very situation they investigate."

Lincoln & Guba (2005) states reflexivity is the process whereby a researcher reflects critically on his-or herself as the researcher. Patton (2002, p.64) adds reflexivity demonstrates the value of self-awareness, political/cultural consciousness and ownership of one's perspective.

Hertz (1996) states that the concept of reflexivity has emerged from the researcher 's understanding of the data. Hertz (1996) later adds that Callaway (1992, p.33) offers one of the best definitions:

"Often condemned as apolitical, reflexivity, on the contrary can be seen as opening the way to a more radical consciousness of self in facing the political dimensions of fieldwork and constructing knowledge. Other factors intersecting with gender--such as nationality, race, ethnicity, class, and age also affect the anthropologist's field interactions and textual strategies. Reflexivity becomes a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness."

For this study, the researcher continuously reflected on the research process from research design to conclusion; this is achieved by using the case study database and the researcher's notes and reflecting on the possible factors, which may have influenced on data interpretation. In addition, the researcher constantly identified and reported the research limitations such as time, data collection or data analysis limitations. Additionally, the researcher was conscious that her participants may not provide their honest or full opinion as she was acting as a tutor for the KIM and IL modules. Even though she was not marking their group assignments, she felt there was a possibility that participants might not feel comfortable to discuss everything they may wish to. Also, as the researcher is not a native English speaker and considers herself an international student - she was aware that due to this, some participants who were home students or native speakers might have not express their true opinion towards international students. To minimise the potential negative impacts of the researcher's role as a tutor and her being international

student, she assured participants that their opinion would not offend her or have any impact on the way she treats them as students.

3.6. ETHICS

Merriam (2009, p.228) highlights that the majorty of validity and reliability of a research depends on ethics of the researcher. Guillemin & Gillam, (2004) identify two sides of ethics: *produdral ethics* and *ethics in practice.*

Produdral ethics is one of the primary steps for qualitative research. For this research, ethical approval was obtained before progressing with data collection (See Appendix V).

Ethics in practice is defined by Guillemin & Gillam's (2004) day-to-day ethical issues that arise during research. In this research study, some of the possible ethically-important situations were discussed before the observation and interview stage in order to prepare the researcher to make sound decisions if any concerns arose. Also the researcher ensures participants are comfortable with providing answers to specific questions and the research information sheet is given to participants to ensure they are aware of the research aims and details and they are not under pressure to take part (Merriam, 2009) in the research as the researcher is their tutor. It is very important students know that whether or not they decide to participate, it does not have any impact on their marks and their answers are confidential and furthermore that no one can access them except the researcher. Also, it would help them to understand their rights as a participant.

In the observation, the researcher makes sure all participants are aware that they are being video and audio recorded and they are given the opportunity to raise any concerns they have related to this. It is clarified that no one accessed the video and audio recordings except the researcher.

During data collection and data analysis, the researcher made sure to protect the participants' confidentiality (M. Q. Patton, 2002) by anonymising all data, all names

are changed, references to specific locations, names are removed and data is stored in a safe place that only the researcher can access. However, the module names, the site of the research, and students' previous occupations, nationalities, gender and age are not anonymised as by doing so important aspects of the data would have been lost. Since it was discovered that these characteristics play key roles in the way students perform in their groups and their experience, it was decided to present this part of the data.

McGraw et al. (2000, p.68) highlight the relationship between reflexivity and ethics and how reflexivity would help the researcher to ensure research is conducted ethicality: "Reflexivity is a process whereby researchers place themselves and their practices under scrutiny, acknowledging the ethical dilemmas that permeate the research process and impinge on the creation of knowledge" and Guillemin & Gillam (2004) suggest reflexivity has a close connection with *ethics in practice* as the researcher reflects on the research process as a whole. As a result the researcher constantly reflects on the relationship and interactions between themselves and participants and the potential harm the research could have for its participants or the researcher. It is essential for the researcher to understand and avoid the ethical problems, which may arise. For instance, to understand the participants' group work process, occasionally during interviews the researcher needed to explain other group members' views towards a common issue. However in doing this, the researcher was conscious regarding the information she enclosed, especially if that information could potentially offend them, affect their group dynamics, or even cause friction between them and other students.

3.7. LIMITATIONS

One of difficulties faced during data collection was recruiting students. The initial plan was to conduct focus groups and then if more data was needed, individual interviews. Focus groups would have provided this opportunity to observe the group dynamics and conversation during interaction but none of the groups agreed to take part in the focus group, so the researcher had to use individual interviews alone. Persuading students to take part in the interview and arranging the appointment time were very time consuming as in the first semester most students returned to their home countries, were travelling since it was the Christmas holiday or were busy doing their coursework. But after the second semester, the researcher managed to interview the majority of participants.

In August 2014, the researcher received the outcome of the second ethics application and due to the expanded scope that this allowed, decided to issue participants with questionnaires linking their individual identity their to learning approach and personality; this aimed to link these qualities with group work performance. However, for participants to do this, the researcher needed to know which questionnaire was completed by each participant. Unfortunately, participants generally felt uncomfortable about doing this (not wishing to be assessed in this way) and as such only one individual completed the questionnaire. Participants were fully informed that they would not be judged on the basis of the questionnaire, but the concept of this kind of activity/assessment still made them feel hesitant. Also, as the second ethics application enabled the researcher to interview tutors and lecturers, she interviewed one lecturer after all student interviews were complete. However, tutors were not available for interview at any point, so this approach was not pursued. These limitations are also discussed in 9.4.

OVERVIEW TO CHAPTER 4, 5, AND 6

In the following chapters (4, 5, and 6) the findings of the research are presented.

In each chapter, firstly, the triangulation process is presented. The observation data, documentation and interview data are analysed and merged to produce a comprehensive narrative for each unit or group of which two or more members were interviewed. It is the timeline of the groups from forming the group to the end of the group task. And if possible an overlook to members' relationship after the group work.

Module documentation is used to provide information regarding the group work task and module outline, observation notes are used to provide another angle with which to understand the group process, and also is used to tailor the interview questions for each participant. Finally, interview data is used to present the participants' perspectives and opinions.

It was especially important to present the narrative using group members' own perspectives as the researcher believes in the value of subjectivism. As such, she believes it is more valuable to use the participants' interpretation of the group work process directly rather than paraphrasing their accounts and potentially injecting her understanding and interpretation of their group work. It was desired that meaning was not altered or lost in the process of summarising their views or correcting their grammar. As such for the case study reports, the researcher used extensive direct quotations from participant interviews and added her observations to provide a coherent storyline. In these narratives the aim was to provide the story of the group process from participants' points of view in order to highlight what was important in their eyes and how they believed they performed and how they viewed other members' performance, in addition to the group performance as whole. Using the direct quotes means that the length of the narrative is sizable, but as mentioned above this helps to provide a more vivid picture of participant perspectives.

Chapter 4 also includes background information relating to the University and the department and is followed by information for each case and the units of analysis.

The second section of the chapters presents the research findings of the thematic analysis of the observation session and interviews with participants across the three cases: IL, KIM and MINICASE. Introduced on a case-by-case basis, findings are categorised into themes and sub-themes emerging from the data such as 'feelings' (both positive and negative), factors affecting the group dynamics such as language, friendships and how home and international students perceive each other. Other themes based on factors external to the group are also discussed, such as module design and how membership of the group unit is decided.

Chapter 6 in addition to above includes themes which are not specific to any case but include valuable information regarding students' view towards the group work, students' expectations, learning from multicultural group work etc. Also the chapter includes cross-case analysis, which highlights the similarities and differences between findings across the cases.

4. CHAPTER 4 CASE STUDY REPORT: THE CASE OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AND INFORMATION LITERACY

INTRODUCTION

The findings from the IL case are presented in this chapter. The chapter starts with background of the research site, which includes information of the University of Sheffield and iSchool. This information would provide an overview of the environments in which the research was conducted and students were studying in. also, the services and supports that students had access during their study.

Afterward information regarding the IL module and group work task is presented. And this follows by the narratives of each group's group work process.

And then the themes emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews are presented.

4.1. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH SITE

4.1.1. THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

The University of Sheffield is a member of the Russell Group of universities, and is located in North of England. The University has a central campus located to the West of Sheffield city centre.

The University values social constructivism and emphasises the importance of multiculturalism - as it mentioned earlier, (section1.1) 59% of its students are international students. The importance of international students is reflected in the University Learning and Teaching Strategy 2011-2016. For instance, one of the aims of the strategy relates to:

"The development of cultural agility, flexibility, and the ability of our graduates to compete strongly in the global labour market." (The University of Sheffield, 2011a) And places emphasis as such, *"coordinate activities designed to develop and embed internationalisation"*

In addition, The Sheffield Graduate Attributes state that the Sheffield graduate is:

"an active citizen who respects diversity and has the cultural agility to work in multinational settings" (The university of Sheffield, 2011b)

The University offers specific support for international students before they start their course and during their study. For example, in order to qualify for Master's degree study, international students may be required to complete a Pre-Masters course at The Sheffield International College - the length of this depends on the individual's IELTS score and their background education. Additionally, the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC) also provides pre-sessional English courses, which are designed to help new students develop their English language skills and acclimatise to a UK HE environment. English language courses are also offered throughout the year.

4.1.2.   THE INFORMATION SCHOOL

The Information School (or 'iSchool') is one of the departments in The University of Sheffield, positioned within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The School offers 9 Master's degree courses including Information Management and Librarianship. The School is considered as one of the leading schools in the information science field. As such, it attracts many students from different countries and within the UK every year. Due to it being part of the University of Sheffield, the School also follows the same learning and teaching strategy; as such, it also aims to prepare students for work in multinational environments by encouraging them to work in multicultural groups during their study when possible.

The School has two computer labs, one of which is part of the iLab which has capacity for 20-40 students. The iLab is designed to facilitate study into how people

interact with information resources such as Facebook. However, it also has facilities to video and audio record focus groups (as it is equipped with high quality cameras and microphones around the room) and conduct small group teaching.

There is one lecture/seminar room in the School. As such, the lecturer uses other available lecture rooms or computer rooms across the University for classes with larger groups of students.

Blackboard is used as the University's virtual learning environment (VLE) platform and called MOLE. All lecture slides, handouts, video tutorials (if available) and FAQs are uploaded to the module space and are made available to students. In addition, modules usually have discussion boards and a forum, which students can use for discussion. In addition, the University uses Google applications (Google Apps for Work) including an email service. As such, students have access to Google Drive.

The School has an International Student Advisor, who provides guidance and support for international students. However, students are also guided to use the University's Student Services Department which includes international student support, and mature student support.

4.2. CASE STUDY REPORT

4.2.1. CASE CONTEXT

Information Resources and Information Literacy was a mandatory module for Information Management (IM) and Librarianship courses delivered in the first semester. The module aimed to help students to develop skills in searching for and evaluating information and understand their own understanding of information literacy (IL) and how they can apply it to their future careers and lives. The module involved seminars, lectures, group activities and computer lab work.

In order to achieve the module goal, students were asked to work in set groups with the coordinator assigning them to these. The groups usually consisted of 3-4

members and often featured a combination of Librarianship and Information Management students. It should be considered that Librarianship students were mostly home students, while the IM course tended to feature more international students.

Students were allocated to their groups. The module coordinator explained that she found it quicker to assign students to their groups rather than letting them choose as the module was in the first semester and majority students did not know each other:

"…I'm keen to try and get some international students and home students mixing a bit and also the cohorts mixing a ….It's quicker and more efficient to get them going straight away…. As I said, it's quite difficult to get an international mix as well because, as you know, just over half the class is Chinese and another good proportion is from various different countries. Over time, from feedback from students, I try not to have just one native English-speaking person in a group. I try not to have just one non-native English-speaking person in the group. So, I was trying to get, say, two British people or two native English-speakers and two international students who might not have the same language as each other but who weren't native English-speakers. Hopefully, there isn't just one person... to begin with I didn't think about that. I got negative feedback from that….I suppose I feel that's better than there being one person who feels like they're being left out in the cold because they do or they don't speak English as a first language. It does also mean that it's impossible, particularly working on that principle, where I just didn't take the native English-speakers and dot them round. If I'd done that I could have had one group but I don't think that would be fair. Also, I wanted to put all the part-time students together because, again, from feedback before they find it difficult working with full-time students. So, I sort of breached that rule for that because I know it's important for them to be able to actually operate in the short time that they're in the university…So, there aren't enough English-speakers to go around and there are a lot of Chinese, so some of the groups ended up being monocultural. I just can't avoid it really following those principles…then, what does happen which in some ways is not desirable but I think a practical option, there is students who arrive late and nowadays it's quite often. …It does mean that they're catching up and it does mean

they get clumped together because I form groups as they arrive. So, it does mean that there tends to be a couple of groups who are rather crippled from the start from the point of view of communication because they're trying to catch up....”

This module was supported by several tutors, each of whom is assigned to several groups. Tutors were responsible for facilitating seminars, answering student questions and helping with class activities.

From the first week, students worked within their group as part of class activities. From the first class, each group was asked to create a blog and update it regularly. It was preferable if all group members contributed by posting to the blog (see module handout in the Appendix III). The blog was mostly about students' understanding of blogging and its role in IL and also their own IL skills. Groups usually had different strategies for blogging; in some groups all members posted individually, but other groups used a single post which included all members' opinions or their shared opinion.

Creating an IL poster was an activity designed to help students understand the role of IL in their future career and students were asked to create the poster with their group mates. In the interview, the module coordinator explained the objective of the activity and the reason behind its design as such:

“What I'm hoping is in different activities on lectures, I'm focusing on the fact that you can't just think of Information Literacy as a set of skills and that's going to be inadequate. So, I feel I'm putting the exercise very much in the centre of what they're... and it ties in with the... so I've printed out these things to try and remind me. Module outline where one of the module aims is to understand from both theoretical and practical perspective the concepts of Information Literacy and Information behaviour. Another one is develop your own Information Literacy and understanding its application to its future lives. So, it's not kind of out of line in any way with the module's aims and based the activities around it. ... By the end of module students will understand key aspects of Information Literacy and Information behaviour including the nature of information complexity and contextual nature of Information Literacy. So, there aren't that many aims. There's

only two kinds of overarching objectives. This activity is sort of bang in the centre of both with them."

Individuals were required to consider what future job they would like to have and how IL could be applied in that role. This activity was not assessed, but it was desired that students understood the value of the activity and produced creative posters. As the module coordinator mentioned, students learned from the activity and formative assessment does not mean they should only invest minimum effort. "I can understand why students want things to have marks but it's all learning and you don't just learn from the assignments. The assignments are formative as well in the classes I run but you learn through…. You have to understand that you learn by... well, I don't need to tell you but I think it's also important to have significant things… I very strongly feel that I shouldn't stop doing something that they feel is too much effort because it's not assessed."

Groups had two weeks from when they were briefed until the poster exhibition.

In week 4, students were briefed verbally and through a hand out, which was uploaded to the VLE about the poster activity, and in the same session they had almost an hour to discuss their ideas with group members. They were given stationery in case they wanted to draw their ideas or even make their posters. Tutors circulated to answer learners' questions and examples of posters from previous years were displayed.

Since the activity was usually introduced earlier in the semester, it was possible that by week 4 some groups would have already discussed their ideas and used the time to finalise the poster. Nevertheless, there were groups which do not have ideas even after the session and may have met outside the lecture time to finish their posters.

In week 6, groups had to bring their posters for the exhibition. Posters were mounted on display boards, so that people could circulate freely and examine them. The exhibition was only for academic staff and students involved in the module and was informal and friendly in tone. The best poster was chosen by students and awarded a token prize (normally chocolates).

Each group needed to have at least one group member standing next to their poster to answer other students' or lecturer/tutor questions. The rest of the group members were able to browse the other posters and vote for their favourite one. It is of course the group's decision how to divide responsibility of remaining with the poster to answer questions.

The module assignment was an individual one - students were required produce a bibliography on a negotiated topic, a literature review and a reflective report.

Each tutor provided an area of personal interest to his/her students, and the students were asked to narrow down the topic by using the skills they have developed during the module. In this assignment, tutors acted as clients for students. Students needed to communicate with their clients in order to understand their requirements and produce a literature review, which met the client's needs. After this, students were asked to reflect on their progress and how they improved their IL skills and identify their weaknesses and strengths. (see Appendix III for the module outline and assignment briefing)

4.2.2.   NARRATIVES OF THE GROUPS

4.2.2.1.   UNIT 1 2013

This group was observed during the exhibition in academic year 2013-2014. ILC1 and ILC2 were interviewed but ILC3 did not take part in the interview.

This group included one British member (ILC3) an American (ILC2) and one Chinese student (ILC1) all of whom are female. ILC2 and ILC3 are of similar ages, but ILC1 is younger. All group members were from the Information Management (IM) course and the first time they met was during an Information Resources and Information Literacy lecture. ILC2 has a Masters degree in Community Practice and Social Action from the United States, and ILC1 holds an undergraduate degree in Information Management and Information Systems from China. In this module, students are allocated to their groups, so when the members met for the first time they introduced themselves and talked about their own background. ILC1 was happy that she had the opportunity to work with students from different countries especially

since their first language is English as she thought she could use the chance to improve her spoken English skills. ILC2 was pleased when she realised the group had already been chosen for her: *"I was really relieved, I was so happy that I was assigned the people that I was because we were already sitting next to each other and had built a rapport, so it was good."*

However, from the beginning, ILC2 feared that she may feel isolated in the group and there would be little communication judging by the gossip between her fellow classmates: *"I thought I would be isolated, that it would be difficult to communicate."* But ILC2 believed that ILC1 actually helped the group dynamics by being open and outspoken: *"She was like a group voice whether she realised it or not."*

The task was given to the students during Week 4 in very large flat-floored hall with moveable seating (LocationA). This building does not have a lecture theatre layout, so students had the choice to move their chairs together or sit on the floor and develop their ideas. They were given a sheet of A2 paper and a few markers to create their first draft, take notes or make their posters.

This group used the opportunity to discuss their initial thoughts and develop an idea. ILC3 was absent from the session as according to ILC1 she was busy, so ILC2 and ILC1 decided on the theme they wanted to choose. Since ILC2 had more work experience, ILC1 followed her opinion: *"Because ILC2 has some background of her career she did some maybe she did work in a small company in America so we communicate our ideas. I don't have any related background so we communicate about this."*

They decided to choose something simple and not spend too much time on it as the task was not assessed and they had other coursework submissions at that time.

ILC1: *"So basically the professor told us 'ummm this work is just work it's not coursework' so we just did that we didn't push ourselves to do our best in that work I think but we still tried our best but not the coursework thing you know. We decided to draw a simple diagram because we think we draw very complex diagram maybe it didn't attract others attention and just ignore it. And still takes a lot of time to do*

that." ILC2: *"It's better than spending 3 hours doing assignments with groups that know it's not going to be assessed"*

But ILC2 believed the idea came from everybody. Also, during the interview she did not mention ILC3's absence. ILC2 and ILC1 decided on the general idea of their poster in LocationA. ILC1: *"basically the basic idea of the diagram ILC2 and me we created together, by discussing our background and our ideas".* They met three times to finalise their poster. ILC2 describes their group work as a group effort: *"it was very collaborative"* and said they did not have a particular leader. During observation there was no obvious sign of leadership from any of group members. However ILC1 believed ILC2 was the leader:

"I think ILC2… people who really helped insist on her ideas. Strong girl in her ideas. I think its good because in sometimes if we could not understand/ decide we had like leader for that."

They met three times after the initial meeting in LocationA in order to finish the poster. They divided the tasks and worked together, but did not communicate with ILC3 after the LocationA session, however they updated her in the second meeting.

ILC1: *"we didn't divide with ILC3 because we didn't communicate with her but later she joined us"*

During meetings they found the images they needed to demonstrate their ideas. They printed and cut them out later in order to stick them on a sheet of A2 paper. They booked a group room in the Information Commons (IC) and since it was the first time for all of them, they sat together and made the booking:

ILC1: *"We ordered a group room in IC. We ordered it together because it's the first time we order a room in IC…we didn't know how to do that. So ILC2 had her computer and we said click here click here!"* [Laughs aloud]

It seemed they did not experience difficulties in their communication - ILC2 spoke clearly to help ILC1 understand the conversation and she repeated sentences if necessary.

ILC1: *"First time I met ILC2 I feel she is very kind girl and she speak slowly for me and I I I told her about that I said that your English is very suitable for me because if you speak very quickly I could not understand you. She told me that she has some relatives who are foreigner so she really practiced it I find it happy."*

For ILC2, ILC1's attitude toward English was an important element in their communication: *"She was open to correction, so that made a huge difference"*

ILC2 took the poster home but on the exhibition day she was late and ILC1 and ILC3 were worried that she may not turn up, but they did not have her phone number to contact her. During the exhibition, they decided to divide the time between themselves to ensure each member got the chance to walk around and look at other posters.

ILC1: *"We basically all of us did this part first ILC2 stayed next to the near poster and answer some questions and me and ILC3 go around to give scores to other posters. And the next turn"*

During the exhibition the group members appeared happy and ILC1 and ILC3 browsed other groups' work together and had several conversations. There were times when all three shared a laugh. From the observation notes: "ICL1 ran and joined others they whispered and started giggling"

Later When ICL1 was asked to explain why they were laughing, she said:

ILC1: *"Something which may made us laugh was the professor told us she met our poster."* Their experience in general was positive. ILC2 enjoyed the group work just because of her colleagues and the fact that the group performed really well. *"I'm gonna say yes because I think the group worked well, we were all on the same page. Our view of what we wanna do, of Information Management, I think that's another thing – we are all information managers so our perspective came from that place, making it better"*

Also working with ILC1 helped ILC2 to challenge certain stereotypical views which she held toward Chinese students.

*"Even ILC1 was kind of outspoken compared to a lot of the other Chinese students...
I'm glad I met her because I wouldn't have had that perspective if it were not for
her.... I would see her with her other Chinese friends, but I think that was just people
she might've known and she didn't feel that she had to isolate herself."*

However ILC2 had strong opinions towards the actual task: *"I hated it. I've never felt
so insulted...I just felt in that particular course what we were asked was very
elementary, not helpful at all."*

Group members did not exchange phone numbers after the group work and ILC2
and ILC3 did not work with ILC1 in semester two, but they worked together in a
group which consisted of all English speaking students for the Knowledge
Management and Information Management modules. ILC1 also worked only with
mono-cultural groups in the second semester.

When they submitted their dissertation, the researcher received an email from ILC1
asking for the photo from their group work as a memento. Which shows she had a
very positive experience.

4.2.2.2.   UNIT 2 2013

This group includes two male students: ILA1 (British) and ILA3 (Chinese) and one
female: ILA2 (Indian). ILA1 is in his late twenties, several years older than the others.
All of the group members were IM students. ILA2 has a degree in Information
Technology Management for Business (ITMB) and ILA1 has a Bachelor's degree in
History. ILA3 did not take part in the research.

ILA1 was unimpressed upon learning that he needed to work with a group, and
furthermore that he was *allocated* to his group. He prefers to work with people he
knows: *"I'm not a big fan of group work anyway, and if I do group work I'd rather do
it with people I know because if I know someone and it's someone I like then I think
they're going to be easier to work with."*

ILA2 did not mind the group work requirement as she recently completed her undergraduate degree and was accustomed to working within groups (including multicultural groups). However, she was a little worried about working with a Chinese person as she explained: *"Yeah Chinese because I'd previously worked in groups with British people and Chinese, I had problems working with Chinese because of language. So again I thought we might have problems, but we communicated on the web using emails and stuff so it wasn't a problem ….. I had problems with the Chinese guy because in the beginning he couldn't really understand us and even when he used to tell us about something like, it was very tough for us to understand what he's speaking. But then I've worked with a lot of Chinese people before, I've got used to it and I've got that patience to listen to what he's trying to say. It was not that bad as I thought it would be."*

But like ILA1 if she is able to choose, she would rather work with people she knows: *"then I would rather go for people whom I know personally because then you have flexibility. If you know people who are working in your group."*

The first time they started thinking about the idea that they were going to use for their poster was when they were given the material in LocationA. They decided to proceed with ILA1's idea, however he insisted that since the final work was 'rubbish' he would rather not to take credit for the concept! : *"I don't want to say because our poster was rubbish but it was more me saying what can we do to represent these pillars and we chose a tree"*

ILA2 said that to decide on the idea, they looked at the previous posters and each group member contributed elements which should be included in the poster. Then they discussed these and decided that to illustrate their future careers with a tree is the best way. They only came up with one idea and ILA2 did not mention the idea came from ILA1. She explained the reason: *"Because I've seen many posters, like in previous groups I've seen that people normally draw trees so I thought you know go with it, yeah. (laughs)"*

After LocationA, they discussed the general aspect in the IL lecture and met once to make the poster. They met in the Information Commons and since they were all IM

students they were familiar with each others' timetable, setting their meeting via email and booking a room later.

They did not divide the task between themselves as they took the task very lightly since it was not an assessed piece of work. ILA1 said: *"It wasn't assessed and we hadn't put much effort... I had ideas how I wanted to do it, I bought lots of card but I'm rubbish at cutting it out, I should look like fruit but it looked awful so I just said 'screw this, it's not assessed!'"* ILA2 mentioned as it wasn't assessed, she did not find it necessary to work hard *"since I knew it was not an assessed poster, I didn't give my 100% to it"*.

However, it seems the tasks were divided to some extent - ILA2 did the illustration as she claims she was better at drawing and the rest helped her to put the elements on the tree. They printed the extra pictures and stuck them on the tree.

ILA1: *"I'm not very good at doing art and drawing and stuff, I don't enjoy doing that stuff. I'll take a lead with what's on it and any other ideas of how to express it, that's fine but that didn't come across, it was 'I'll draw a tree for you' and 'I'll print some stuff to stick on it'."* And ILA2 said*: "we didn't really divide equally. It was like each pillar we would discuss, so I was a bit more on the artistic side so I do squiggles that give ideas so it was an equal contribution."*

ILA1 took the leader role, explaining that the only reason he did so was because no one else would do it: *"Yeah I like to think so because no one really cared about it. I said 'we've got to do something'."*

ILA2 described him as 'dominating' but later explained she did not mean this term in a negative sense:

"Not really dominating, but he gave us what to do and how to do, he actually led us…. No it was more in a positive way because we couldn't really understand what we had to do so he made a plan for us that we should do all this and how we are supposed to do it, which was really good, whereas the Chinese guy was a bit laid back so, yeah. But we all contributed to the poster…. The Chinese guy gave many good ideas. So we all were leaders in our own things."

ILA3 wrote part of the text for the poster but ILA1 decided to rewrite this content as his English was not perfect: *"He wrote one of the things for the pillars, I think he wrote a couple, but I had to re-write them correcting the English he did contribute his thoughts to that."*

For the exhibition, group members decided to divide the time between themselves. They decided to leave ILA1 to answer lecturers' questions since he does not have any problem speaking English.

ILA2: *"we errr decided on giving timeslots, like the first time since the judges were supposed to come in so we thought because ILA1 was much more confident about the poster. So we planned that he should stand at the beginning and then the Chinese guy stood and then I did. So all would get chance to look at the others' posters as well. We gave slots to everyone"*

Both ILA1 and ILA2 mentioned they would do a better job if they were asked to do it again. Even though ILA2 was not as disappointed as ILA1 regarding the poster. She was more positive about the result but mentioned that in comparison with other posters, they could have done better: *"After looking at others, they made a storyline and were really good. I think we could have done something more creative and innovative"*

During the observation when the researcher approached ILA1, one of the first things he mentioned was about their poster being basic. However, they stood next to the poster in turn and ILA1 answered most of the questions.

Nevertheless, ILA1 strongly believed if the poster was assessed he would have performed better and ILA2 opined*: "the poster should have been assessed … because you know you bring something out of it, but it's I feel I'm learning if I'm giving something, I'm giving 100% I should learn something from it. Like, I should get something out of it. I know I'm learning, I've achieved many skills but then I can't show it down anywhere"*

Also ILA1 added that other group members impacted upon his attitude toward the task:

"If someone in the group had been enthusiastic about it I would have worked harder I would have reflected that as well, knowing we would get something better. I thought 'I'm just awful at art so I'm not going to try' I thought 'well if they don't care there's nothing that I can do.' If someone says 'I can make this look really nice' then I think 'we can do this'. It's different when it's assessed like doing the rich picture for knowledge management. KMF1 said 'I know how to use Photoshop' so I said 'oh great! We'll have a nice looking thing at the end of it'. But yeah, if no-one else cares I think 'well I'm not getting marked on it'."

After the group work, they did not become friends but did greet each other if they met in the lecture as ILA2 said: *"We don't meet outside lectures, but then when we meet during lectures we do say hi to each other. But I came across, he's a very silent person, he likes to stay quiet. Even when he's with his Chinese friends during the lectures he's quiet."*

During the exhibition, the group did not demonstrate signs of friendship - they were polite but not very close.

ILA1 also mentioned that he added them as 'friends' on Facebook.

"I'm friends with ILA2 and ILA3 to a certain extent and on Facebook, we send messages and stuff sometimes. That was nice and meeting new people's always interesting."

4.2.2.3.   UNIT 3 2013

ILB1, ILB2, ILB3, ILB4 all took part in the observation but ILB4 did not take part in the interview.

This group consists of three male students: ILB1 (British), ILB2 (British) and ILB3 (Chinese) and one female: ILB4 (Chinese). ILB1 and ILB2 identify themselves as mature students while ILB4 and ILB3 are younger, but of a similar age to each other. ILB1 was previously a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) teacher and ILB2 was a primary school teacher. They both studied for their undergraduate degrees several years ago.

ILB2 mentioned that because of his shyness and also the fact that it had been a long gap between his Bachelor's degree and the Masters, he may not fit in well with fellow students. In addition, he was surprised upon realising the high ratio of international students to home students.

"I was a little bit frightened that I wasn't going to mix or that I'd be too old for people to relate to, or whatever. I was that bit apprehensive, I was steeling myself before coming here and I was surprised later at how many international students there would be. It amazed me how many there actually were."

He started making conversation with other individuals such as Chinese and Korean students. However, he later became close to one of the home students from group ILA with whom he felt he had a similar personality.

"… ILA1's quite reserved himself, he's quite a shy person by himself anyway so we naturally got talking. On Monday afternoons in the INF6320 module ILC2 came in early and we ended up talking. ILA1 and I would end up turning up very early for lectures and start talking because I think he felt a little bit lonely, he came from London worked in bookshops, so he felt a bit by himself whereas my thing was I've lived in Sheffield all my life I was born here I think I have a life outside the university as well so I didn't need to make a super effort to get to know people."

ILB2 wasn't sure how the group dynamics would work when he realised he was assigned to his group and that he had to work with two Chinese students

"My first feeling was of apprehension, but I didn't know who was in my group. I didn't know how we were going to get on or relate to one another. I suppose with two of the group being Chinese in particular, I was uncertain because there wasn't much contact between us beforehand."

ILB1 claims he was not bothered at all when he realised he had to work with this group as he previously worked as an English teacher he was familiar with other cultures and that he also knew how to communicate with these individuals.

Conversely, ILB3 was scared that he would need to work with home students. However later on, he mentioned this group actually helped him to speak more to other people.

They started working on the poster from the LocationA session, then they met three more times to develop and finalise the poster.

They decided on the time and location and set the meetings via email. ILB1 was in charge of scheduling meetings. However according to him this arrangement did not work well:

"It was a bit sporadic, people turned up at different times we didn't have much in terms of material – I think the Chinese lad brought the rolled up paper that we had. I had meant to bring pens but forgot to, ILB2 had forgot to as well, so we actually walked across to the student union and bought a bunch of pens and highlighters and coloured markers and things and came back....The second time we met I was late because I couldn't find the room and the fourth member the Chinese girl didn't turn up at all, I think she wasn't feeling well."

At LocationA they discussed general ideas and the second time they met, ILB3 and ILB4 produced a poster with the concepts they talked about and ILB2 designed his.

ILB2: *"No I went home that week (after LocationA) and drew some concepts. Then I presented what I thought, because I thought there was going to be nothing on the table. I hate being unprepared and I hate sounding big-headed because I don't mean to at all, but I like to have ideas on the table which can be either criticised or modified or rejected, but at least there's something there."*

When they were discussing their ideas they faced some difficulties understanding each other's ideas, which was caused - as ILB2 said - by 'cultural differences'.

ILB2: *"Yes it came easy. But especially at first, when trying to articulate ideas about the poster and design, it became 'culturally' different. I came up with the old idea of a tree – the Chinese students saw that tree within a brain because I think they had seen the examples given by previous students and they were trying their best to*

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compromise but it ended up as a weird mix in my opinion! Because I was trying to articulate what I felt and what they were doing, we had to come up with a compromise. So even though it was a weird mix, it sort of did work."

In the meeting they did not involve ILB1 as he mentioned that in the first meeting they discussed their ideas when he left to buy markers and only informed him and second time when he was late that ILB2 and ILB3 had made the decision without him.

ILB1 specified his role in this group as the person who stopped others complicating matters, especially since he believed a unassessed piece of work is not worth much effort. *"I was a little bit sceptical about its kind of value so my kind of input was not letting things get too complex or too involved given how much work they would've been putting in it to something that wasn't going to be assessed or anything. that was mmm yeah."*

ILB2 explains ILB1's role thus: *"ILB1 was sort of playing devil's advocate. His role was to partially criticise me, and guide things together. But to be honest, one of the first things he said to me was, he told me a story about how to delegate. Yes, I know how to delegate, but that's not a submission that you don't do anything. Delegation has to come from a position of strength and knowing what you want, knowing how to guide and how to manage that. It's not just a question of being able to dole out things just because you don't want to do them. It sounds horrible to say and I don't mean in quite those direct terms, but that's the best way I can... I think ILB1 and I thought in the first place that making a poster was a little silly. I think that was the other thing – we felt that...if I wanted my children to think of some... an easy task for them to do for a supply teacher, a poster is one of the things we'd ask them to present."*

However, ILB1 contributed to the group by finding relevant images, checking the implications for copyright, printing and cutting them out; members of the group then put the information on these. It seemed ILB4 was feeling unwell and she did not play a major role in this group work. However, ILB2 believed she contributed to the ideas. ILB2 took the leadership role as ILB1 said, *"I let ILB2 take the lead with this*

poster, because as I say, he seemed to have lots of ideas and I don't sketch, I don't draw I don't have a visual imagination." And also, he mentioned *"Not really memorable moments, but there was the point at which I had assumed that there had been a division. There was a point at which I realized what I expected to happen, that we would integrate more and better as a team wasn't going to happen. I think at that point I lost some interest in it."*

It seemed ILB4 and ILB3 were happy with his leadership but ILB2 himself mentioned that if he got the chance to do the task again he would not lead as much, and explained the reason such: *"Because we ended up with such a weird compromise. I think it would've been better to construct it together more than me saying 'well, I've come up with these ideas, what do you think?' because you're almost presenting a, b and c and they think, 'I don't want to offend him, so I'll say a'. I think I would've come to it much more circumspect and tried to lead much more by using open questions than trying to sort of compromise and do it with not a closed mind, but just, I'd already set the parameters. I would have had the parameters in mind, but I wouldn't have sketched them out so it would've come much more naturally."*

ILB3 took the poster home and the group members did apply the final touches on the morning of the exhibition. It seems they really did not discuss how they wanted to divide the time standing next to their poster between themselves. ILB3 mentioned he thought it a better idea if ILB2 and ILB1 stood by the poster and answer the questions, as their English is better! ILB3 himself stood next to the poster for short period of time but he was constantly texting. However, ILB4 simply stayed with group of Chinese students in the corner - later ILB3 joined them and it was observed that at some point he was sleeping!

ILB3 considered ILB1 and ILB2 to be his new friends but ILB1 and ILB2 mentioned they simply say a greeting if they see each other in lectures or corridors. During the exhibition there was no sign of friendship between two home students and the Chinese membersILB4 was also very much separated from the group.

ILB1 and ILB2 worked mostly in mono-cultural groups during the second semester.

4.2.2.4.   **UNIT 4 2014**

This group included four females: one Chinese (ILD2) one South Korean (ILD3) one Nigerian (ILD1) and one from Thailand (ILD4) who did not take part in the interview.

None of the students expressed any problems with being assigned to the group except ILD2 who was nervous about her English skills (about which she later did not experience any problems). In addition, members liked the fact that the group was multicultural and that they got the chance to work with people from other countries, as ILD3 mentioned:

"Yeah, yeah... it was okay. I think it great fun. I work with one girl from Africa and one girl from China and Thailand"

Later ILD3 mentioned that even though she is Korean, she found it difficult to work or socialise with students other than those from China. This meant the task provided an opportunity to converse with students from different countries.

"Yeah, we like activity and the group seeing is about the activity and is with the great friends because if I don't get... if I didn't get chance like them it would be impossible to be friends with people from Africa, because I'm Korean and look like same as Chinese. I have no option to make... same national but different here. "

Being in a group with other female students gave group members the chance to have more conversations about different subjects which were not necessarily course-related such as shopping. This helped them to become more confident and build social bonds.

ILD2:

"For us, I find them quite I don't know, friendly and easy going so and both are girls, so it's very easy to communicate or so much… many topic to talk..... Yeah, very comfortable. I like them very much."

They started brainstorming in LocationA and all put their ideas forward, finding it easy to criticise different ideas and formulate mutual ideas. From the members' interviews and the observation, it seemed group members respected each other and also developed friendships during the class activities which helped them to have a smooth and easy group work experience for their poster. They spent time together during the exhibition and were very relaxed around each other. They were also willing to tell the researcher about the group work.

The idea for the poster was developed by all of the group members. ILD1 noted that it was very fun and easy to work together. They started with a general idea and when ILD3 suggested to go with something colourful in terms of appearance, this was accepted. Eventually, they decided to represent the ways they were going to use IL in their future careers using flower petals - each member used one flower, placing their ideas in the corresponding petals and they added their own picture to the middle.

Group members bought material together and met again to make the whole thing; they finished the second time they met.

The task was taken very lightly even though the final product was clear and they made an effort to cut and stick together the colourful paper. According to ILD2, this was due to the task not being assessed:

"Oh, actually we didn't take it so seriously, because the prize is only the chocolate, it was not that we got marked. .... Yeah, even though we didn't win the prize. But we still feel so happy for what we have done, because actually we don't value this prize so much, so it's okay I think. Learn something? Clearly I don't think the poster is quite helpful to our mark so..."

ILD3 mentioned there was some conflict since some of the group members wanted to take it more seriously and some insisted to not do so, however she did not name anyone specifically.

For the exhibition, group members decided each individual would stand next to the poster for 15-20 minutes, however they mentioned in their interviews that they did not strictly decide who goes first, second, etc. The order was decided on the day.

"So, what we did is that we had shifts. I think it was about 15, 20 minute shifts, so somebody would stand for 15 minutes while the others go around... 15, 20 minutes while the others go around and that's how we rotated it." ILD1

ILD1 mentioned that everyone took their turn, but ILD2 was a little bit concerned about her English, so when it was her turn to answer the lecturer's questions regarding their poster, she turned to ILD1 (it just happened that she was there too) and silently asked her to answer:

"she stood at the poster for the shortest time and I think after I'd gone around and seen everybody else's I went back to the poster just to hear what's being said and all. I think I took over again for some time and I was standing there just to see and all. I didn't mean to answer questions. I was going to be like an observer just to see how people are reacting and how the voting is going. I think somebody asked a question and the person wasn't Chinese 'because if they were Chinese they'd speak their language together, the Mandarin together. The person wasn't Chinese and the person asked in English and I think, actually, it was a lecturer that asked. She looked at me to sort of help her out and I didn't want to because we all had our part to play. We all had our turn in standing there and answering questions but then she couldn't so I answered the question and explained everything. Then the lecturer did move on."

ILD2 explained her feelings:

"Oh, so nervous. Yes, it's just about language problem. I think the work it comes so fast but is pretty well... but I really nervous, get so nervous when I need to explain the how does this work? Does this work, do you have an idea or something? It's just another language problem."

In general, it was a very positive experience for all group members. ILD1 believed one of the reasons was because they were so open to each others' opinions and

respected each other. ILD2 said: "It was quite relaxed, it was just like we make friends. It's not the group making or doing the same task sort of thing, it's just like we made friends, chat, eat something, just kind of…"

When they were asked what they may change about the task, ILD3 thought more time to complete the task would have been better. However, ILD2 believed she needed to do more reading at the time and she did not really understand what IL was and what the 7 Pillars stood for. It seemed ILD1 liked the task the way it was.

ILD1 and ILD2 stayed in touch but did not work together in the second semester. ILD3 mentioned she preferred to work with male students and said, *"Boys, less complaint." S*ubsequently she worked with male students in the second semester.

4.2.2.5. UNIT 5 2014

This group included three female members and one male: Two Chinese students (ILE1, ILE3) from the IM course and two home students (ILE4 and ILE2) who were Librarianship students. All members were within a similar age range. ILE2 and ILE1 took part in the interview.

It seems group members did not talk about their pasts or shared interests beyond the classroom. This group's communication seemed instead limited to the task. During the interview it was apparent that they did not know a significant amount about each other.

Both ILE2 and ILE1 seemed very happy that they were allocated to their group. ILE1 made this apparent by saying he was lucky to be in this group, especially because he got the chance to practise his English working with home students. ILE2 believed member allocation made the experience easier:

"I prefer not choosing because I always find you always end up excluding someone at the expense of someone else and it can get quite political. So if someone chooses for you, it makes the whole thing easier and you don't have to mess around do you know what I mean? I just think it makes it easier and actually all the group work we've

done, regardless of whether it's ended up being a multicultural group has been chosen. ... prefer it to be chosen though for us, it just makes it easier I think."

However, later she added she knew ILE4 beforehand since both were doing the same course and this was positive in some ways.

They started developing their idea by looking at the previous work and then ILE2 came up with the 'train' idea; she mentioned that everyone seemed to like this. Later, ILE3 suggested that they could use landmarks to demonstrate the Seven Pillars. The end product was a result of everyone's input - as ILE2 said, everybody contributed to the idea. ILE3 suggested she would draw the poster as ILE2 noted she was good at drawing, but ILE2 was not sure if ILE3 actually created the illustrations or her friend. According to ILE1 she had a friend who was good at drawing and speculated maybe she did this:

"And because we don't want to spend a lot of time on drawing the picture, we would try to use our maybe our relationship… friends' resources and you know Hang Dong Mei find a friend who is good at writing and she maybe she draw the first draft."

ILE4 created a Google Doc and everyone added their own content in bullet point form, listing the content they wanted to include in the poster there.

The group met a few days later and finalised the poster. They did not discuss their strategy for the exhibition until the morning of the event - members decided to take turns and ILE4 stayed next to the poster first. ILE2 mentioned ILE1 and ILE3 took their turns together. During the observation it was noted that, "the Chinese members stood together"

When the researcher asked ILE1 about the exhibition, he mentioned that they (ILE1 and ILE3) did not want to answer questions or explain the poster, as they were not comfortable with their English language skills, so they went around and looked at the other posters first. ILE2 mentioned they brought several friends in a bid to encourage them to vote for their poster as the best entry. She also added they showed her other interesting posters.

During this process, ILE4 apparently took the role of moderator. ILE2 mentioned there were times that she was trying to explain something and ILE1 and ILE3 just met her comments with blank expressions and did not seem to understand her. Also, ILE2 found the whole poster task to be 'a waste of time' as it was not assessed and she had other assignments due at the same time; she was quite negative but ILE4 as ILE2 said:

"ILE4 was kind of a good bridge between kind of the two of us I think at that point. She was kind of like a mediator I would see her role as. But I think she was also kind of good at conceptualising stuff which I thought was quite good. She's quite good at the abstract side because I kind of like to think of myself as the ideas person, but I'm not very good at kind of pulling it all together. She was… I would say that was her kind of role, mediating."

But for ILE1 it was fine not being assessed as he said he "got the chance to practise his English".

This problem was not limited to the poster activity but rather was presented in classroom activities and discussions. However, the misunderstandings or difficulties in communication were not only limited to inadequate levels of English - sometimes their different understandings of phenomena made it difficult to proceed with discussions:

"No, their English wasn't as good on some occasions. I mean we had to work on a blog as well, together. So there were times when we were trying to put things into the blog like some of the shared group blog posts and we had to talk about our favourite kind of social media. So they were using some Chinese examples like Weibo and that kind of thing; I don't think they quite understood what exactly to write, kind of thing." ILE2

Sometimes ILE1 and ILE3 did understand the English term, but they did not understand the concept so in this kind of situation one would explain it in Chinese for the other, or ILE4 and ILE2 simplified the concept and explained it for them.

"but it was when you explained something, you had to think about how to explain it in a different way but without kind of… Not dumbing down because that sounds terrible, but trying to explain it in a more…" ILE2

Regarding the language issue, ILE1 said:

"No, no, no. But I am good at listening. I can understand most of you… your… but sometimes maybe the language obstacle maybe I need to just stop and that will yeah because sometimes I can't you know, if I want to express my ideas I will search the word, yeah, in my mind, so it will… yeah."

When answering whether or not he could understand their English and if they spoke too fast, he said:

"No, no, but not the general English, but maybe some things… because they are Librarianship degree is maybe about relevant to the Librarianship, so some of the maybe too academic words are…Yeah, maybe the… you know, the seven pillars and we would draw… there are some words on the poster so maybe some words I can't understand, but they will explain us… yeah explain it to us, so that's really helpful. They were nice guy yeah." ILE1

ILE2 mentioned they never talked about how they want to communicate but she avoided using idioms, slang, or proverbs. However, she did not try to speak slower as this may have looked bad. They used the Google Doc when they were not in the class. ILE1 and ILE3 suggested using the 'WeChat' app to communicate and ILE4 and ILE2 even downloaded it, but they did not actually use it to communicate.

ILE2 said the language barrier was the biggest challenge in this group work. However, they worked together very well - ILE1 mentioned he spent some time on their blog to add music and keep it up-to-date. According to ILE2, ILE3 and ILE1 were significantly involved in the poster. And even though they had problems communicating their ideas, their blog won the best prize.

ILE2 did not see herself as a leader but she liked people to have clear responsibilities when working on a group project; she says she likes to break up the task but not

assign it to the people but rather encourage them to see the allocations themselves. This is especially true when individuals are from different courses or are part-time students, in such situations it is difficult to monitor everyone's contribution. ILE2 believed ILE4 played the leader role or provided guidance in this activity by bringing both sides together and being more patient.

"But only because not so much in what you'd say was a leader naturally but she… because she was keeping the two sides together like in terms of communication, and negotiating with tasks and I'd say that she kind of added like a bit of light-heartedness to it as well. She doesn't take it too seriously and sometimes I do and it's useful to have that kind of influence. So I think just kind of by guidance, she was more of a guider if that makes sense rather than a leader. And then everyone else kind of had, felt confident enough to bring their ideas forward, so it kind of felt like a group led project rather than someone who was leading and telling people what to do……. sometimes when I was communicating, I'd get a bit impatient if I had to explain it more than twice. And then sometimes, like I'd kind of get into this mode where I'd feel like they just might as well give up, or just kind of think 'oh I'll just do it myself.' Or something like that. And I think ILE4 was good at kind of bringing me out of that shell and helping me work better. I don't see myself as against them or separate or anything like that." ILE2

With all of the above, still ILE2 was sure the group was not divided into two sub-groups even though they have talked to the person from their course more but they stayed as one whole unit and it did not affect their group performance. This was apparent as they sat on the floor together during the exhibition, and on one occasion when ILE1 spotted an interesting poster he came back to take the other members over and show them.

However, ILE2 mentioned in the meetings she was mostly looking at ILE4 explaining her ideas:

"I think you naturally feel closer to a group that you spend more time with. You know, if I saw people that I kind of knew over people on my course, I'd go to the people on my course. But I think… but I suppose that's just on the length of time

you've known them. But yeah, I do know what you mean about the sub-groups and that can kind of affect the dynamic of you being forced together to work together. But I don't see it as being like a massive issue in terms of working with them or anything like that though.......When I was talking…It's funny you mention that. ...... When I was talking I think I naturally looked probably more at ILE4 thinking about it now and then kind of you know… I included them, but when I think about it, I probably did naturally look more towards ILE4. But I don't know whether that's because I knew her more because she's on my course, or because she speaks English. And maybe if she understood she could then if they didn't understand, then maybe explain it in a more simpler way than maybe I could do if I repeated it. I never felt like it was too much of a problem really."

ILE2 mentioned it was a smooth group work experience because everyone contributed to the task and she did not need to worry for this. Even though they experienced the language barrier, her experience was positive. She liked to work in groups and did not have a preference between multicultural and monocultural ones. ILE1 enjoyed the group work also. However, they did not stay in touch but did acknowledge each other during encounters in the corridors or lectures.

ILE1 worked in multicultural groups in the second semester.

4.3. IL THEMATIC ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

In this section the result of the thematic analysis of the IL interviews and observation is presented.

4.3.1. FEELINGS

As mentioned in the case description, the INF6350 students are allocated to their groups at the beginning of the module. Students were asked to blog as a group and also to engage in a blog-based discussion related to specific lecture topics.

As group work is a central theme of this research, participants were asked about their experience of the group work assignments. Because the formation of the group is one of the fundamental elements in group work, students were asked about their feelings regarding being allocated to their group and also toward their group mates.

Participant feelings and opinions varied, but were also similar in some aspects; they can be categorised as negative views or positive views towards being allocated to the groups. However, in each of these categories participants provided different reasons, which can be seen as sub-categories.

4.3.1.1. NEGATIVE FEELINGS

In this category, students noted that initially they were uncomfortable and did not react positively towards being allocated to their groups for various reasons such as language problems, wanting to work with students they are comfortable with or fear of not being able to communicate. However, some of the participants discovered that after a few sessions they felt part of the group and their initial negative feelings were gone.

The main categories are as follows:

4.3.1.1.1. COMFORT ZONE

The data revealed most negative feelings and fears toward being allocated to the group come from each student's personal preference and personality. Participants

mentioned that they feel more relaxed if they work with people they are familiar with as they believed it would be easier to work with them.

ILA1: *"I'm not a big fan of group work anyway, and if I do group work I'd rather do it with people I know because if I know someone and it's someone I like then I think they're going to be easier to work with."*

However, they also believed when they are not familiar with other students it matters less if they are allocated to their groups.

KMA3: *"I prefer to choose my group member by myself but the teacher give us the group members that's fine, because of anyway at the beginning we didn't know each other at that time"*

4.3.1.1.2.   NOT KNOWING FELLOW GROUP MEMBERS BEFOREHAND

According to the data, unfamiliarity with other group mates was one of the elements which impacted upon students' initial feelings as the module was offered in the first semester and students did not have any contact beforehand. This reason is categorised separately from the comfort zone as it is not due to students' personal preferences but rather the fear of not being familiar with a different culture and also not having any prior social interaction beforehand.

ILB2: *"My first feeling was of apprehension, but I didn't know who was in my group. I didn't know how we were going to get on or relate to one another. I suppose with two of the group being Chinese in particular, I was uncertain because there wasn't much contact between us beforehand."*

The data also revealed that after the first few weeks, students felt more comfortable once they got to know each other. One international student stated he was scared at the beginning but eventually felt more confident.

ILB3: *"I think group work change me to talk more with people"*

4.3.1.1.3.   WORKING WITH STUDENTS FROM SAME COUNTRY

Although for the majority of international students' language is one of the elements regarding feeling scared or shy to work in a multicultural group, the data has

revealed that most of these students do like to work with people from a different country. As such, when they are allocated to group mates from the same country as them they experience disappointment.

KMA1: *"I don't like the way they divide us into groups. ...I don't know why they always put Chinese people or Asian people together even though I'm not from China. I would love to be in a group with people from different countries, from Europe or America or South America. But don't put me in a group all from Asia; it's not the point. Do you know what I mean?"*

However, this issue has arisen in other cases, occurring even when students had the opportunity choose their own group mates. This happened when due to the spread of nationalities in the course, some Chinese students had to work together in purely monocultural groups as the number of Chinese students was far higher than any other nationality.

4.3.1.1.4. LANGUAGE

According to the data, another factor impacting upon students' feelings toward group formation is language; this is mentioned as a negative factor by both home and international students. For home students, the difficulties they face when communicating with international students and for international students, a lack of self-confidence or English speaking practise are cited as the reasons.

Fear of communication in English made some of the international students nervous.

ILD2: *"I was so nervous actually because the language problem. So, I don't know how to communicate with them."*

However, this also could be because of cultural differences and not knowing how to treat each other.

4.3.1.2. POSITIVE FEELINGS

It can be seen that students also have more positive or natural feelings toward being allocated to their groups. However, the data revealed it is more likely for

international students to feel positive for varying reasons such as: a chance to improve their English, meeting new people, making friends, etc.

4.3.1.2.1. IMPROVING ENGLISH SKILLS

As mentioned above, the data revealed that international students are more interested in working with students from different countries, especially home students; these participants like to learn British accents, broaden their vocabulary and learn the culture. This is significant to the extent that when one the participants was asked what they felt when they found out they were allocated to their group, they responded: "*lucky*".

ILE1: *"Oh, I found I am lucky, yeah. Because you know so many Chinese students. I am going… I go abroad for study with the foreigners, not for the Chinese students,…they are British maybe. … they have a very good British accent yeah and I can practice my… our English, yeah. That's a good point and you know if you are in an international group you need to communicate in the English yeah. So it is… you are forced to do it."*

Another participant highlighted that not only does she like to improve her English but to learn about different cultures and gain new experience.

ILC1: *"Because in my undergrad I interacted with my Chinese friends I wanted to improve my English level and chance to meet others from different country so I can know something interesting about their countries and I think working with people from another countries interesting maybe you can find some special things from it. And it's a good experience for me."*

4.3.1.2.2. MEETING NEW PEOPLE

As the module was offered in the first semester and students did not have the chance to meet or socialise beforehand, the data indicated that group work provided an opportunity for them to meet other students. Even though the majority noted they would like to work with students they know or who they are friends with, it was also mentioned that by allocating them into the groups they had the opportunity to meet and talk to students with whom they may have not done otherwise.

One of the students reflected on his experience and pointed out that if the purpose of the group formation is explained clearly students would perceive it more positively. The clarity of task and its purpose will be discussed later 4.3.7.1

ILB2: *"I think that perhaps we've missed a trick, because in letting you decide your own groups it becomes I don't know…the purpose of group work is to get on and to work with people that you don't know as in a work situation... Perhaps not allowing picking and getting people to mix is more conducive as long as that's explained at the beginning."*

4.3.1.2.3.   HAVING SOMETHING IN COMMON

The data revealed another factor which makes students feel more relaxed. This is being assigned to a group whose members have something in common, such as speaking the same language or being international students. According to the data, students experience a sense of belonging when they share something; with this they may feel less lonely or vulnerable.

One of the participant pointed out that she enjoyed the group work as she was allocated to all international students group.

ILD1: *"I actually liked it and we were all international students and that helped a lot. I liked it actually quite a lot."*

Another students mentioned as they shared the language he was able to benefit from their experience and not being worried for language barrier.

KMC3: *"My group members are Chinese… luckily. …. We just speak in Chinese because…Don't need to yeah, we can… we understand each other in Mandarin and…I benefit from the different… the people's experience… … people have different ideas and sometimes I don't know a particular thing and they say it's quite simple. So I benefit from their experience, rather than English."*

KMB1 also mentioned having another English person made the group work easier for him and he mentioned speaking in English and not being worried for the language barrier made a difference: *"none of the people in my group for Information Literacy*

I'd never spoken to them before but I get on easily with people. Maybe to be honest if it had been three international students who I'd never spoken to before, maybe I would have felt a little bit more pressure. Whereas having another English person made it a little bit easier. They are not so confident speaking English, so yeah, having another English person I think just made it different."

Gender also was mentioned as one of the factors which made the group work pleasurable. ILD2 mentioned being in an all-female group was pleasing and comforting: *"For us, I find them quite I don't know, friendly and easy going so and both are girls, so it's very easy to communicate or so much… many topic to talk."*

4.3.1.2.4. PAST EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN MULTICULTURAL GROUPS

Some of the participants had a more relaxed attitude due to their past experience of working in multicultural groups in their work place or during their undergraduate degrees. As such, they were familiar with the process and they knew how to communicate; however, this does not mean they did not face any challenges, but rather they knew what to expect.

One of the participants explained as she had relevant experience she was relaxed and comfortable to work in a diverse group.

ILA2: *"yes I was very much comfortable because I'd previously worked with such groups so I knew how we needed to work"*

However, some students changed their approach after experiencing the language barrier. The impact of language on the group work experience will be discussed later in section 4.3.3.

ILB1: *"It didn't bother me in the slightest. As I've said, because I worked abroad in my 20's. . I'm not sure I would feel the same now."*

4.3.1.2.5. AVOIDING CONFLICTS AND DISAPPOINTMENT

Some students mentioned that being allocated to the group was beneficial as they avoided the process of choosing group mates which could potentially result in disappointing their friends since they could not all work together. Also, it was

mentioned that conflicts can impact upon friendship and it would be better to avoid working with friends.

ILD1 *"When you do choose your group mates people will want to go with friends and all those things, but so many things can happen. So many things can happen that can go wrong but if you go and you work with people you're not used to, you may be meeting them for the first time... But now you're working with them and you have no choice, I think you're going to put your best foot forward ... more so now being that you didn't choose your group mates that they were chose for you. I prefer it when lecturers do choose."*

Another participant explained being allocated to the group can make the group formation easier as one does not need to exclude anyone:

ILE2: *"I prefer not having to... I prefer not choosing because I always find you always end up excluding someone at the expense of someone else and it can get quite political. So if someone chooses for you, it makes the whole thing easier and you don't have to mess around …it's ended up being a multicultural group has been chosen. So I think… chosen for us, so I just prefer it like that."*

Even though the majority of the participants stated they were happy being allocated to their groups, later in the interview when they were asked about their preference in choosing group mates, almost everyone said they would rather choose their own group mates and work with people they know or had worked with before.

4.3.1.2.6. Sitting next to each other

As mentioned before, mutual familiarity before the group work assignment had a positive impact on the students' experience. Students mentioned that they felt more relaxed and happy when they realised they would be working with others that they were already sitting next to and conversing with.

ILC2: *"I was so happy that I was assigned the people that I was because we were already sitting next to each other and had built a rapport, so it was good."*

Regarding group formation, it seems the students prefer to have one element which they are familiar with, like being from the same country, speaking the same language, knowing their group members beforehand, etc. They would rather stay close to their comfort zone and the data suggests students are less likely to be willing to experience something completely new.

In the next section, findings regarding the impact of particular group members on students' group work experience will be discussed.

4.3.2.   GROUP MEMBERS

After forming the groups, students had the opportunity to get to know each other and started working on in-classroom tasks (and later) on their poster. The data shows that the students and their group mates' personality, past experience, age, and academic attitude all impact upon the way students approach group work.

In this section, the findings regarding student characteristics and identity and the resulting impact on students' performance and experience of group work will be explained.

4.3.2.1.   AGE

The data suggests mature students are less likely to enjoy group projects which involve making something by hand such as a poster. The majority of mature students noted they did not enjoy working on the poster and indeed, found the task to be childish. It was also felt that a presentation could have been more appropriate for this purpose. Findings regarding the task and task design will be discussed later in this chapter 4.3.7.

It also appears that those students with a gap of several years between their undergraduate and postgraduate studies possess significantly different perceptions towards higher education compared with those taking no or little gap; these can be manifested in a negative attitude towards the task.

These two quotes demonstrate participants' feelings and expectations:

ILB2: *"after the initial feelings of 'well this is silly' or the apprehension of meeting new people and being able to relate, it became a lot easier..... I think ILB1 and I thought in the first place that making a poster was a little silly."*

ILC2: *"I felt insulted and like I could have been doing other work. It's better than spending 3 hours doing assignments with groups that know it's not going to be assessed...I mean PowerPoint slides are visual as well, ..."*

4.3.2.2. PAST EXPERIENCE

The data suggests the individual's overall view toward group work and the task could have a direct link with students' past experience. Past experience here involves their work experience, previous education, group work experience or (as mentioned above) life experience.

The data revealed students who have worked before and returned to university are more likely to have higher expectations and a stricter mind-set regarding the programme of study for their course and what the university should offer. This includes the activities and tasks given in the classroom in addition to the group work. The outlook of these students affects the younger individuals in the group who have little or no work experience; within the group they are less likely to put their opinion forward as they think other group members with more experience may know more. Of course, not putting one's opinion forward could be the result of poor English, lack of self-confidence or cultural differences.

KMA1: *"because at first I came up with an idea and said 'if you have any question or any idea you think is appropriate for to our poster, poster just let me know, because I just propose this idea, we don't need to use this idea but just my idea'. But most of them just said 'ok' that's it"*

ILA2: *"because I've seen many posters, like in previous groups I've seen that people normally draw trees so I thought you know go with it, yeah. (Laughs)... no we were fine with it.[no one put their idea forward]"*

ILF1: *"Not really, sort of democratic I guess. Me and ILF2 spoke more, we definitely spoke more in fact."* ILF1 explains how they arranged their meetings and mentioned

"Me and ILF2 did. We asked them if it was ok, obviously."

One of the participants explicitly described her feelings when she was given the task:

ILC2: *"And then that one lecture, I'm like 'oh this is what librarians do with this'. First of all, I'm not going to be a librarian, second of all that world is ending, if not has ended so why are we having this conversation. To be treated, I felt like I was 12 or 13! I started using internet, I was 12 when I got …. I may see it from a different perspective, but there are students who see it the same way"*

Also students who had done their pervious degrees in a different educational system had different expectation:

ILD2: *"the poster is not so helpful to the module. It's just like a new experience and doesn't… because well in China if you doing a Master degree we won't do that. Just probably write essays or give presentation of something, we don't do this poster thing."*

However past experience does not only affect the students' performance in a negative way. When students can use their skills to manage a group or do the task it actually works for the group:

One of the participants explained how his experience as a teacher affected the way he approached the group work:

ILB2: *"At first though, my position is 'let's get it done, let's get it finished, I want to be ahead'. I suppose in a sense that's how I work. As a teacher you've to be ahead of the game and prepared…. I believe that if you've got a task, you just get it done and that's it. That's also partly because of my experience in chairing and leading"*

According to the data, when international students were working with home students in the group they also considered their experience when dividing responsibilities, such as 'letting' the other person to be the leader.

ILB1: *"he worked in primary schools which obviously had a hands on you know kind of art thing as part of the classes and began making suggestions with the great*

enthusiasm and I think yes both of them… there was 4 in the group- myself and the mature students who were English and two Chinese students (whispering I can't remember their name) and um yeah I think I let on the ground that he's got a more visual imagination than me let him take the role". Later he also added that being a mature home student, certain students may assume the leader role by default:

ILB1: *"I think the dynamic of the group is quite significant in as much as being a mature student and a native speaker of English, it's easy to take on a role by default. I let ILB2 take the lead with this poster, So I hung back in comparison with the other group work I've done…. It might be because of his character - he does things and he's proactive and willing to get involved which I think is because of his career."*

Regarding communicating with international students, ILB1 related how his teaching experience helped him to have better communication with his international group mates: *"The Chinese lad had ideas about what he was going to do which were far too grand and far too complex and I got the impression that there was a bit of a communication difficulty which didn't strike me that strongly, possibly because I come from a teaching background so I've worked with people whose language isn't English."*

These experiences and expectations can also encourage pre-judgment and stereotyping which can impact upon students' view towards the course, the module or even their group mates. This also impacts on how students choose their group mates.

The data revealed that by assigning students to their groups, these preconceptions and expectations can be challenged and also this could help students to change their views.

ILC2 explained how her Chinese group mate changed her previous perceptions: *"I thought I would be isolated, that it would be difficult to communicate. From what I saw everyone was in a cluster, so that's how I thought it would carry on. But with her (Chinese group mate) I ignored all of that because as young as she is, her understanding of things, very mature. She kinda meshed well with the group."*

Another participant also talked about his view towards Chinese students before the group work:

ILA1: "It's terribly stereotypical, but I assumed all Chinese students would work terribly hard all the time, which they don't."

In contrast, another participant who had previously held negative views towards Chinese students explained how his view was challenged and changed during the group activity:

KMA2: *"But the guy I was working with was exceptional. It was later I found out Chinese people are smart and the exception to that rule are the ones in Finland; for 5 years I just assumed they are not too smart with a few exceptions, but then when I got here to study I realised if you can afford that much to study, it means you're very smart. Like the other one in my group KMA3 (called by her English name), very young very smart, and when I compare her to our mates in Finland it was two different worlds…. Yes he did (change the perception) because he was the first Chinese person I worked with after Finland. Well, I worked with a few of them in Finland also and I felt they were the exception because we had lots of Chinese people in that school and 80% of them were just lazy, you give them an assignment and return it they copy and paste so bad, they copy and paste and the bookmarks and the website is still there."*

Past experience also can help students to communicate with each other and promote mutual understanding; for example, ILB1's experience as an English teacher meant he was able to explain concepts, phenomena, phrases, etc. to international students and even though misunderstanding still existed, it seemed this helped. In ILA1's case, his experience of teaching English in another country meant he had some appreciation of the difficulties for international students.

Or ILC1 mentioned: *"First time I met ILC2 I feel she is very kind girl and she speak slowly for me and I told her about that I said that you English is very suitable for me because if you speak very quickly I could not understand you she told me that she has some relatives who are foreigner so she really practiced it I find it happy."*

4.3.2.3.   ACADEMIC ATTITUDES

The data revealed that the academic attitudes of students have a direct impact upon their group performance and group experience, this also impacts on other students' experience as well. Students tended to adopt different approaches depending on the nature of the group task – for example, they acted differently on occasions when the activity was assessed, compared with when it was not (this cussed in the cross-case analysis section 6.5).

The data suggests participants could get frustrated while working with others who have academic attitudes which contrast with their own; for example, those students who leave the work until the last minute frustrated their group mates by doing this.

KMA1 : *"because I assumed my members were willing to get more info to this group work. But always have some members they don't want to do anything and always absent from our meetings."*

ILA1 explained how his approach was different to that of the other group members and he resultantly had to do the majority of the work:

ILA1: *"Others would add to it, but it was always me who would put it up. The way I work is that I get very stressed about deadlines, I like to start early, but I feel the other two didn't work like that. So I was like 'right, we have to have a blog,... It was the same with the blogs as well, I'd be the one to put the blog past up and maybe someone would post something up and add something to it, but the other two didn't seem"*

ILB2 expresses his expectations regarding the academic attitudes of others: *"I hate being unprepared and I hate sounding big-headed because I don't mean to at all, but I like to have ideas on the table which can be either criticised or modified or rejected, but at least there's something there."*

However, ILB1 mentioned he did not take the poster seriously as it wasn't assessed. As a result, he took a more relaxed approach to the task and how he tried to persuade ILB2 to invest less effort into the poster:

"I remember thinking that this poster does not require as much effort as much work as is going into it, y'know it's only a poster, it's not that big a deal ad chatting with ILB2 at some stage."

ILB2 described ILB1's approach: *"ILB1 was sort of playing devil's advocate. His role was to partially criticise me, and guide things together. But to be honest, one of the first things he said to me was, he told me a story about how to delegate. Yes, I know how to delegate, but that's not a submission that you don't do anything."*

However, this was not always frustrating - some students noted that their group mates' relaxed approach towards the task actually helped them to enjoy it and each other's company. Even when someone else took the lead, it was actually seen as a comforting act:

KMA2: *"after the first meeting I'd say he was leading and I enjoyed it because 'yes, let somebody do it now' I was very relieved I have a mind-set which is not very good, that if I'm not steering the boat it will capsize so I kind of have these trust issues with teamwork, so ok I don't trust this person to do his part well let's see the group and I feel 'ok [an example] may not do her part' I'll do my part and I'll do your part just as a plan B so when you don't do your part… yeah like I say it was based on my experience in Finland. I would have to do the other part there but here everybody does their work which is really good."*

ILD2 explained when they adopted a more laid-back approach it was treated less like work and more like a group of friends meeting: *"It was quite relaxed, it was just like make friends. It's not the group making or doing the same task sort of thing, it's just like we made friends, chat, eat something, just kind of…"*

4.3.2.4. PERSONALITY

Data shows that a student's personality is another element which influences their group work performance and experience. However, it should be also considered that personality could also potentially affect academic attitude (as was discussed in the literature review section 2.3.1.1.2). However here, personality is placed in a separate

category to highlight its importance as a factor and also to consider its differences from academic attitude.

The data revealed students tend to take different roles in a group which are mostly based on their characteristics and personalities. Participants explained the reason for taking (or not taking) the specific role in a group by referring to their character.

ILE2 explained her reasons for taking the leadership role as no one else volunteered and she felt she has to take the role even though taking the leadership role does not come to her naturally: *"no it kind of felt like ILE4 was the leader. I don't see myself as group… I don't really like taking the lead role in group; I'll do it, if no-one else does it.… Like for one of the groups there was no-one really kind of taking the lead with it and kind of pushing it through. And I thought if I don't kind of take the bull by the horns, no-one else is going to do it. So I did it anyway, but it's not really something that comes naturally to me. I don't really like doing it because I feel like a bull in a china shop and I feel like I might be standing on people's toes. So I kind of see myself as someone who can break the tasks down into separate areas and then kind of not give them to people, but help people see it in a way that might make more sense. …."*

ILA1 had similar reasons for taking the role: *"I like to think so because no one really cared about it. I said 'we've got to do something'."*

Also when a student needed to make more effort to communicate, it seems those with different personalities reacted differently: for example, ILE2 did not feel herself to be an effective communicator, so did not take a leadership role in her group. This role instead went to ILE4. ILE2 explains how ILE4's personality made them a great leader or guide:

ILE2: *"what you'd say was a leader naturally but she… because she was keeping the two sides together like in terms of communication, and negotiating with tasks and I'd say that she kind of added like a bit of light-heartedness to it as well. She doesn't take it too seriously and sometimes I do and it's useful to have that kind of influence. So I think just kind of by guidance, she was more of a … then everyone else kind of*

had, felt confident enough to bring their ideas forward, so it kind of felt like a group led project rather than someone who was leading and telling people what to do."

These different roles and personalities helped to keep the group together. ILC2 explains how ILC1's personality helped the group and perhaps changed the group dynamics *"I think she was very open and that probably made the difference in our group. … She was open to correction, so that made a huge difference…. ILC1 was kind of outspoken compared to a lot of the other Chinese students. … She was like a group voice whether she realised it or not."*

Also, it seems personality - like past experience - can impact on how students communicate with each other, how they help each other to understand the task, or even with language difficulties. ILE2 explained:

ILE2: *"sometimes I get impatient if I have to do it [explaining something] more than twice, Twice I can deal with, but when it's three or four, I just kind of get a bit impatient, which is not nice I know, but… ILE4 in her role was kind of like the mediator and that kind of thing… and I think ILE4 was good at kind of bringing me out of that shell and helping me work better. I don't see myself as against them or separate or anything like that."*

4.3.2.5. MOTIVATION

Data revealed that group members could impact on each other's motivations. If one or two members do not make an effort or contribute to the group task, it seems it becomes likely that the other members also give up and conversely, if one or more members push the other members and encourage them, then they are more likely to make more effort.

As the group task was unassessed, some students decided to contribute minimum effort. As a result, it highlighted the personality and differences in academic approach within a group.

Data shows that peer pressure can help to boost students' motivation to work hard, but at the same time, most students are likely to give up if the majority of group

mates are less serious regarding the task. However, students tended to act differently when the task is assessed.

ILA1 explained that he thought the group needed to produce something, so he motivated his fellow members and took the lead for both the blog posts and the poster.

ILA1: *"…I don't want to say because our poster was rubbish but it was more me saying what can we do to represent these pillars and we chose a tree….Yeah I like to think so because no one really cared about it. I said 'we've got to do something'…It was the same with the blogs as well, I'd be the one to put the blog past up and maybe someone would post something up and add something to it, but the other two didn't seem…no-one else would put it up if I didn't do it."*

However regarding KMA1's group, as the other group members contributed little effort, eventually he decided to reduce his own contribution.

KMA1: *"And also, the poster is not marked, right? Because one of my members she almost never showed up. …. because I really put a lot of effort at first, and I also just like if it's not marked, other people… and I think I know the purpose of organising the poster but it sometimes you know (sighs) the step it took from the situation, from my situation I just don't like it. Because it's not fair. Group work should be fair and the people should be responsible and try to get themselves more involved in these activities otherwise it's really pointless."*

He did try to motivate his group members, but in this case it did not work: *"I did, but they didn't do anything. They would rather stand somewhere else It's like 'I think you should do it, but if you don't, fine, we don't do it'. I just feel like how can people behave like this?"*

ILE1 explained his group's dynamics and how one member's lack of contribution affected this: *"you know, because, you know, the Chinese girl is… I think she is you know, a little bit lazy, yeah. But you know in the international group it also force her to you know to move. her also have lots of motivation to do the work yeah… you know the main thinking of the group for example if three of the guys are thinking we*

don't have to do it. When are we will do it you know, just before the deadline. Yeah. So this work won't move on and if three of them stay out, we will do it as soon as possible then the other guy will follow them yeah. And that is the atmosphere. "

In addition, students may be motivated to get more involved in group discussion and tasks for different reasons such as improving their English or making friends.

ILE1 explained how improving his English language skills is somehow more important than the assessment: *"because you know my motivation is to… one motivation is just practice my English, it doesn't… yeah… it has no… yeah, no relation for this mark assessed here"*

The relationship between an unassessed group activity and motivation will be discussed later in the task design section 4.3.7.1.

4.3.3.   LANGUAGE

Language is one of the most frequently discussed issues by the participants. The data shows that English language skills have a key role in almost every aspect of the students' group work experience and the group dynamics.

It was revealed that international students' English language skills is one of the biggest challenges in multicultural group work. However, the phenomenon is not limited to group work; it actually impacts upon how students make friends, get to know others, their contribution in the classroom, the social aspect of their university life, and their self-confidence.

KMB1 explained he would have found it more difficult to make conversation if he was the only English speaker in his group: *"Maybe to be honest if it had been three international students who I'd never spoken to before, maybe I would have felt a little bit more pressure. Whereas having another English person made it a little bit easier. Just because I find and it would even be the same for me I guess, if I went to study in another country, people are a little bit more shy to just to get to know you*

takes a little bit longer. They are not so confident speaking English, so yeah, having another English person I think just made it different."

Because the IL module was delivered in the first semester, international students (especially Chinese students) tend to struggle more in terms of the requirements of group work.

According to the data, issues related to language are categorised in four categories:

4.3.3.1. SWITCHING LANGUAGE

One of the most common issues in multicultural groups occurs when two or more international students from same country switch between English and their first language. However, this is not necessarily a problem as some students may not mind, but students may dislike it as they feel excluded. However, data shows the majority of students are tolerant toward this issue as no conflicts happened due to language switching.

ILE2 explained a situation in which he experienced language switching by his group mates and the reasons behind it: *"We were talking about, I can't remember what it was exactly but ILE1 (called by his English name) understood it and ILE3 (called by her English name) wasn't sure. So then he explained in Chinese and it was like 'oh right, yeah, I understand now.' So their English was fine, but it was when you explained something, you had to think about how to explain it in a different way but without kind of... Not dumbing down because that sounds terrible, but trying to explain it in a more simplified way."*

ILE1 explained the reasons for him to switch from English to Chinese: *"oh, yeah if we don't understand something we just... if it's hard to understand English and say that, we just use Chinese. Maybe it's more like err, let me check (checks dictionary) instinct, naturally. Like if you were dangerous or something or you shout suddenly, it's the first choice. So I think this because you don't have the idea to use English to expand all you want to say that and if you do that it makes things more terrible than before, (laughs) so we just use the easy way to do it"*

Data shows that international students tend to speak in their mother tongue mostly when they cannot understand the task, words or even a concept. As one of the participants mentioned, usually one member with better English or understanding of the topic explains the concept or word in their mother tongue for others.

When ILE1 was asked if his group mates minded the changing language he said:

"I remember one time we tried to speak Chinese to each other and then ILG3 just asked me 'what did you say?' and I translated Chinese to English and make her understand ….just curious (laughs) because when people use some language that others don't understand, if two people just talk about one other guy, maybe that guy can observe some aspects from their body language or their face and they will know! But we just talk about our group work and I think it's ok (laughs)"

The data shows there was insufficient communication between members to discover if the other members mind this language switching or not. It seems most international students assumed it is acceptable to switch and they do not explain the reason or ask for permission to alternate between languages.

As mentioned earlier, this issue did not create any conflicts.

4.3.3.2.   DIVISION IN THE GROUP

Speaking different languages by group members and also switching between languages did not cause conflicts but in some groups it caused division. This also could be the result of "having something in common" meaning students tended to get closer to a member who shared something with them such as similar course, country language or etc.

Participants mentioned when some group members spoke in another language, the group eventually divided in to two sub-groups: English speakers and non-English speakers.

It seems on some occasions there was a little attempt to bring the group together.

ILE2 explained she may have looked at and included ILE4 more than the other members as they both spoke English: *"When I was talking…It's funny you mention*

that. When I was talking I think I naturally looked probably more at ILE4 thinking about it now and then kind of you know… I probably did naturally look more towards ILE4. But I don't know whether that's because I knew her more because she's on my course, or because she speaks English."

ILF1 described a similar situation in her group and she emphasised language barrier made he uncomfortable to speak to non-native group members: *"When we first got in our group because … two of us were English for our first language and two were Chinese students and straight away we kind of fall into just talking to the other person who … like, it sounds really bad but it just me and ILF2 the other girl in my group … we're on the same course so we automatically had a split because of that and there was some language difficulties as well, so we would say something and we weren't always sure they understood, but they didn't say they didn't understand so I didn't feel comfortable about clarifying because I didn't want to sound patronising and they would talk together to work out what they were going to say so it just created a big split. And that was from the very beginning."*

ILB1 explained the division in his group by comparing it to all-native-speaker groups and highlighted that members having low level English language skills contributed to division in the groups: *"but there was the point at which I had assumed that there had been a division. There was a point at which I realized what I expected to happen, …I think at that point I lost some interest in it…I have a feeling now that there's less integration with the groups. For example with the Information Knowledge Management course, the 6002[KIM]. The fact that there's six of us and we're all native speakers of English, I was kind of surprised at that arrangement because it's quite a large group of 6 people. There's a couple of people who have made comments which suggest that the apparent level of interaction and engagement on the part of the Chinese students is not that high, which kind of surprises me."*

But in some groups, members managed to balance the group to some extent as they did not mention any division. However, the data revealed the presence of several in-classroom divisions such as English native speaking students, international students

and again with the two Librarianship students, IM or IS students and Chinese students, etc.

4.3.3.3.   COMMUNICATION

According to the data, the language barrier has a direct impact on the communication within the group. This is not limited to difficulties with communication between group members, it actually causes low self-confidence and as a result less or even no communication occurs.

The data shows that in the group activities, some of the Chinese students did not communicate with other non-Chinese speaking group members; this may have happened at the beginning of the group activities or continued throughout of the group work assignment. In the case of ILD2 (as mentioned earlier in 4.2.2.4) the student was nervous and unsure how to communicate with other group members. However later ILD2 explained in the second semester the situation changed and she did improve.

Sometimes due to communication problems, the process of developing an idea together was more difficult and complicated than necessary as group members did not fully understand each other.

ILB1 explained how language skills affected the group and the idea development: *"He [ILB2] seemed to think that the Chinese lad had ideas about what he [ILB2] was going to do which were far too grand and far too complex and I got the impression that there was a bit of a communication difficulty"* and about their female Chinese member he added: *"she hadn't got what was going on in the slightest. I think that was a linguistic thing, she hadn't got the instructions that had been given."*

In some groups, native English speaking students needed to explain their idea, concept, etc. in order to help international students understand it. As ILE2 mentioned, this needed patience which she did mentioned she did not have, but ILE4 took the role of explaining matters and keeping the group together. Also, as ILC2 mentioned, international students' personality was key to being able to correct

their English. She mentioned as ILC1 was open to correction, he was easier to work with and overcome the language barrier.

In ILB2's group ILB2 tended to interpret for their international student group members.

ILB1 explains: *"I have this memory of ILB2 explaining it very carefully a couple of times."* And ILB2 adds: *"Sometimes it took a little time to pull out what exactly the semantic meaning was. It took a little negotiation, because if I got the wrong concept, I would see puzzled faces and I'd think 'ok, this is not quite right so I'll try a different approach'. In a sense that why I'd ask questions, to get to exactly what was being meant, or draw something out, you know what I mean."*

ILG1 described how their native speaker group mates helped them to understand: *"… We just talked like…maybe she the British girl thought we could understand but if they used some normal language in that terms, we can't understand, but she will just translate to us or explain to us… yeah because we are a group."*

ILF1 noted that at the time that she did not consider she may need to speak slower or try to ensure her group mates were following her:

ILF1: *"I think the main issue is I sometimes when I'm stressed talk really fast and probably use a lot of slang it's probably quite a lot of my fault that they didn't understand and I shouldn't do that, … I don't think about that at the time when I'm doing it and I don't realise."*

ILA2 explained how difficult the communication was due to the language barrier and added how her previous experience of working with other Chinese students helped her to communicate and understand her Chinese group mates better: *"I had problems with the Chinese guy because in the beginning he couldn't really understand us and even when he used to tell us about something like, it was very tough for us to understand what he's speaking. But then I've worked with a lot of Chinese people before, I've got used to it and I've got that patience to listen to what he's trying to say. It was not that bad as I thought it would be."*

4.3.3.4.   MISUNDERSTANDING

TASK

When students were asked about the group task, it was apparent that a few individuals did not understand the task requirement fully. This could possibly be due to not paying attention or misunderstandings relating to language skills.

KMA1 mentioned that due to lack of attention he missed that the class activities and the poster were not assessed: *"Maybe I didn't read the module assessment clearly so I thought blogging and poster were all marked. Actually I later found out they aren't marked – it was kind of a relief actually, but I still feel like my team members don't want to do anything on the poster or the blog."*

Some students mentioned working with native speakers would minimise the misunderstanding as they would understand the task and can explain it.

ILG1 explained how working with native English speaking students is beneficial for him as he believed these individuals would help the everyone to understand the task and avoid misunderstandings: *"have different groups and then in Lecturer IL1's class all groups have two Chinese guys and two British girls and then we think maybe we can learn something from them because English is their first language and they can handle it and we understand what we are then asked So we can have lots of, maybe like benefits. Because they can do what we can't do and we can give our ideas to them and if they can understand they can transform it and make it better than us because we have some barriers: not only the English skills, but understand the culture or the true meanings of the English language. Maybe sometime we just misunderstand about our words. According to our English skills, they say it's a common thing to happen. So we think if we have two British girls we can do this job easily then."*

CONCEPT

When students started developing ideas for their poster, they had to devise a concept which made sense to all of them and which they could work on together.

This process proved to be difficult as some concepts were difficult to understand for international students and the terminology used was not familiar. As a result, the group had to compromise and adopt an idea which made sense to all. However, in one case the final product became a combination of different influences and was explained by one of the students as 'a weird concept'.

ILE2 explains the situations in which her group mates misunderstood or did not understand what they were asked to do due to the language barrier: *"No, their English wasn't as good on some occasions. I mean we had to work on a blog as well, together. So there were times when we were trying to put things into the blog like some of the shared group blog posts and we had to talk about our favourite kind of social media. So they were using some Chinese examples like Weever and that kind of thing; I don't think they quite understood what exactly to write, …so it was bit of kind of misunderstanding around that. But just in terms of communication as well, like especially when we were colouring in. We were talking about, I can't remember what it was exactly but ILE1 (called by his English name) understood it and ILE3 (called by her English name) wasn't sure."*

Even though these misunderstandings can be interpreted as language barrier, they may be also because of cultural differences such as students' understanding of copyright issues.

ILE2 explains a challenge they faced regarding copyright issues in which her group mates bought a picture from a Chinese website but were not able to ascertain whether use of the picture would be permissible; the two British members found it difficult to explain the issue to their Chinese group mates before finally deciding that they couldn't fix the problem themselves and had to ask the tutor to help: *"it was an issue and took quite a long time to get to the bottom of that. Lena had found a picture and we wanted to check whether we could use it, but the website was in a Chinese language I'm not sure which and we were trying to ask ILF3 and the other guy whether we could use it, if they could check the website and I don't think they understood what we were trying to say because it took quite a long time…We had to*

ask one of the tutors to help, because we'd been trying to explain it for quite a while and there was obviously no understanding between us of what was happening…"

As mentioned earlier, language had impact on different aspects of group work and as such when group members divided the task responsibilities, it did play a main role. This will be discussed in the group work contribution section 4.3.8.1.3. However, some of the English speaking students mentioned in the future when working with international students that they will make more effort to communicate with and help them:

When ILF1 was asked what she would change about the activity she replied: *"I'll change my approach, I just didn't think about it at the time but obviously it's so much harder [for them] and it's so much easier for me because most people are English, they speak English, I speak English. Where even if you think you're really good at English in the actual situation it's really different. I found that when I went to Spain and I thought I was alright at Spanish. So I should have paid more attention to that and be more understanding."*

4.3.4. NAME

During the interview, all participants were asked their group mates' names and which countries they are from. Most of the participants tended to refer to each other by their nationality even if they were from same country; this was not only the case for the IL group work but for all the group work assignments in which they were involved.

Also, data reveals that international students (especially Chinese students) may feel it necessary to choose an English or Western name. Those who attended an English speaking college in the UK before starting their Masters degree are given their English name by their 'teachers' (like KMC3) while others chose it themselves. Almost all of the Chinese students who participated in the research adopted a Western name and none mentioned that they did not like it; it seems they see this as something they need to do. Both Chinese participants and home students acknowledge in their interviews that using Western names would help these

students to integrate better. According to the data, it seems there was also little attempt to learn how to pronounce the Chinese name by home students.

ILA1 explained why he uses his group mate's English name: *"She's Chinese, yeah. That's her English name. I don't think I can't pronounce her Chinese name."*

ILE2 said: *"ILE1 (called by his English name) and ILE3 (called by her English name). They did tell me their Chinese names but I can't remember."*

And it seems what ILE2 mentioned is a general understanding by Chinese students as ILD2 said: *"Because it is so hard for them to remember my Chinese name I think, so."*

KMC3 explained how she got her name and why: *"Yeah because my original name is KMC3 and she couldn't remember Chinese student's name, yeah, to remember Chinese student's name, so she gave the students and it isn't my choice, it's my teacher's choice. Today you are KMC3 (called by her English name) and you will be KMC3 (called by her English name) forever."*

It seems Chinese students believed that by choosing English name they would blend better with other students.

KMC3 added "*I didn't have a preference to choose a particular name, I just wanted to mix with foreigners…*"

ILB1 was one of the participants who passionately explained why international students should choose English names and if they do not there is higher chance that home students will not remember their names: *"The fact that they both used English nicknames was significant. Neither of the Chinese students in information literacy made that concession or having a name which we were easily able to pronounce and remember."*

In addition to this it seems students referred to their group mates by their nationality even though they are able to pronounce their name, especially if they did not develop their relationship beyond the group work, i.e. when they do not develop friendships or socialise together. Most Chinese students referred to those students

who are not from China as 'foreigners'. However, they also referred to their Chinese group mates by their nationalities like "Chinese girl".

ILB1 identifies Chinese students by their nationality to clarify who he is talking about and emphasises gender to specify certain group mates: *"the Chinese students to go especially with creating the ideas. The girls especially covered other ideas and things we can do."*

ILE1 refers to his British group mates: *"So we maybe decide to yeah that the two English persons".* This is also seen with ILA2 calling ILA1 "British person"

ILA2 referred to both of her group mates by their nationalities: *"Not really. We were all good in our different things. Like I was a bit on the artistic, the English guy he was good in leading us you know? What needs to be done. The Chinese guy gave many good ideas…"*

Similarly, ILC1 introduced her group mates by their nationality: *"… ILC2 the American guy. And the local guy ILC3 she wasn't there.."*

None of the participants reflected that they needed to learn other members' real names or they would rather others to refer them by their real names.

4.3.5. FRIENDSHIP

Even though students were allocated to their groups from the beginning of the module and were asked to discuss various related subjects, the data revealed that excepting one group, none of the groups formed any friendships and none socialised out of the classroom. They did not exchange phone numbers or add each other on social networks such as Facebook. However, they all mentioned they politely acknowledge each other and if they are in the same lecture and module they are more likely to sit next to each other.

ILE2 explained their post-group work relationship was limited to only a polite acknowledgement of each other: *"No, not really, I mean I see them around, I see ILE1 (called by his English name) around and I see ILE3 (called by her English name) around and we kind of like nod at each other and say 'hello' but we don't… I think*

that's about it we don't like kind of speak….. Yeah we recognise each other, but we don't like say 'how are you?'… we don't… haven't really contacted each other much"

ILC1 explained why she likes to sit next to ILC2 as she feels comfortable and relaxed but their relationship was also limited to casual conversation in the classroom: *"but we know each other more. ILC2 and I both have ecommerce module so if in the lecture we see each other we sit together and discuss about the module. But with others I don't want to talk about it because I don't her maybe it's a little strange talking about the module with stranger."*

ILC2 pointed out that even they enjoyed the interaction during the group work, their relationship stayed limited: *"I remember we enjoyed each other's' company, we were laughing. Nothing in particular. We didn't hang out outside of class, but we had other courses with each other so we see each other all the time."*

This was not limited to Chinese students or even international ones but English speaking students did not stay in touch, such as KMA2: *"I know his name is [his name] but the other guy I don't remember his name, but we still see each other around and we still say hi to each other."*

It seemed on some occasions they did not form friendships due to different personalities or age difference ILA2: *"We don't meet outside lectures, but then when we meet during lectures we do say hi to each other. But I came across he's a very silent person, he likes to stay quiet. Even when he's with his Chinese friends during the lectures he's quiet…he has his own group, he stays with people who are his own age. Even when we communicate we don't have anything in common."* However, ILA1 mentioned: *"in terms of information literacy even though I would say the work produced wasn't particularly great but I'm friends with ILA2 and ILA3 to a certain extent and on Facebook, we send messages and stuff sometimes. That was nice and meeting new people's always interesting."* This also shows students had different definitions of friendship as ILA1 considered ILA2 his friend only because they still messaged each other sporadically.

However, ILD2 explained their friendship: "was quite relaxed, it was just like make friends. It's not the group making or doing the same task sort of thing, it's just like we made friends, chat, eat something, just kind of…" and she added: "Yeah. And… ILD1 and I are very close I think. Do you go out? Yeah. Shopping yeah"

None of the other participants worked together again, even ILD1 and ILD2. Only ILA3 ILB1 and ILB2 work together in another group work for KIM, however it was not solely due to their friendship rather being in an English speaking group. The reasons will be discussed in the KIM section 5.2.1.

4.3.6. LEARNING SPACE

One of the issues students raised is learning space, mostly in terms of the lecture setting. In this module, the classroom had two columns of tables: each group was sitting next to each other in a row and their row was allocated so they sat in same area almost every week. Each student had a computer in front of them and sometimes group members were asked to discuss a subject with the other groups, meaning those in front of or behind them; students were asked to discuss different subjects within their groups. Overall, this setting was problematic according to participants - they found it difficult within the linear setting to involve all of the group members in the discussion, as it was difficult to form a circle. Also, they mostly seemed to speak to the student next to them. And according to the observation, students sat in a same place in their row every week.

ILB2 found it difficult to include all of the group members in the discussion because of the layout: *"I don't think the room helps either, because of the layout. We we're sat round this table it's far easier, but when you're sat round computers and the linear layout of the PCs, it becomes very difficult to collaborate, it's not the most conducive of atmospheres. It became a question of me saying 'what do you think?' trying to incorporate their ideas, and then articulating it in a blog together."*

KMC1: *"I don't think it really helps the group to have… when you've got people sitting facing computers and asking them to do computer based tasks… I think it makes the*

conversation a little bit more difficult to flow purely because of everybody sitting in a line. You haven't got the thing where you're sort of sitting where you can see each other and you know. We did end up managing very well." She added if she could change anything about the module it would be the room and she explained: *"stop us getting in a line. Because that's the other thing about that room, it was so big; people were so far away from Lecturer IL1 when she was speaking or Lecturer IL2 when he was lecturing. And people at the other end of the room you know if there's friends sitting together or near to each other it's just snigger, snigger, chat, chat, chat, you know, distracting and annoying. So yeah, but that's just diverting."*

When the poster task was introduced to students, they were taken to LocationA and sat on the floor with their group to discuss ideas and start making the poster. KMC1 believed if students had a specific space booked instead of LocationA it would have worked better for them:

"we physically had space as in floor space but it was literally squatting on the floor to do things and it wasn't very… that maybe leant a sensible… well it's all just kind of something you'd do like at primary school you know. Just scribble it all out, who cares, you know. Whereas you know if they'd been, 'ok we've got these rooms set up and you can go and use these rooms to put the work together,'"

4.3.7.　GROUP TASK DESIGN AND MODULE DESIGN

The data suggests most students did not like the task they were asked to do, citing reasons such as not wishing to create something by hand, their being less accomplished at art, etc. Some students also questioned the point of doing a task which is unassessed and some thought the aim of the task was not very obvious or relevant for them.

4.3.7.1.   TASK DESIGN

It seems for some students the task was unclear at the beginning and they did not understand what they were asked to do.

KMB2 experienced difficulties understanding the task and its purpose: *"Well, first of all I think the question was a bit vague. It was hard to actually understand what was the purpose of the question when it's important for our work."*

Once they understood the task, it still appeared they had difficulties to appreciate its aims and how these relate to their course learning objectives. Students mentioned they wanted activities, which directly link to the final assignment.

KMB2 explained he could not understand the aim of the assignments and how this specific task was linked to the module aims and even the course: *"I kind of like the idea that we have to force ourselves to think about what we're going to do after the graduation and what are the skills that we are going to need for that work. But, at the same time I felt that these are our dreams,…. But the worst thing maybe would be it was actually for me maybe hard to connect that exercise for the whole module… and for the whole course...Yes that would be if the course… if the exercise would actually support the final paper somehow, then I would see the point that it's preparing us for the final paper."*

ILE2 explained she did not see how the task would help her in her future career. Two elements are important for her in every assignments: *"….Whether it's marked and whether it's going to be useful to me in a future career."*

ILA2 added the skills she attained during the task were not transferable: *"…I should get something out of it. I know I'm learning, I've achieved many skills but then I can't show it down anywhere"*

But student uncertainty regarding the task was not limited to the aims, some of the students had problems with the way the way they were asked to present their work. As mentioned previously, there was resistance towards making a physical artefact due to various reasons such as seeing it as a childish activity, not professional, etc.

These reactions are derived from students' past experience, expectations and personalities.

ILC2 explained that she found the task shallow and unprofessional: *"Maybe if we could present it in a different way, maybe if it was more in-depth perhaps...The way it was presented, it would have been worse if it were assessed. If it were an assessed assignment and presented with a different outline then I can say different, but as is, I would've been even more furious...I would take away the whole pictorial piece, because it can be a very serious issue. You can be creative; I mean power point slides are visual as well, the whole information mapping deal, that makes sense….In the end it was just a waste of time because the lectures weren't connected."*

Students seemingly need highly clear understandings of the task and how it relates to their future career, otherwise they potentially do not engage. The data showed that the majority of students do not make the link between the task and real life/their future career themselves and they expect the academic staff to clarify it for them.

4.3.7.2.   UNASSESSED TASK

The fact that the task was unassessed had a major impact on the way students performed and reacted to the task. Some, like ILC2 (in the quote above) called it a 'waste of time'.

According to these students, if the assignment is not assessed they do not see a reason to invest significant effort to complete the task. As such, they would rather do the minimum and save time.

ILC2 felt very strongly about the poster: *"But coming in I felt insulted and like I could have been doing other work. It's better than spending three hours doing assignments with groups that know it's not going to be assessed"*

KMB1 mentioned as the task was not assessed they did not feel the need to make significant effort: *"it wasn't a marked piece of work, so our view was, the simpler the better."*

KMB1 elaborates: *"I mean the idea was kind of, I just suggested something simple and something we could do and everyone was like 'oh yeah.' Whereas I think if it was an assessed piece of work, you'd have a longer length of time discussing potential ideas and come up with maybe two or three ideas and then think which one's the best. Yeah, I think the whole approach to it would have been… we'd have taken it a lot more seriously."*

KMB1 explained the reason behind their decision and he highlights unassessed task was less important as it was at the same time as another assessed assignment which was very time consuming and difficult: *"I don't know, the only thing I can… as a football fan, I'm kind of thinking like a proper match that counts in a competition and a friendly match. It's never the same. You've never got that, it's just not as important. And I think in an environment where you know we had loads of other bits of work we were doing, MINICASE module which was an absolute nightmare, I can't even describe that. You know, when you've got that going on…it is hard to find the same motivation to do something that's not assessed."*

ILB1 mentioned he was unsure how he would benefit from the activity: *"I have seen information posters being used hmm very, very well mmm since this project took place but when it first happened it was kind of using posters was quite new to me. And I was a little bit sceptical about its kind of value so my kind of input was not letting things get too complex … that wasn't going to be assessed or anything. That was mmm yeah I remember thinking that this poster does not require as much effort."*

It seems for some students that the unassessed nature of the task was a reason to not push themselves to do something innovative. ILA1 did have some ideas but did not try to create the poster by cutting paper, as it was not assessed.

ILA1: *"I had ideas how I wanted to do it, I bought lots of card but I'm rubbish at cutting it out, I should look like fruit but it looked awful so I just said 'screw this, it's not assessed!"*

He explained that due to the generally-held attitude towards the poster, none of the students took it very seriously as it was not marked. He explains:

ILA1: *"For me when it's not assessed I'm more relaxed and am more creative, I'm not under pressure. I noticed though a lot of students didn't put much effort in even though it had a good aim... because it wasn't marked, no-one really cared about it so the group work wasn't exactly great for that one. We did something very basic so then we can forget about it."*

ILA2, ILA1's group mate confirmed ILA1's view however mentioned she was disappointed when she saw other posters: *"since I knew it was not an assessed poster, I didn't give my 100% to it and yeah I thought I was really good at drawing but after seeing that poster I was a bit disappointed!"*

KMB2 and ILC1 also pointed out similar reasons for not making much effort in the poster activity.

But KMA1 believed student's lack of effort was not due to the unassessed task, but their personalities.

KMA1: *"Hmm even if the poster is marked it would have less impact for the performance. Even yeah, even they have some impact for our performance at some level but I think it's not hard to involve everyone because those people who care less still care."*

As shown in KMA3's view, her group would have produced something acceptable anyway as there was an exhibition and they expected to be judged by their poster. She also explained that for Chinese students it is more likely to make more effort for assessed assignments.

KMA3: *"I guess so, hmmm I mean yeah probably but what do we do about that because there is an exhibition later on and we embarrass ourselves at that (laughs). But yeah students – I don't know about other cultures - but from China if you know your work is going to be marked you take it much more serious."*

ILD3 wanted to invest more effort, but her group mates believed it was unnecessary. She did use the word 'argument' but during further dialogue with her, she made it clear she meant discussion.

ILD3: *"Yeah... the work because the thing that making the poster is not actually assessed. So, some girl said like it was not very important job. In my case, I think every work is quite important, so I put the thing...in the work but some girls didn't. It was bit argument. Some girls' say don't think it's very important."*

Her group mate ILD2 explained: *"oh, actually we didn't take it so seriously, because the prize is only the chocolate, it was not that we got marked."*

KMA2: *"Personally yes, I'm like that and you need some kind of reward system if you come to me in an e-commerce class and say… angel brought this person I think from Etsy they asked us to look at the website analyse it and write up something we feel and I asked her will this be assessed and she said no. She said 'there is a reward' by that point in time I was asking would the reward affect my grading in any system. She said no and I couldn't be bothered if the reward is an iPhone 5 or a Nokia Lumia if it doesn't add any value to my course grades. I didn't care so I didn't do it."*

However, not all students produced simple posters - there were students who made considerable effort and produced more complicated posters. ILC2 believed this task was more suitable for the Librarianship students:

"I just felt in that particular course what we were asked was very elementary, not helpful at all. I know the library students enjoyed it very much and that's awesome, but in business…yeah."

Even though almost everyone mentioned they did not put 100% effort in the poster activity due to it being unassessed, when asked what they would change about the activity or their approach to it, the majority of participants stated they would make more effort.

ILA1: *"so it has to be something visual' well it wasn't assessed but we could've put some effort in..."*

4.3.7.3. TIME WASTING

As the assignment was unassessed it was perceived as a waste of time, which is a reason for the students to not invest much effort in it. As ILE2 mentioned: *"if I'm completely honest the poster kind of seems like almost a waste of time to me because it wasn't graded and I know that's kind of a strategic way of thinking about it but I had… Obviously you got the assessment and everything else so I think I was getting a bit kind of negative at that point."*

According to the data and as ILE2 mentioned, having other assessed assignments to work on at the same time made the poster activity less important.

4.3.7.4. HELP AND SUPPORT

According to the data, the view of academic staff towards the task could have a direct impact on the students' view, their motivation and consequently, on their performance.

KMA1 explained that his group was missing one member and raised it with his tutor; according to KMA1, the tutor responded: *"Tutor1 just told me 'if she still absent from your meeting, just let me know' but I need to let you know the poster and piece is not marked."*

He went on to explain how this impact in their performance:

"Yes because I think if Tutor1 would take more aggressive steps and tried to warn or try to get us together and tell us the purpose or give some people have signs the rest of them know the situation they are facing now. And I think the situation would be better… I dunno, it's just weird for me."

And ILC2 had somehow the opposite experience - she did not enjoy the course, but felt her tutor [different tutor] helped her to cope better.

ILC2: *"Yes he did. He was very supportive. A lot of support my frustration was with the course and the assignment."*

However, most students mentioned if they get the chance to do the task again they would make more effort to produce a better poster even though it is unassessed.

ILA2: *"I would actually re-make the poster again and think differently. We just took a very vague idea and put it on the poster. After looking at others, they made a storyline and were really good. I think we could have done something more creative and innovative."*

4.3.8.   CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROUP WORK

4.3.8.1.   GROUP PERFORMANCE

4.3.8.1.1.   PUTTING THEIR IDEA FORWARD

As mentioned earlier, international students did not significantly contribute in some of the multicultural groups. This can be due to a lack of understanding of the task, English language skills or the individual's personality and academic approach. However, in other groups they were actively involved and helped to develop key ideas. It seems they may not suggest the initial idea, but they did develop it and helped to create it.

ILA1 explained that his Chinese group mate did not put ideas forward but did help with the poster: *"He wrote one of the things for the pillars, I think he wrote a couple, but I had to re-write them correcting the English he did contribute his thoughts to that."*

However, ILA2 did not believe this, as in her interview she mentioned: "The Chinese guy gave many good ideas. So we all were leaders in our own things." But she did not say exactly what idea came from him.

In KMB1's group the idea came from KMB1 and [another student's name] but they made the poster all together.

KMB1: *"But it wasn't sort of input from everybody. So I think it was either me or [another student's name] that had the idea and we just sort of said and everyone agreed it sounds okay, so that's what we went with... We all got together and like drew the different bits, cut the different bits out and that all happened in that one meeting....actually doing the thing on the day when we done it, yeah everybody was there, everybody participated... Maybe got the impression that the other two just*

went along with it. I don't know, I'm not sure whether they'd have had the confidence to have said actually I think we should do this or that. But in terms of actually communicating."

ILE2 explained that in her group they developed their idea together but ILE3 proposed the idea of how to illustrate their future careers and ILE3 accepted to do the drawing, as she was better than others. It seems they all worked together to produce their poster:

"So we kind of thought about it for a while and it was my idea I think to kind of come up with a train kind of thing. …Then we kind of thought about I think it was ILE3 (called by her English name) actually that came up with having the landmarks, representing the different pillars. So although it was kind of my idea to begin with, it was very much input from everyone… like from ILE3 (called by her English name) and ILE1 (called by his English name) and ILE4 about how it would look on the paper. … and ILE3 (called by her English name) said she was quite good at drawing so she went away and drew it up and bought it back and it was really good. They were quite keen to get involved with it, even though it took them time. And they even put some extra stuff on it as well I think. Because we'd completed all the ones Lecturer IL1 had set us and I think ILE1 (called by his English name) put a few more bits and pieces on there that were related"

4.3.8.1.2.   HAVING ANOTHER ASSIGNMENT

Another element, which had impact on group performance, was other assignments. As discussed earlier, the assignment was unassessed and as such was generally taken lightly by students, who would prioritise other assignments that they had at the same time.

ILC2 explains even though she enjoyed her group mates' company, still she believed other assignments were more important: *"I liked my group, we had fun, but as I said to them I can't believe I'm spending time doing this when with MINICASE and things I had assignments, I could work on that and other kinds of things."*

Or ILB1 mentioned that he forgot where their meeting was and explained he had

deadlines and was thinking the poster doesn't need so much effort: *"I was stressed. I forgotten why, there must've been a deadline or something. I remember thinking that this poster does not require as much effort."*

4.3.8.1.3.   DIVIDING RESPONSIBILITIES

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

Data suggested most groups preferred to divide the responsibilities between themselves rather than working on the poster all together. Meaning in general the majority of groups adopted a cooperative approach.

ILB1: *"And then it was just a question of tweaking it and we divided it into sort of… I was supposed to look at some on images, ILB2 was putting in some text, the Chinese lad was finding other images, there was a division of roles. I think we met all together maybe three times."*

ILD3, ILF1,ILA2 confirmed they worked more collaboratively in their group as well.

ILF1 explained how by working cooperatively they managed to illustrate different points of view: *"….that was interesting as we all had very different ideas about what we thought we were supposed to put."*

When ILA1 was asked if everyone contributed equally - as he mentioned his Chinese group mate did not put his own ideas forward and ILA2 also explained the process in terms which suggested he did not contribute as much - he said: *"Yes given what little work any of us put into the poster yeah."*

ILC2 and ILC1 explained they worked collaboratively - even though ILC3 had missed some of the meetings, it was fine with them. ILC1: *"first time in the LocationA we only have me and ILC2, ILC2 the American guy. And the local guy ILC3 she wasn't there she had some work to do maybe so she didn't come so me and ILC2 we decide topic."*

AVOIDING PRESENTATION

According to participants, most international students preferred to avoid answering questions regarding their poster and they mentioned they did not feel confident

with their English skills to answer the questions. As mentioned before, language plays a main role in students' contribution in a multicultural group. As such, when members were dividing the time between themselves to stand next to their poster and answer the questions, most international students avoided the questions section due to their English skills or they encouraged someone with better English skills to do it.

ILE1 explained how they decided it would be better if the British group members explain the poster as this would mean they need not be concerned by language barriers: *"I think it's because I'm not good at speaking, so maybe I can't to explain the whole entire poster, yeah. So we maybe decide to yeah that the two English persons, the British person to you know, to introduce our work …. also because when they will stand here for a long time, we move… we move chair for them and let them sit down as well, yeah."*

ILA2 mentioned they decided to assign ILA1 to answer questions as he was a native speaker: *"we er decided on giving timeslots, like the first time since the judges were supposed to come in so we thought because ILA1 was much more confident about the poster."*

KMA1 felt that as he did most of the work related to the poster it was unfair to leave him to explain the poster as well but he felt his group members wanted him to explain the poster as his English was better than theirs:

"because I just feel like… I only stood in front of my poster was when Lecturer IL1 and Tutor1 came to the poster and I explained to them. The rest of the time I was just looking at somebody else's poster because I think I have already done everything in the… Also sometimes I feel like some of my members are really irresponsible because for our exhibition day we need to have some people staying in the front to explain the poster but because I was kind of like leading the group and I think I have already done so many things ….they assume my English is better than the rest of the guys so they all still want me to do the presentation, standing in front of the poster to explain everything to everyone and I just kinda, uh, tired in this situation."

In similar way ILD1 had to help her group mates with the question even though she believed she did her part:

ILD1: *"I didn't really think about that but I think it was okay for at least... not including myself, the other three girls. I think at least for two of them it was okay. One of them I think she may have felt a bit not confident standing next to the poster but she did.. Looking back, you know, she stood at the poster for the shortest time … I was standing there just to see and all. I didn't mean to answer questions. I was going to be like an observer just to see how people are reacting and how the voting is going. I think somebody asked a question and the person wasn't Chinese 'because if they were Chinese they'd speak their language together, the Mandarin together. The person wasn't Chinese and the person asked in English and I think, actually, it was a lecturer that asked. She looked at me to sort of help her out and I didn't want to because we all had our part to play. We all had our turn in standing there and answering questions but then she couldn't so I answered the question and explained everything. Then the lecturer did move on."*

During the exhibition in 2013-2014 it was observed that the majority of Chinese students gathered in a corner speaking in Chinese. When participants were asked about this it seemed it was a natural act for them and they did not feel they need to socialise with others.

4.3.9.   CULTURE

On a few occasion students had some cultural misunderstanding or difficulties in their group, however none of these caused serious conflicts.

In the case of ILF1's group, two Chinese members bought a background image from a Chinese website and they had some misunderstanding regarding the copyright issue. ILF1 explained in section 4.3.3.4:

Or as different social networks are used in China, when the students were asked to write about their favourite social network some of them had difficulties

understanding each other. ILE2 mentioned in section 4.3.3.4.

And ILB1 explained that they were surprised when their Chinese group mates told them directly that she was on her period and she cannot attend the meeting*: "I can't say that she didn't have much of a role, but I think it was more because she wasn't feeling well. There was a kind of a cultural thing which was a little bit delicate because I think she emailed ILB2 that she wouldn't be coming and she explained that this health issue was a period and he was surprised to hear that. I don't remember what exactly she did after that."*

ILE1 explained why he thought it may be difficult for Chinese students to work in groups:

"Er, according to what we have and what we be teached and then we use our knowledge to make something just like…but maybe some Chinese guys like this but most of use the knowledge from the book and the teacher they told us how to do it. Like we're just set in the house and we can't run out the house because we just have the fixed idea. In my country we don't have enough opportunities to do group work like this, we only do individual work. Maybe with individual work I have my idea and they have their idea so maybe we have conflict with each other or I don't agree with him and he don't agree with me so it's hard to do the group work. Maybe it's just a culture problem or an education problems, but the British people do this work since they were child, they do this maybe at primary school. They can handle it and innovative and have many creative ideas. Maybe it's like evolution."

4.3.10. GROUP WORK EXPERIENCE

When participants were asked if they had any conflicts or arguments, the majority mentioned they had a good group work experience and did not experience any major disagreements. As mentioned above, there were some misunderstanding or communication difficulties, however none of these issues caused serious conflicts.

When ILG1 was asked what he would change regarding the group work he replied: *"Err nothing to change, because we do it well"* and he added he had positive experience.

ILE2 mentioned: *"I think it was that everyone was very happy to just get on with their part kind of thing and it was easy, no one was slacking, or no one was… everyone was clear they had to do it by a certain time and it was just nice to not have to worry about group work."*

Students suggested the fact that the unassessed nature of the group task helped them to feel more relaxed and in some groups (like ILC1 and ILC2) when a group member was not present at some of the meetings it did not cause arguments. But as was discussed in the task design section (4.3.7.1), students were unhappy that the activity was not assessed nor directly related to their future career. As such, it can be said that even though that some did not enjoy the task but the group work in general was a positive experience.

4.3.11. MEETING

The majority of groups met less than four times.

ILE2: *"We met in here a couple of times mainly because everyone knew where it was and I think that's it actually. I think we only met in here (iSpace), because..."*

ILB1: *"I think we met three times but I can only remember two meetings off hand."*

The majority of groups met in the iSpace and Information Commons or in the lecture room.

ILF1: *"We met here, in the iSchool Space. I think we always met here, in fact. It's useful."*

ILA1: "We met for the lecture, we talked about it, then we met again and drew a lovely picture of a tree (laughs) then we met beforehand to put it together"

Some of the students forgot where or when the meetings where. This did not cause any argument or conflicts.

ILF1: *"(laughs) yeah they went somewhere else."*

ILB1 explained he could not find the room as he was stressed for other assignments: *"The second time we met I was late because I couldn't find the room. I was stressed. I forgotten why, there must've been a deadline or something."*

4.3.12. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

In addition to meeting every week during lectures, some groups used different communication tools to stay in touch outside the lecture. Most groups used email and Google Docs. Almost none of the students mentioned using Facebook, Twitter or the discussion board on Blackboard. This (as some of them mentioned) could be because Chinese students do not use Facebook or Twitter in China.

KMA3: *"but you don't use Facebook in China"*

ILE2 mentioned they tried to use a free mobile chatting App but at the end they did not: *"I'm not sure, I'm not sure… I don't… I'm not sure, they didn't [Have Facebook or Twitter]… they added us to… oh yeah, they tried to get us down… they made us download this App called WeChat and add them on that. Yeah, but we didn't use it. …But it was all kind of by email or on the Google Doc. Everyone was quite happy with that, set up I think. We saw each other once a week, I think that was kind of enough. Because we spoke to each other even if it was like 5 or 10 minutes about what we'd done in the lecture and that was enough really."*

KMA2: *"No no no we were thinking about the poster for a long time. We had a meeting and I said my group was I thought it was different. We were always meeting and discussing on google, we had meetings. Did we have a Facebook group? No but we meetings all the time and exchange communications through email"*

4.3.13. DIVISION IN THE CLASS

According to the data there were different layers of division in the class. Students mentioned three main groups: English speakers, Chinese, and Librarianship students. Even though Librarianship students did speak to native English speaking students, it seems there was little integration between these three groups.

ILG1: *"so we in common just like the Chinese people just work with Chinese people and make friends with Chinese people and British just make friends to the British guys."*

KMA1, as an international student and Taiwanese national, mentioned: *"it was the first few classes, because we have Librarianship and IM students merged in these classes so I think we have so many British people in the class, but how come they stay in the same group?"*

Most IM students noticed that Librarianship students were not really willing to mix with other students.

ILC2 as international and English speaker students said: *"I feel that the librarian section of the students was a bit sheltered, very enthusiastic about libraries, but I don't think aware of how the outside world uses the library and so I felt like it was like a false start for them."*

KMA2 as international and English speaking student: *"Librarianship is mostly English people. The girls in front of me, the librarians I call them the 'type of' girls because they're always together. They're always together."*

Data also suggest that English speakers mostly formed their own group and excluded non-native speakers. And also non-native speakers preferred to stay together.

ILA1 explained why he spent more time with English speakers: *"Once you get to know people obviously that changes but that's the reason I got to know ILB2 and ILB1 and people first because they were a group of people who spoke English really... No, no, that was just because we were friends really. I think that has to do maybe with the fact that when we first came in for the introduction to the module, just we were the only people who were not Chinese and we ended up coming together."*

ILB2 explained: *"I recognise some of the Chinese students by name but not all. But then I think as I said there has been generally a separation us, which is sad, but it's happened. I think that's partly to do with the English speaking students forming their group and partly due to the fact that people are going to sit together that have their*

own language in common and their own way of thinking so it's naturally going to happen."

ILF1: *"I do think about it a lot that there is a gap between the international and the British students and I don't think that's a good thing and I wish I did more to.."*

4.4. CONCLUSION

The narrative of the groups provided an insight into group process and students experience during group work. The narrative also illustrated how members of same group may understand the group work and their relationship with other group members differently. It is also highlighted that there are several factors, which affect on the group dynamics and students' performance such as unassessed task. In addition, it provided an overview into students' relationship, their friendship and also how students interact with each other. Furthermore, it is highlighted that students' performance in the group is potentially affected by their experience, age, academic attitudes and etc.

Key themes emerging from data for the Information Resources and Information Literacy case are 'feelings toward being allocated to the group' including the reasons for positive and negative student feelings, group member personality and characteristics, and the impact of past experience on individuals' performance and decision making. Language is one of the most important elements for the students they believe if all group members speak fluent English or the same language, the group would perform better. Some home students did try to help their international group mates, but mentioned they were not sufficiently patient to speak slower or explain some of the key concepts or words.

'International students' name' is another theme which both group home and international students seem to believe having a Western name would help international students to integrate better.

Data showed the majority of groups did not form any friendship and they did not stay in touch after this module. It has been suggested by students that learning

space meaning linear setting did not encourage them to have discussion or conversation.

Data revealed students tend to make no or little effort for unassessed tasks. They certainly do not prioritise the task if there is no marking to be applied. Students also invest minimum effort required to finish the task. Furthermore, in this setting group mates appear to be more tolerant if some members do not contribute as much. Also the data showed if few of the group members do not take the task seriously there is a good chance other follow them. However, in some cases one of the group members motivated others to complete the task but still they did not put too much effort in it. There was not any argument or serious conflicts in any of the groups. Most international students avoid answering questions or presentation due to lack of confidence in their language skills, which in this case it did not caused any conflicts. The majority of groups met fewer than four times and they used email and Google Docs as the communication tool. There was group division in some of the groups due to the language barrier or nationality difference and in addition to this there was a general division in the class, which divided the class into three main groups Librarianship, English speakers, and international students.

Group dynamics in most unites followed the diagram bellow. In this module majority of the groups skipped the forming stage as members were allocated to their groups. There was very little conflicts in the groups as students were more relaxed towards the group work as it was unassessed. Groups spend more time in norming and performing stage.
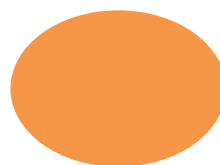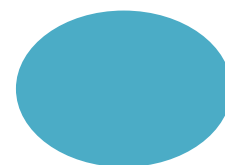
Forming   Storming   Norming   Performing

5. CHAPTER 5 CASE STUDY REPORT: THE CASE OF INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background information of the module, including information regarding the module, the assignments, module tutorials, and the assignments briefing. Afterward, the narratives of the groups' group work process are presented.

After that, the findings and themes from the thematic analysis of the interviews are presented and discussed.

5.1. CASE STUDY REPORT

5.1.1. CASE CONTEXT

Information and Knowledge Management was a mandatory module for the Information Management course delivered in the second semester. The module addresses both theoretical and practical aspects of managing information in organisations. It also aims to enable students to understand key aspects of information and knowledge management in organisations, and to engage critically with a number of current issues and debates in this field. It also aims to equip students with a foundation of expertise in identifying, diagnosing and evaluating key organizational issues of practical relevance to information and knowledge management in business and other organizational settings. Different methods of teaching and learning are used in this module such as: lectures, seminars, practical exercises and tutorials ("Module Outline," 2012-13).

During the lectures, students are introduced to three case studies (NASA, Xerox and Danone) which provide real-life examples for students to develop their knowledge. Each case covers part of the module content and they relay particular events which

occurred within organisations. Students are given the chance to share their understanding with others in class discussions.

Assessment is weighted as such: 30% for a group presentation and 70% for an individual essay. *"The group presentation consists of presenting a diagrammatic representation of an integrative perspective on information and knowledge management strategies in organisations. The individual assignment builds upon this and is an essay discussing the key issues identified in your diagrammatic representation against the contexts of the cases studies of NASA, Xerox and Danone, using the literature and the academic background to the subject to support your arguments."* ("Module Outline," 2012-13).

In week 3, students were briefed about their group assignment. They were given different examples from previous work and different diagrams (such as mind map or rich picture) which they could use to illustrate their understanding of cases relating to information and knowledge management.

They were told the rich picture should have some kind of story and they were advised to use metaphors to tell the story. Also it was emphasised that the rich picture should not be a process, e.g. a flowchart. To ensure students understood the requirements, the researcher (as a tutor) also explained the coursework using her own group's rich picture from 2009-2010. At this stage, students were told that they needed to form a group from 2-6 members and were advised it is better to have a group of 3 or members. Also, they were given a list of relevant resources which could help with the assignments.

By week 7, students needed to have their group and ideally would have started working on their group assignment. In week 11, they had a tutorial in which groups were divided between tutors and each group had 30 minutes to ask questions regarding the group work. Groups could meet with their tutor only once but could also email them to ask questions. As groups were asked to present their work later on, all group members were advised to prepare for their presentation. As group members all needed to present or answer questions, presentation preparation also helped them with their individual assignments. Because the individual task was

based on the group activity and therefore it was important that all group members contribute to the group activity. Each group could present their work in the way which suits the them best: they can use a 3D design, poster, PowerPoint, etc. However, if they used PowerPoint, they were advised to avoid too much text and use visual prompts such as diagram snapshots explain it.

After the tutorial, groups had two weeks to complete their diagrams. In week 11 groups were divided between three lecturers and they had to present their diagram to the lecturer and other groups. After the presentation they had almost a month to submit their individual assignment. Also, in accordance with University policy and procedures, students must also produce a short individual reflective self-assessment of their group work experience and their individual contribution to the group task ("Module Outline," 2012-13). This reflection was not assessed, but students would fail if they did not submit one (see Appendix III).

5.1.2.   NARRATIVE OF THE GROUPS

5.1.2.1.   UNIT 1 2013

This group had six members - three females: KMF1, ILC3 (both British) and ILC2 (American) and 3 males: ILB2, ILA1 and ILB1 (all British). Their ages ranged from the early to late thirties. KMF1 and ILC3 did not take part in the interview.

The group members decided to work together primarily because they had sat next to each other in the lecture theatre and talked. Also, some members had worked together in groups previously, like ILC3 & ILC2, ILA1 & ILB2, and ILB2 & ILB1.

ILB1 speculated that the difficulties other group members such as ILA and ILB2 experienced in their previous group work assignment may have been another motive for working in an all-native English speaking group.

"but I couldn't say that for the other members of the group. I don't want to put words in their mouth, but I think that both ILA1 and ILB2 thought there was a bit of a

lack of application of the part of the Chinese students, which to me hmmm might be the case."

However, ILA1 stated that they had worked together because they had become friends.

"that was just because we were friends really. I think that has to do maybe with the fact that when we first came in for the introduction to the module, just we were the only people who were Chinese and we ended up coming together."

ILC2 said:

"In the first lecture when I looked around and saw and heard, not only were they Chinese students but non-confident Chinese students, and looked at ILB2 and was like: 'I need to get to know them'. So my selection began at the start of the course."

ILC2 had some bad experiences from her previous multicultural group work assignment. She explained why she decided to collaborate with familiar people:

"I think the language is a crux. There's some form of English that people understand. Although the language is a crux, I think the real issue is cultural to me, that's the barrier. Culture and personality, everyone's different. The cultural difference, not challenging authority, going with the flow and if they're leading you off a cliff it doesn't make sense."

ILB2 mentioned that since they arrived in the lecture room early, they had the chance to talk. Also, he noted the lecture room was almost completely divided between non-native English speakers and native English speakers. Furthermore, the layout did not encourage students to talk to each other.

"I'm just naturally reserved and if I walked over and say 'hello!' I would feel that I was imposing on their space, and I wouldn't want to do that. Whereas if you've got people round you and they're discussing things you're much more likely to chip in, because either you've got the answer or you've got a point of view and you want to put it across, that makes it easier. But you don't go and say hello like that, I wouldn't do that naturally anywhere... we all started talking. So naturally we formed an

affinity and at that point when it came to deciding, no-one wanted to break away from one another. I don't think it was intentional, we were just sat together an no-one wanted to say 'I don't want to work with you'. It became that natural reserve that came up, where I think the other students that came in the room bang on time or later, it became harder because you didn't speak to them."

They decided to work in pairs and each pair was in charge of one of the main aspects of IM and KM. By doing this, the intention was that they would not need to read all the material and it would be easier to produce richer data. ILC2 explains that ILA1 started reading the material before and shared his knowledge with them; this brought the idea of working in pairs which helped the group to work through the reading material faster and easier:

"Before we got together, he'd read a couple of articles before we met and were talking about some ideas from those articles. I said here's the deal: instead of us going back and forth through the articles, this is the one we're going to stick with, you both read it, why don't we catch we catch up, read it with you and this is where our ideas will stem from and whatever extra material we have, we'll use this as our base. With that said, we already got the theory and perspective and it was easy to break down. And ILA1 said we can split off in pairs."

ILA1 & ILB2, ILB1 & ILC3 and ILC2 & KMF1 worked together. ILB1 explained how they formed the pairs:

"Six of us in three strands, two to each strand, and it was under question who went for what. KMF1 was keen to do the communities of practice team working side of things and ILA1 & ILB2 wanted technology. Because they are very much friends - they meet when studying and have lunch together, so they're like a team anyway. ILC3 both said we didn't mind and met during the economics strand."

ILA1 explains the pairing process:

"We all went away read some stuff and came together. Obviously we decided to use Bloom taxonomy I think it was KMF1 who said we'll look at behaviour on this and I said I wanna look at that as well so we said and ILB2 was technology and said 'I'll do

that'. And also ILB1 and ILC3 were working on another group project together so they were meeting anyway. So it was very informal – what you're interested in mostly."

As they were working in pairs, they did not need to have regular group meetings, but instead met in pairs and later in the group.

ILB1:

"…I'd done more reading than ILC3 at one point, so we got together, I made a list of suggestions, I put them in an email to her and I didn't do anything on it for the next two weeks because I was busy with other assignments. When we met on Wednesday, ILC3 had taken my suggestions and put them all into the map as I was like, 'oh, good!' So she had taken the lead at that point, and that kind of reciprocal thing that somebody else is doing as much work as you are I think is good. That somebody else is intelligent and competent and will do the work."

However, ILA1 mentioned that as they were friends, when they went to the pub for a drink they started discussing the group work and the gathering somehow changed to a meeting:

"but that we were all friends by that point, we'd got to know each well so that made it easier for me. We ended up going to the pub for a drink afterwards, so it wasn't like 'we've got to go for a group meeting now' but more 'Oh! A group meeting! I'll see my friends and we'll go for a drink'."

They worked together collaboratively. ILB1 mentioned that no-one in particular was the leader but ILC2 said ILA1 and ILB2 took the lead, especially for the idea. However, it was different when they were observed it was noted that ILC2 took the lead and asked more questions.

Whey met their tutor, ILC2 and ILB1 asked most of the questions. KMF1 missed the meeting and ILC3 remained quiet. When they were asked about the reason for this, they said they had not even noticed. Observation also showed they all looked very relaxed and did not show any sign of disagreement or discomfort.

ILC2 mentioned the group work was not a smooth experience throughout and sometimes the meeting times and locations were unclear:

"ILB2 and ILA1 mostly took the lead as far as idea wise, but I felt it's necessary to put it out there 'what time we going to meet?' 'What are we discussing?' so I think it was collaborative. I actually did make the comment: 'you guys have conversations on the side and forgot to include us.' It was a miscommunication about where to meet and there was an email and I was like 'where is it? where is it? where is it?' so it might've been said in class... it's no criticism but it was just a natural thing. A conversation you think other people hear. But I think that's just the issue for a larger group anyway. But I have given them a lot of credit, stepping forward with the theories, yeah."

The presentation was delivered by all of the group members. Each took two minutes to talk and they agreed that whoever knows the answer to questions would answer.

ILA1:

"So we split it into sections, so it was ILB2, did the introduction, I talked about Technocratic, and ILC2 and KMF1 split their behaviour in two and talked about that and same with Economic and then questions were asked. It's more the person who had the best answer would talk; we did think about splitting it but then it's like what if someone asks a question about something that someone's already talked, there's a great answer to and then the person who's been asked doesn't know what to say?"

However, ILB1 was not impressed with the decision:

"For the KIM I don't really see the point in us all speaking. People can answer questions afterwards. Like I say, it's a group decision so...."

It seems they had pleasant experience working on the task and together. ILA1 emphasised the group size was one the reason that he enjoyed working in this group:

"We worked together quite well. The reason that worked was there was a lot of us, we did a lot of reading, people had found what you couldn't find otherwise, that was interesting. There were cases like NASA too."

The best part for him was the presentation, as the students were divided in groups and they did not need to present in front of a big audience. The best part for ILB1 however (as mentioned above) was working in a pair and with hard-working people. ILC2 enjoyed this more than other group activities as the whole module made more sense and as she said, she had more clear understanding of the module aims:

"The design of the course had something to do with it, the materials, the feeling after that first session was 'ah finally'. First semester I asked around and around and went in circles and circles asking 'what is information management?'. 'what does Sheffield say about this?' If I hadn't been in a group I would've been comfortable with KMA2 and KMA3 (called by her English name), they're a couple of people I would've been comfortable with."

It seems that even though ILC2 was not a home student, they considered her as one; in his interview, ILB2 even referred to ILC2 as a "home student". So when the group members were asked to talk about their experience of working in multicultural groups, they did not consider the KIM group work as a multicultural activity.

ILA1 and ILC2 both emphasised that it is not language that is the problem when working with other students, but rather culture is. However, it seemed they found it easier to work with English speaking students.

5.1.2.2. UNIT 2 2013

This group included two males: one from Finland/Nigeria (KMA2) and one from Taiwan (KMA1) and two female members who are from India (ILA2) and China (KMA3).

KMA3 studied Digital Archives in China and ILA2 has a degree in Information Technology Management for Business (ITMB) KMA2 studied business in Finland and worked as a tutor before coming to Sheffield. KMA1 studied IM in Taiwan and worked as software programme tester before coming to Sheffield.

Two female members were younger than the males who are in their early 30s. They decided to work together because in addition to being friends they worked on another group project together. ILA2 and KMA3 started talking to each other during IL module. They were working in two different groups during IL and groups were sitting next to each other and they were asked to discuss a topic together, that was the time KMA3 and ILA2 got to know each other.

ILA2:

"With the Chinese girl she was there in another group in IL. We had to exchange ideas, we had one of the activities where two groups have to exchange ideas so she was from the other group that's how I became friends with her. We added each other on Facebook and then thought of meeting outside. And then KMA2 was the Chinese girl's friend that's how I got to know KMA2 and KMA1 (called by his English name) is also the Chinese girl's friend, he's actually like a brother."

KMA1 and KMA2 met during the registration week and KMA1 was sitting next to KMA3 in the MINICASE lecture, so they started talking. Since there was a break between MINICASE and 3rd module and also because the lecture room for the latter module was not in the same building as MINICASE, they started walking together to next lecture and became friends, later KMA1 introduced KMA3 to KMA2 and they worked together. KMA3 then introduced ILA2 to others and they all become friends. They would go out and socialise together.

ILA2:

"we became friends during the course, during semester 1 then we go out during weekends. We go out for clubbing and everything, food…"

ILA2, KMA2, and KMA3 worked on 4th module together.

Regarding KIM, KMA2 felt that their group's members knew each other enough to trust each other and that they would make a good group:

"Because in KIM, from MINICASE I could see the way they worked and the way they think. And the thing about KIM, I haven't read the outline, but we're going to have to

present and come up with a poster, present our poster it should be thematic; and it's not like what we're doing but how we're doing it, so it it's more to do with the process. And it just felt 'ok the guys from IS and Minicase would make a very good team' because when Lecturer KIM1

came to class and she used you as a case study when in your case there were six of you and at the same time some people at the back said 'KMA2 can I join your group' and I'm like 'I'm sorry it's filled up all ready'. I didn't explain the number because I mean we knew that ok 5 this is what was expected of us and this is how we get there – let's stick with these people. It was too late to start experimenting over again"

KMA1 explained:

"Because I have a positive experience with KMA2 and KMA3 so we chose to be in the same group. And also because KMA3 has a good relationship with the other girl, yes and we recruited her to our group"

ILA2:

".....it also depends if they're really into the topic. Like a few of them, even if they are my friends, you don't think 'ok we all are friends so half of the work, the other friend will do it and I don't feel like doing anything' but I know each one of them is responsible for their own work. Like when it comes to work, they are very serious about it."

As mentioned before, the researcher was also their tutor. She was in charge of holding a group meeting and answering their questions regarding the group activity. The group meeting was held in the iLab in the Information School. The iLab has several cameras and microphones, which enabled the researcher to record the meetings. Each meeting took 30 minutes.

All groups were asked to bring a draft of their rich picture. When this group came to the meeting however, they did not bring any work. KMA1 was late and KMA2 was joking that he probably got lost! It seemed the group did not know how to start the work, so rather than discussing the draft, the duration of the meeting was spent discussing the best way to initially tackle the task. During the meeting group

members did not look stressed and were laughing, but were disappointed that they did not bring a draft. It was obvious they have close friendship. Members did express differences in attitude regarding not having any work done before the meeting - KMA2 and KMA1 mentioned in their interview that they were very angry and disappointed while it appeared KMA3 and ILA2 were less annoyed.

ILA2:

"…We were told at the beginning so we thought we still have time and we had like two weeks' time for the main poster presentation so we thought we have enough time because we didn't know how difficult it is going to be so after meeting you we got to know that there is a lot of difficult work to be done. Too much research needs to be done, so that's the time we started – after meeting you"

KMA1:

"I was really mad but and also before the meeting I had already warned KMA3 'we need to prepare something'….. I sometimes feel like it's so irresponsible to prepare nothing…. they said 'no we don't need to, we just need to ask the tutor what we need to do'! I was like (sighs) 'fine'…. Because I was also working on other stuff, I forgot what was that. And because all our work is really time consuming and I think… ok it's also my fault because I feel like 'if they won't do anything then I won't do anything' and it's not a good way of thinking, I admit that."

KMA2 had a personal problem so he was away for some time:

"Somebody sent an email as to where we'd meet. My point is I did not have a clue what was going on, and I came back: 'guys so we're gonna meet this person, what's the structure, what're we asking?' and they were all like… (pauses)….yeah I was pissed, I was really pissed, so we ended up actually going to the meeting looking, feeling very stupid and I was just drawing from my experience from my Bachelors thesis even though they are kind of unrelated. Still, it was the same feeling and the other objective was to actually get through that whole meeting without looking stupid. Because the truth is, first impression means a lot. And your meeting when

you're going for the first time y'know… to say the truth, truthfully what I think is these people are just unprepared, this is irresponsible."

KMA3 *said: "I was kinda scared because my God we did nothing and it looked that we're not serious about our group work. It seemed that way because we produced nothing."*

It seemed both KMA3 and KMA2 valued the impression they would give their tutor.

KMA2 emphasised this happened due to a lack of responsibility but somehow he felt it happened due to lack of communication. He later added:

"The problem we had in KIM? I don't know that because I wasn't very happy with that you know it cannot go on. But I kind of understand them the work was… there was lots of other modules and one challenge a student actually has balancing, so perhaps it was in their wise to balance the workload or perhaps they thought 'if KMA2 isn't here we'll do this work now' and it's not defined. People can just assume 'ok [an example] will do it' while KMA2 is thinking 'KMA3 (called by her English name) should do it' and KMA3 (called by her English name) is '[a person name] will do it'. Doesn't always work well."

However, they quickly planned to recover, they divided the reading list between themselves to start with then decided to share their knowledge after reading their parts.

KMA2: *"You know, I don't like it – I think this is not the way I work, the way we work. And I was happy, after that it was like a wake-up call – we finished, and we turned everything around."*

ILA2:

"We were motivated because you said you got the highest. KMA2 was very much motivated, he said 'I'm going to score more than 83'."

KMA3: *"After that meeting you were so helpful, it's like, you tell us you need to go through the reading list and find different ideas and then do the rich picture, those*

kinds of things. It was so helpful. So after that we came down, we printed the reading list we divided our work and say who – I think it's five or six to a person so we read our thing and say after three or four days we combine our everything together and yeah we just follow your… what you tell us. Except for my own part I did my reading list and I wrote the sources and because I said probably after we meet we discuss because we could have some misunderstanding so I write the article's name and the page number of the source."

KMA3: *"so it's like we wrote our sources and explained to each other and then we… because we are supposed to find a relationship between IM and KM, so we need to combine sources together not only by separately writing keywords there. So we got another paper, so it's like 'ok let's combine A with B' so we write it on the paper the relationship and the we use the pencil to delete it on the big paper so we did it like that way, yeah."*

It seems they even considered KMA3 may need longer time to read the material or KMA1 needed to go through some books so then they set the time for the next meeting.

ILA2: *"she started on Wednesday itself because she knew that she's really slow….yes we wanted to make sure that if we meet we want everyone to read because we didn't want to waste time…. we wanted to give at least 2 or 3 days to read because there were 4 resources. A few people had books to read, others had journals, like I had journals and one book. The Chinese guy had two books and three journals so it was really tough for him to read"*

Even though they did not have a great start, they still trusted that each member would do their part and there was no need to ensure everyone is contributing. Since KMA2 and KMA3 were particularly interested in knowledge management and they intended to do their dissertation in similar field, KMA1 was confident they would work professionally.

KMA1: *"actually we didn't make sure because we both wanted to have a great mark for this module and also they know I was kind mad for our tutorial section. Even though I didn't say anything or they didn't say anything here but after the meeting with you we just divided work and for our next group meeting we just read through the materials that we had and tried to make it more clear for each other and put it in our group work."*

They met few times after the tutorial, mostly at KMA2's place and generally the meetings were followed by food.

KMA3: *"Yes so it's working quite well so after we met we got a very big paper we stuck all these kinds of paper together – IM theory, IM methodology, KM theory, KM methodology and in the middle so we just 'ok let's write our own key words in the different parts' so we wrote it and then at KMA2's place we did it, we did it for a long time and we had dinner together. (laughs)"*

However ILA2 did not mention working at KMA2's place when she explained how they developed the concept and divided the responsibilities:

"…St. George's. We all decided to meet at iSpace over here but then we used to meet at 4pm but at 5 it closes so we always used to go to St. George's after that. Once there we used to decide how to illustrate, what to illustrate and then I was in charge of getting pictures from the internet of the animals and since the Chinese girl and KMA2 they're doing their dissertations on KM and they're much more aware about the topic, so they know more about KM than KMA1 and me whereas KMA1 had two books that he had to read and I think most of the references came from that book; it was by Choo so that's a really useful book. KMA2 was the one who developed the poster actually we didn't really used the software to develop it, we just took out the jungle photo the background we printed it out and then printed out the pictures as well, we cut and pasted it and we scanned it. That's how we did it, because then it would be easier than using the software. It was like equal contribution from everyone"

It seems due to friendship or prior work group members got to know each other better and used each others' strengths to produce better work. ILA2 noted:

"since we had KMA2 who's really good at communicating he's really good at explaining things to others, he likes doing that. So even if I was not able to explain it to him, somehow he knew what I was trying to tell him. I think he has done a lot of research on this topic for his dissertation so he explained the same thing to others."

They developed their idea by looking at the given examples then eventually they agreed upon their original idea, which everyone was happy with.

KMA2: *"I'm guessing our presentation our judge liked it a lot, well from what they said, we'll find out from the grade. …well after meeting you, we were like 'let's look at what she did and spin off from there' and you used the battle of Dien Bien Phu (Vietnamese battle vs the French) , and our challenge was 'ok there are three case studies we discussed in class – the Xerox, NASA and Enron and we have to integrate everything'. I was like, well what we know is to use a case study doesn't restrict the number of case studies we can use so let's tell a story and use a jungle theme."*

Two days before the presentation they sent their poster to their tutor in order to check if it seemed acceptable. The tutor made comments and they managed to amend the poster before presentation. KMA3 and KMA2 did the presentation as their dissertation was in the same field. ILA2 and KMA1 were responsible for answering the questions, which did not seem a problem. They appeared satisfied by the result.

KMA1:*"I tried my best to be involved more but because KMA3 and KMA2 do the presentation, because for me I'm usually the kind of person to do the presentation but this time I didn't do it because I really feel that they really do understand more than me so they did the presentation and I want to feel more engaged with these things but I couldn't because I think they really understand more than me"*

In total the members were all happy with the outcome and the actual group work. It did not seem they had a leader but rather they worked together. The only negative comment was KMA1 mentioning one of the members left the meeting or used the

time for personal matter (he did not mention who exactly, as he said they were all friends and 'it is not nice thing to do').

KMA1: *"I didn't say they didn't make an effort to our group work, but for instance if we schedule our meeting for like 1-5 but from 4-5 it's some special period for some people they need to do something and they will just do it and we just let the meeting stop. Because for me it's our group work and what kind of thing is so important during that period of time? We still need to work together, not like 'I need to do something else I need to go and we have to stop right now'"*

Even though ILA2 knew KMA3's name she regularly called her 'the Chinese girl'. It was particularly interesting for the researcher, as these two individuals were friends: it would personally be expected that they would call each other by name.

ILA2 and KMA3 stayed friends after the course and indeed, some of their friendship group even went to KMA2's wedding in another country.

5.1.2.3. UNIT 3 2014

This group included five members, four males and one female. The female member (ILD2) and two of the male members are Chinese (KMB3 and KMB4). The other two male members are British (KMB1) and Finnish (KMB2). Incidentally, ILD2 and KMB3 were dating at the time.

KMB4 and KMB1 were friends and they worked together in the first semester for the MINICASE module. They become friends with KMB3 then as KMB1 mentioned it, they started exchanging text messages and helping each other frequently. KMB1 believed they were thinking and working in a similar way so it would be a good decision to work on the IKM coursework together, so KMB3 and ILD2 (his girlfriend) joined them. KMB2 was sitting next to KMB4 (called by his English name) when they formed the group, so he joined them too.

This seemed like a positive group work experience. Members initially divided the reading list between themselves and after reading the items, created a conceptual

model of what they had read. Then in the next meeting, they explained what they produced and discussed how they could merge the material. However, as KMB2's dissertation was in the KM field, he worked more than others and his input was also greater. According to KMB1, KMB4 was poor at reading new material and he found it difficult, unlike KMB3. If the Chinese members had any problem understanding the concept or an idea, they switched to speaking their native tongue - it seems the other two members did not mind this.

ILD2 was very conscious about her English language skill and sometimes felt nervous about talking to KMB1, so she discussed this with him:

"Well, actually at the first… I feel so nervous to talk with KMB1 because he's the English guy and I worry about my English problem and every time I just keep quiet. And actually, we had a dinner sometime and I did say to him, I get so nervous when I talk to you and he went "Why? You don't have to something" and just after that everything was fine." ILD2

However, it seems she did voice her opinion either by discussing it with her boyfriend first and then with others, or just trying to clarify what she meant:

"Well actually I just say it to everybody but in a very simple way, word by word. If they can get it okay, but if they don't think it's quite useful then just that because its group work we can't do it so individually." *ILD2*

KMB2 used his knowledge to identify related sources and help others with their reading. He said it was not difficult or annoying that he did more than others as he had to do the same reading for his dissertation proposal anyway. He also appreciated the opportunity to test his knowledge and understanding by sharing what he read with the group. When I asked him if he was happy with this situation, he said: "Yeah, yeah I am because the more I read the best for me."

During the tutorial which group was observed KMB1 and KMB2 took the lead mostly. They asked more questions. KMB4 joined them in some parts but ILD2 and KMB3 mostly stayed quiet. The rich picture that they presented to their tutor was not what they were asked for, as such they asked more question to understand how they can

improve it. In this process all members were engaged even if they did not talk. They had very friendly attitudes towards each other.

The group members worked together to produce the final rich picture and it seemed they all contributed equally. The group mostly worked in St George's Library and in the Information School. They decided to avoid the IC as KMB1 did not like its atmosphere and busyness. However, they found it difficult to find a place to work as everywhere was so busy.

ILD2 was responsible for drawing and the other members scanned her output and used different software packages to improve it, changing the colours. The intention was that for the presentation it would not be obviously hand-drawn. KMB1 said:

"Yeah, I mean thank God for ILD2 (called by her English name). I can't draw to save my life, not that sort of drawing. And I don't think any of the others in the group can, so had it not been for ILD2 (called by her English name), we would have had to have a very different approach, so we've been lucky in that sense"

They all worked on the rich picture, as each member chose one or two buildings to colour and improve.

It seemed group members were all happy with the work they had produced and KMB1 commented:

"I think the contribution to the theoretical model hasn't been even, but then I think that's quite natural."

KMB1 mentioned he likes working in a group as:

"when you're together working because you can bounce ideas off each other and you can support each other much better so."

They said they would not change anything related to the task but KMB1 added he would start reading earlier in the semester to get a deeper understanding.

This group apparently functioned well. Members did not only have discussions related to work, but also football and politics (which ILD2 actually found boring).

They went out for a meal together sometimes. In doing this, group members developed friendships, which seemingly it made the experience easier for them.

5.1.2.4. UNIT 4 2014

This group is wholly comprised of female members: three are home students (KMC1, KMC4, and KMC2). KMC4 and KMC1 are British and KMC2 (who moved to the UK several years ago) has an Indian background. There were two international students (ILD1, and KMC3) who are Nigerian and Chinese. KMC4 did not take part in the interview.

KMC1, KMC2 and KMC4 decided to work together as they sat together on the same "bench". KMC1 mentioned the KIM module was the first time she met KMC2 and KMC4 as both were part-time students. KMC3 was sitting behind them and asked if she can join the group too. They decided to go with group of four as according to KMC1 it would be easier to divide the task and coordinate the group.

KMC1: *"Now we said four because we thought it would be easier to split work that way, fewer people to co-ordinate, has got to be easier you know without really thinking."*

However, when ILD1 asked KMC1 if she can join KMC1's group no one raised any opposition. KMC1 mentioned that ILD1 looked very keen and she knew her a little bit from last semester, so she did not have problem with her joining. KMC3 also called ILD1 a good friend of hers. ILD1 mentioned she wanted to join their group as her best friend was in another group with three other guys who she worked with for the MINICASE module and she did not want to work with again.

ILD1 added that she knew KMC1 and KMC3 before and that KMC2 was very warm and welcoming, however KMC4 was not. She added that she guessed it would be difficult working with KMC4.

As they were advised to in the class, they started by dividing the reading list. They made sure everyone got an equal amount of reading. They created a Google Doc to share their notes, and also another to upload pictures or ideas for the rich picture.

They did have regular meetings and according to KMC1 they all committed to attending the meetings on time and not missing any. Even though they did have some ideas in the shared area, these were not developed and so they could not identify a mutually agreed metaphor. So after finishing the reading, they decided to produce a rich picture each. However, KMC1 believed ILD1 and KMC3 were not willing to do a rich picture each, they instead preferred to do the work all together:

"I think a couple of people would rather that we were all together, did something there and then as it evolved together"

KMC2 added:

"Like you did for your Knowledge Management, we also sort of went back, did our own pictures and then came back and then went with one concept. I thought the idea of group work was the challenge went everybody went back and did their own work, they actually at the end rather than trying to merge everybody's concept, we ended up just doing one person's work."

Nonetheless, in the next meeting they all had their individual rich picture to present to the other members. KMC1 mentioned there were different levels of complexity in the rich pictures, and they all discussed them and explained the logic behind the pictures.

KMC2 mentioned she believed her rich picture was really good but it was dismissed as it had a process-like story and KMC1 and KMC4 believed the rich picture must not include any process - this disappointed KMC2. However, this subsequently was found to be a misunderstanding of the coursework specification.

ILD1 was very angry that her group mates dismissed some of the pictures due to the process element, as she mentioned that she believed KMC2 had the best one. She argued that it would fine to have the process element in the way they used it:

"I know that's what Lecturer KIM2 *meant in class but KMC4 and KMC1 kept on saying it shouldn't be a process, especially KMC4. I was so angry that day that I actually went and emailed* Lecturer KIM2 *who replied a week later when things were settled."* (she was almost crying when telling the researcher what happened)

It seems KMC3 did not have any problem with the selection and she was happy with the decision. She did not mention anything regarding the decision making of the group and the disagreements they had.

Finally, the choice was between KMC1's or KMC4's pictures, and KMC2 said she opted for KMC1's as her picture was dismissed, and anyway she couldn't vote for herself!

KMC1 mentioned she felt KMC4 was determined to have her own submission as the group's rich picture to the extent that she was not even very interested to listen to other group members' explanations:

"KMC4 was very determined that hers was going to be the one and didn't… she clearly didn't see any value in discussing them she did dismiss all the other pictures without even… and she was getting very impatient at the fact that there was even going to be any discussion because it was very clear from the way she presented and sat down and sort of almost you know that there was no discussion."

When it came to make a decision, they did not have any strategy in place. They mentioned at the beginning that they did not agree on how they are going to make decisions in the group. As a result they had problems choosing the rich picture.

KMC2: *"That was the problem because we didn't have a structure which I have reflected in my group reflection to say we didn't have a structure, of doing the decision making, which we had after we had gone with it."*

According to KMC2, it seemed KMC4 believed that as she stayed up the night before to make her rich picture, hers should be the one they were going to use.

"But actually at the end, because KMC4 had sat all night till two o'clock to complete this work…" (She said sarcastically)

KMC1 explained the decision making as such:

"Well, she wouldn't consider anything else and she just wouldn't. She wouldn't go… I mean the others were saying things like, "well…" I said, "What do people think? I think it's between these two" and KMC2 said, "yeah well I like this and this" and I think the others did like them both but you know one or two people said there's more scope for the story with the sort of pirate one. She wouldn't have it, wouldn't have it at all, so and I'm thinking I don't want to be precious about it and I was very conscious when I did my own work that I was getting kind of a bit too detailed almost. And I was thinking…"no" I was consciously having a word with myself, "don't go in" this is like a finished thing, it's a fait accompli, it's supposed to be… it's just an initial draft, it's just an idea, we've got to discuss it and there's got to be room for people to have space to work on it and everybody's got to. But it was just clear that she thought that what she had done was pretty much it and was really quite impatient. So it was awkward and the decision was made, it was not clear how the decision was made, it was basically she just refused to… so it was almost by default well what are we going to do? We're just going to have to almost… That was the way I felt that it was made. It was difficult to know how the decision was made, but we said at the end and everyone had right bloody miserable faces at the end. Are we going with this one? Yeah, okay. Because we thought we had no choice. Well I thought we had no choice"

KMC3 seemed content with the process and it seemed as she did not feel the tension in the group. KMC2 mentioned ILD1 and KMC3 did not say anything, however ILD1 did mention in the interview that she was unhappy.

After deciding to work on KMC4's rich picture other members started asking her questions in order to understand the concept and logic better. However KMC4 stormed out of the room when she was asked questions.

ILD1 explained:

"We started asking her questions and she got so upset she stormed out of the room. We were like, "What is that? Seriously, why can't she just say, "I put this because of

that and I put this because..." What is the meaning of storming out of the room? I think that was so disrespectful and she said that she feels that we are all attacking her and saying that her work is rubbish after her staying up 'til 2/3 am. I was just like, "No, you can't say that because you need to be able to sell your idea to us and defend yourself and defend your idea and say why it is your idea is the best and we should go with your idea." With her doing that and storming out, the following week, she was really rude to all of us saying that she doesn't actually like coming in here week in, week out to meet with all of us. I thought..."

KMC2 added:

"Yeah she was saying, "I'm doing bloody thing with the group work like..." Oh okay. Well you know I've worked in an organisation. I know how the knowledge management and information management works, so look don't give me that. You know the way...?"

KMC3 said she tried to calm her down by explaining why they are asking her several questions.

"And I said… at that time I said don't be angry, we are just curious about what it would be, so we just have lots of questions to ask about it. i look like middle man make her happy, you know?..... She came back later… And I said "No, we don't think your picture is rubbish, it's just amazing, it's fantastic maybe you think that, because it's so limited information, you have this and this and this it's very good. Because the other people just think about what is the activity."

After that meeting, KMC2 emailed KMC1 to stress that this is not a good way of decision making. ILD1 and KMC1 had a discussion about the meeting as well:

"It seemed as if it was directed to KMC1 which is very surprising. It seemed as if it was directed to KMC1 as all of us but KMC1 was so upset she kept quiet. KMC1 is not the kind of person that keeps quiet. That isn't KMC1, so you can tell that she was very upset. We had a discussion, me and KMC1, about how it was and about everything. I could tell that she too was upset. Everybody was upset. This is group work. It's not about pleasing an individual person."

When they went to see their tutor, they were instructed that they did need to have a story and the rich picture should show this narrative. The group members also realised they misunderstood the meaning of the process in the rich picture. During the meeting with the tutor, KMC4 was very defensive toward the current rich picture, however the group decided they needed to change the work to show the story. During the tutorial meeting, the group was observed. KMC1 was late, and when KMC4 entered the tutorial room she sat between the tutor and left a sit for KMC1 to sit and crossed her arms. She did not make any conversation with other members.

It was obvious that KMC4 is very sensitive regarding the rich picture and challenging the tutor's guidance. However, in that meeting there was little observable sign of tension as the majority of members stayed quiet. However, KMC2, and ILD1 avoided eye contact with KMC4 and KMC3 was mostly taking notes and nodding. However, all members showed they want to be engage in the process. But in a same time there was no friendliness between members.

Occasionally one of the members asked a question, which the researcher made a note *"I felt the question was asked to prove a point to someone. Like see I told you so kind of question"*

Even though they subsequently decided to use a voting system to make decisions, the process did not get easier with regard to KMC4. As KMC1 mentioned, every time they wanted to change something on the rich picture KMC4 became very defensive:

"It had potential it could have been okay. But there was just no going back. I mean if I had dug my heels in and said, "no, no" it would just have… I didn't want to do that, you can't, it was rubbish but you just have to move on and we had to get going. It did change. We did add some things, we did change some things, it's never easy to do and after that meeting where we made the decision… we didn't make a decision it was you know…we ended up with this diagram. I said, "we need to have an agenda for the next meeting", we need to have a way of making decisions, allow everybody's voices to be heard that sort of thing. And someone said we need to have a voting system, everybody needs to have… because I just thought otherwise the only way

decisions will get made in this group, is because she's going to throw a strop, throw her toys out the pram every single time and everyone will just bow down and go, "oh we don't want to upset KMC4" ...so they agreed with the voting and we did use it a few times and that was okay but, … "There you go again," sort of thing. Oh she really was like…"

It seems for ILD1 the decision making was not the only problem, she actually found some of KMC4's behaviour to be racist and upsetting:

"... I think really it could be a race issue. I mean, KMC1 isn't pure white. You can tell KMC1 isn't pure white. She's mixed. KMC4 is pure white and KMC4 during all our group work, KMC4 will only look at KMC1 and will only converse with KMC1. She wouldn't recognise that KMC3, KMC2 or I are there. When I talk I look people in the eye and I try to distribute my attention amongst everybody in the room. Now, in that case when I do look at KMC4 she's looking at me, she immediately looks down as in she doesn't want to look at me"

In her interview, KMC1 mentioned that once KMC4 had an idea, she would sketch it and show it to KMC1 and then it was actually KMC1 who shared it with the rest of the group. However no-one else except ILD1 felt that racism was occurring. KMC2 mentioned that ILD1 raised the issue with her, but she did not share that feeling and added that KMC3 mostly praised KMC4 and said: "there was that feeling, although KMC3 keeps appreciating KMC4 with the emails saying 'oh I love you KMC4, that's beautiful.' But actually, that's about okay. We had really brilliant ideas as well, do you see what I mean?" It seems this behaviour irritated the others as they believed not everything was 'brilliant'.

Eventually they managed to change the concept of the rich picture and adjust it to have a level of storytelling. They used the summary they produced when they did the reading to identify the key points and add them to the rich picture.

It seems KMC3 did not contribute as much as others at this stage as both KMC2 and ILD1 did not mention her contribution when talking about the work; and during

tutorial she stayed quiet looking confused. KMC1 explained this, highlighting reasons such as low level English skills and KMC4's dominance:

"When we had the very first meeting and KMC4 didn't want to get involved in the group discussions, she sat in the corner and showed me a little sketch of something, some ideas that she'd done. She showed me and was talking to me and not the rest of the group. I said no we need to do this together and started off with a blank piece of paper and I started off a conversation and we were all sort of talking and chipping in and I was jotting things down....Well because it's scribbled, hand written in a hurry and then KMC3 couldn't read that so she came back and asked and she said can you type these words up so I can see them? I said yeah that's okay. So I typed them up and then put them on. So that was the thing about KMC3. I know she would… at the start I thought this will be okay because she'll ask if she's not sure. She's not somebody who would be so shy that she would not say anything. She's asked me questions about things you know from semester one so I had an idea but if she's struggling she should say and if she doesn't understand she'll ask you know and I was confident on that basis that it would be okay. But now, at the other end of the process I'm not actually sure and I don't know really whether… I did get the feeling… I would say in a meeting what do you think KMC3 and she would say something that you know not always… I don't think she always did get what was being said or was always following the conversation.

In addition, KMC1 added this lack of contribution could be due to lack of preparation or even because of bad group dynamics:

"And possibly a language thing, possibly a lack of preparedness in some ways as well. The thing with this is that you have to have done the reading and you have to do notes up and I know from the note taking that everybody did that was a very different thing. That was a good example of KMC3 learning from KMC4. KMC4 had a really good sort of template and a way of doing things that, "oh that's a good way, I'll do my notes like that" sort of thing. That was good. But certainly there were other things where she… things like copy and paste, copy and paste into the… I mean it's not notes, it's just copy and pasting chunks and that worried me when I saw the

notes. Because I thought, "oh shit" you may as well just… and because there were some chunks copied and not others, things were out of context. I still have to read this stuff myself anyway because these notes are not of any use. So it did create a bit of work in that sense and there was some lateness early on when things were supposed to be coming in and like she hadn't done what she was supposed to, she didn't do the reading when she was trying to put to you, you know she'd done it. She thought it was one book and it was another, it was all a little bit weird but I did have a word about that and she did it so that was okay........ But I would always want and expect people to take responsibility for their own learning and if they don't understand, to say will you slow down or can you repeat that? Or, do you mean this? That was a little bit of a worry I had and a concern and frustration a little bit because I was thinking, I don't know whether you do always understand what's going on. But if you're not, you're not saying. But I don't know how much of that was down to KMC4 dominating things and people would see me… if KMC3 was less confident would see arguments going on with the dominant member of the group and you know, things get heated, are you really going to step into that? I mean…"

However, when KMC3 was asked that if she could understand her duties, she said 'yes' and appeared happy with the whole experience. But she mentioned she was prepared to and was not shy to voice her opinion. However it appears the rest of group did not share the same feeling.

KMC3 was aware she did not contribute as much as the others:

"Because I learn a lot from my group members, I don't think I make too much contribution, I just sometimes I put some of my ideas, but most time they make more contribution."

It seemed eventually the dynamics improved and the group started to perform better. KMC2 believed this was mostly because they decided to have a voting system. KMC1 added:

"KMC4 has started to laugh at herself a little bit now and acknowledge that, "oh I was the horrible one" and sort of make a joke about it and things like that. And she

has given ground and it's been less of a battle to get things changed or suggest things"

It seems they divided the tasks to some extent and they each posted their individual contribution using a shared Google Doc. However, both KMC2 and ILD1 mentioned that when they posted material, no one responded. KMC2 added she had some difficulty encouraging KMC4 to reduce the word count as KMC4 kept changing the work without asking her opinion.

Surprisingly when it came to present the rich picture, KMC4 was very reluctant to do this. KMC1 noted that they previously worked in another group together and KMC4 did the necessary work, but when it came to the presentation she argued 'I have done all the work so I am not presenting'. KMC1 suspected that she wanted to repeat this behaviour in this group, but when it was suggested that all members present, she had to do it. KMC1 believed that having all members present was the fair way to do it as everyone got the same share of presentation and answering questions.

In general KMC1 and KMC2 appeared more prepared to voice their opinion and it seems ILD1 was intimidated by the whole situation.

ILD1 said:

"I mean, she just became so angry and I think when she did that I sort of became intimated (sic) and I was like, "So, does that mean I can't talk, I can't ask a question, I can't try and correct you?" or something like that. So, if I was to change anything I would actually change how I approached her and be actually more assertive in some instances. Sometimes I was. Sometimes I wasn't but in the times I wasn't I had to try and be more assertive because in all those things, you know, try and talk to her and say, "Look, you know what? We are all grown women and we must be able to work as a group. If you don't like coming to see us neither do we." I do have a mouth and I can really use it but surprisingly I didn't say anything that day.... That is the first time in all my group work somebody has ever shouted like that, so it's something I'm not used to at all, being shouted at and yelled at like that. I mean, this is an

academic setting. I'm, not your sister that you can easily shout at like that. So, I expected more from her and I just wish I had done more"

When KMC3 was asked to say what she liked about the group work she said:

"All my group members are fantastic. ..Yes, because… no, not so kind because four of them have work experience you know, that's very, very important. KMC1 goes to work and I learn from them and they have, they really have a different perspective to particular issues. So they… yeah, first they are very good and very, very organised in time management and article management and the resources management, yeah and diverse thinking."

KMC1 and KMC2 mentioned they have learned a lot from this experience and it seems they reflect on they experience. ILD1 said she would not change her group mates if given a second chance, as she believed in reality people should be able to work with anyone. Additionally, KMC2 and KMC1 mentioned they wrote about the issues they experienced in the group reflective report.

The group members did not stay in touch after the group work.

5.1.2.5.   UNIT 5 2014

This group included three Chinese male members (ILE1, KMD1, and KMD2) and one Korean female member (ILD3). KMD1 and KMD2 did not take part in the interview.

ILE1 decided to work with his group mates from the MINICASE group work, and soon afterwards ILD3 also asked to join them.

ILE1: *"KM., hmm because you know that some of my group members are also group members in the previous group? Just as* MINICASE*, yeah. Yeah and the Korean girl, she come to us and wants to join us yeah"*

ILD3 was the only Korean student and decided to work with two other Chinese students. She did not have any specific reason for choosing these group mates but said did not like to work with female students if she had the option.

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ILD3: *"I worked with all boys. Boys, less complaint."*

During the first tutorial, the group did not have their rich picture ready. They divided the task between themselves and decided ILE1 and the other members would work on the rich picture and send it to ILD3 two days before to comment on it before the meeting. Also they decided to have a meeting before the tutorial to discuss what they need to ask. However, ILD3 did not read the rich picture before the meeting, this made ILE1 very angry.

ILE1: *"Maybe for example I… we surprise… we separate the group… the diagram into two parts you know the… yeah. One guy and I are in charge of the second part, yeah….So, we draw the diagram maybe just use one hour in… on this Monday. Yeah. The Korean girl told us to met before to meet you, yeah, to have a meeting before, yeah. So, but is already on Wednesday yeah and she you know, she thinks like… it seems like she didn't…maybe she didn't read my diagram before Wednesday, so I'm very…angry…. She didn't… yeah she didn't see, but I had emailed her on Monday."*

However, ILD3 said the Chinese group members left everything until as late as possible and she mentioned that the other members did not tell her about the rich picture which was the reason she did not know. However, she mentioned she prioritised her individual work before group work.

ILD3: *"They take their time. I try not to prioritise the group work. I do my work and then the group work. It much better for me… Two of our group member maybe they had some time to be together so they did first draft….I don't know why but they didn't tell me."*

As ILD3 did not look at the rich picture beforehand, ILE1 had to explain it to her which frustrated him. However, he did not tell her how he felt as he explained he would rather keep this to himself instead of creating or facing conflicts.

ILE1: *"So, I'm she just want me to explain her what's the process? What's the process? I'm feeling I do the very same thing, the same thing to explain her and explain her and oh I just feel very, very, maybe a little bit angry… I didn't tell her….*

Yeah, I keep it in. I'm not that person you know? Some persons are outgoing persons, but some persons yeah want to keep their minds, or emotions…yeah."

However, the main idea for the rich picture was ILD3's. The group decided to work on it together:

"Yeah, the KFC poster. KFC was my idea because first draft was just the writing and I said we need to use more metaphor. So, I asked them how about chicken farm and company where some types of restaurant could use metaphor and they said okay. They always agree with me… We were quite happy."

Later, ILE1 again had the problem of contacting ILD3 and this was significant because they needed to make improvements to the rich picture. But when ILE1 sent the rich picture to her, she did not reply.

"But for right now maybe you know I have to admit to you I have correct maybe some… several mistakes about that girl and I send off and no response."

The group had some miscommunication regarding when and where their meetings were to be held. It seems the group had a communication problem as ILE1 mentioned he was not aware they had a meeting at one point and learning this was not the case, he then got very confused regarding where they were supposed to meet. The experience disappointed him as he said it was a 'bad moment for him'.

ILE1 explained: *"Yeah, bank holiday and maybe… sometimes, something about… it's not about a task, something about maybe just the lack of motivation, because, you know, the… KMD2, our group member of us he told us to… He has book a room on Monday but you know on that day he said, no room… I maybe… I book a room but late, maybe 10pm yeah. So I'm a little, little… I can't understand why he don't tell me earlier, but you know, the other guy he knows it already… But I think he knows…Yeah, yeah, but so I think the information you know… communication is very important. Yeah? Because you know if we have lack of information to each other we will misunderstand yeah. So that makes me feel not good, yeah…..But you know we can't find a space in library, so I suggest, why don't we go to the hospital library, you know that library?...Yeah? So… but you know some of them say it's too far. We*

don't want to go there. And they don't know… because a few people know the
library, the location…Yeah. And I need to take them there, but you know, sometimes
maybe KMD1 is swimming, yeah, is swimming and KMD2 is sleeping and the other
girl, the Korean girl, is in the Western Bank library. But you know, what I want to
meet the Korean girl first and tell her I am in the… let's meet at the front of the
Student Union. And she says "I am in library three" and I thought library three is in
the IC. Yeah, so I come to IC and wait her on ground floor and maybe ten minutes
later she says I'm in Western Bank library. Yeah because Western Bank library have
highest level three, yeah. Oh I really, really, confused here. So that was a bad
moment, very bad moment for me."

ILE1 was the leader of the group. He believed that group leaders usually end up doing majority of the work he explained this was because other group members simply submit their individual work first but he actually balances his contribution.

ILE1: *"Well most of the time, I need to be a leader. I think leader is very important in a group here. Someone must to stand up yeah…..Because the leader's just a title. You need to do most of the works you know. Yeah. You know the other two guys they are… they put their individual work first. They think their personal things are probably the most important, so they maybe they have done maybe… I think their individual work, maybe the other module work they have finished."*

During the tutorial session ILE1 and ILD3 asked most of the questions. Whole group except ILE1 looked uncomfortable to speak in English however all members where paying attention to the tutor and they looked keen to improve their rich picture. There was no observable sign of closeness between them but it looked they get along. No one had any negative attitudes and they looked serious about their work.

ILE1 added that In order to finish the rich picture on time, they need to work on poster first, but he states: *"Well I think they need to pay more attention on the group work.. yeah they just care themselves."*

They did not have serious conflicts; this may be because ILE1 never showed how he feels. Also he mentioned he was comfortable with working with the same group mates as in the MINICASE group work as he was familiar with them.

ILE1: *"Everything because we were very familiar. I am very familiar with my group members, so we are not only friends, yeah, we have some experience to work with each other, so I know that guy will finish that work, yeah, so. Yeah, so that's comforting."*

When ILE1 was asked what he would change, he mentioned that next time he will prioritise his own work first as he struggled with his individual coursework since he spent more time on the group work.

ILE1: *"Maybe I will first focus on my job. ... Just keep the same pace with them. Because I don't want to struggle. Only myself struggling, yeah. They... maybe have their struggle... they have their schedule, schedule, yeah, they have their schedule and I just maybe do the same thing is okay."*

They did not mention a language barrier even though they did have some misunderstandings, but ILD3 mentioned at the beginning when her Chinese group mates switched to speaking their mother tongue, she found it irritating.

ILD3: *"Now, I thought it was kind of rude in the beginning of my work but now I kind of understand because I would do that if I had a Korean friend. But in the beginning of my work I thought that quite rude."*

ILD3 did not use any names during the interview and ILE1 called her 'the Korean girl' but he did call other group members by their name.

5.1.2.6.   UNIT 6 2015

This group consisted of four female students: KME4 (Greek), KME3 (Malaysian), KME2 by her and KME5 (both Chinese) and one male: KME1 (Nigerian).

In 2014-15 the module was moved to the first semester, and thus students were not familiar with each other beforehand, as they were in previous years.

On the induction day, KME3 approached KME4 as they were only non-Chinese students and KME3 thought they were both lonely so they could be friends.

KME3: *"She was alone at that time. She was the one who didn't have any friends with her yet so I just went with her. Because everyone else, like Chinese people, they have a bond, friends, so I didn't want to disturb them. So, I just went with someone who was alone like me. I saw KME4 and just said hi, and we got along together."*

When it came to choosing group mates, KME3 thought it would be good to work with a friend.

KME3: "Because we were in the same class for the whole semester, so I think it's easier because we're friends, and I don't say, 'I'm picking your friend', so I just say, 'KME4 and I have been friends so why don't we just get along' and then we found another three."

KME3 had the same personal tutor as KME2 Furthermore, KME2 met KME4 during registration.

KME2: *"I think it's both. Yeah I remember how I met KME4 who is the Greek girl. It's in the Intro week, we were doing our registrations with university and we met just by accident and so we met near the [University] sports centre and we know we were doing the same subject, yeah? So yeah."*

KME2 also explained she wanted to improve her English so she tried to start conversations with 'foreigners'. As such she preferred to work with a multicultural group which helps her to speak in English.

KME2: *"Yeah you know when I listen I can hear I just realise how many Chinese students in this major. So I think it's better for us to choose some foreigners to work with, because that will be a good opportunity for you to practice your language. Also to find out their ideas, how they think. So I think I caught a good opportunity to talk with them before we were allocated with this work. So, if we have already been familiar with each other before that work, so we just met each other and then discussed how about let's do this work together. So that's it, quite simple. each lecture, yeah just a normal greeting like that. Then they will realise that you are existing. Yeah. I think every student can do that but some are just quite shy and they don't speak."*

KME2 used to sit next to KME1 in another module and she was friends with KME5 so they joined the group.

"KME1 we had the chance to sit next to each other in one lecture of Information Retrieval I guess. Yeah and I knew KME5 (called by her English name) before I knew them, yeah."

Also KME1 explained: *"I think it was people that I was developing relationships with in class. So, some of the people I would say hi to; some of the people that knew me here. So, when we were asked to form a group it was just the people I already knew and we decided to work together."*

KME1 was the only male member in this group and all of them thought he managed it very well.

KME3 *"Yes. I didn't see anything, awkwardness or... he was fine."*

KME1 himself thought it was challenging but that the experience improved later. *"A bit challenging at first; but I ended up liking it. I just felt a bit uncomfortable being the only guy. But I enjoyed working with them, yes; I did enjoy."*

KME4 explained group members were confused about what they were asked to do at the beginning and that the class tutorial helped them to plan:

KME4: "At the basic level yes. We were still confused about how we should do it; what it should have in it and this kind of stuff. But in terms of how to build a strategy and how to do the reading and how to divide the reading lists and all that yes."

KME4 suggested dividing the reading list between themselves. In doing this, they made sure everyone got same number of books and articles. Also they considered that others may need more time to finish the reading due of their English reading skills.

KME4: "I was the one saying, 'We need to divide the reading list'."

KME3: "Yes, we did, from the list and then we divided. There were five of us. I think there were 22 references roughly, so the people who got to read the book would get less articles. …First we asked them if they had any preferences to read. There were lots of topics. But they didn't…..Yes, they don't care, so we just divided it four, four, four. Each one gets four articles and two books. I don't think we managed it by specific area of interest; we just went with the list of that so everyone gets."

When they finished reading the resources, they shared the key information and after that they decided which area they wanted to focus on and divided the tasks accordingly.

KME4: "Actually KME5 (called by her English name) I think at the beginning said that she might not be able to finish the whole list at the end of the week. But it was okay, we said okay."

KME3: "Then we asked everybody to list out the most important key words, key points that could be inserted in that rich picture. We set a meeting and then we showed them what we have. So, everyone has their own kind of mind map. Everyone brings their mind map, I bring mine in, and then everyone starts to explain what they have. So, me I have symbols that represent some of the message that we like to tell them. So, KME4 came up with a list of reference and some of the key words. Everyone managed to merge together and do their rich picture."

KME1: *"When we decided we were going to work together we gave each other tasks and said, 'Go and think about what you want to do'. So, everyone went and thought about what they wanted to do. So, we came back, discussed and then we picked one thing, one thing that stood out. And then we decided to read around that one particular topic that stood out, and developed it."*

They met once a week and shared their ideas; if anyone wanted to change something they discussed it during the weekend.

KME4: *"We were checking regularly. We usually met every Friday, or if someone wasn't able to meet us on Friday we were trying to do it during the weekends or maybe in between. It was mostly Fridays or Mondays. We had regular meetings so that we group all together the notes; take what everybody had read of the given list. If someone had read something extra we would write it down and take it as well. So, we knew who had read what."*

They agreed on the theme all together from the beginning.

KME3: *"Actually from the beginning we had agreed to do the theme, so everyone has this picture in their head. So, everyone has agreed to do that theme. It's just when you come to a meeting we just put what information needs to be embedded in that theme… Because we think it's cute and it's possible for that kind of… Actually the concept was taken from a game; if you ever play a Smurfville game they start to build up the village. So, we think it's related to how they manage information and how the knowledge management things develop."*

To choose the theme for their rich picture, they discussed their interests and hobbies to find the common subject or interest to work with. KME2 did the initial sketch.

KME4: *"When it came to choose the topic of our rich picture we just started discussing and asking each other what they are interested in, like video games, music, movies. We all gave really, really interesting ideas. Someone said Star Wars I think. At some point, I don't remember why, KME3 said something to me and I started talking about Smurfs village. I love the Smurfs. So, we all started a discussion on this subject because KME5 (called by her English name) and KME2 (called by her*

English name) didn't know about the Smurfs. So, I sent them the link so they could see the video and all that. In the end, because Lecturer KIM1
said it should be interesting as well and something imaginative, we ended up choosing Smurfs village. ((Laughter))"

KME3: "Yes, they know about the Smurfs. Some of them had watched it, but some of them had never played the game, so that's why I explained."

KME2: "To be honest the only one rich picture was finished by myself because I think at that stage everyone was a bit confused about what we should do. So, it was just one night I came up with some new ideas. I'm not sure whether it's true but I just did it because I used to learn how to draw a picture, painting when I was young. So, I think I used my strength at that moment and then I mean after that night, I show my picture to everyone and they approved that. And then we just worked together on that, yeah."

They decided to divide the rich picture between themselves so when they met their tutor each of them explained their parts. During the tutorial they were observed, they were very friendly to each other, and one of them was late and they made joke about it. It was apparent that they all worked together. They had clear idea of the task and they knew who was doing what.

From the observation notes "this group was very close and organised, obviously close friends."

KME3 talked about the tutorial meeting:

KME3: "We had in mind that we have to tell you what we want to do, like what we want to have in our rich picture when we come to you. And then we started to divide: like you explain on the IS system, information system, to ((?)) and I will explain the general part of the rich picture; and KME4, you explain about the behaviour. So, it's much easier if we want to consult with you, because if I were to explain everything in my bit they don't get the chance to…. It was based on your understanding: if I think that I have read more about communication, from the reading list, I would volunteer myself, 'Why don't I explain to The researcher about communication'."

KME2:*"Yeah and I think everyone just want to show what we have done and wanted to hear the advice from you. Yeah, quite simple."*

KME3 was in charge of creating the rich picture using computer software. She worked closely with the others to generate the picture, she explains:

KME3: *"Yes, there was because when I tried to construct the rich picture I needed to ask them, because I'm the one who did it on the computer. We designed it together. Sometimes I cannot understand what they want. Like I told you we divided everything into specific areas after we have read everything. Then to represent, let's say for the information behaviour, like KME4 wanted the picture of the Smurf kind of dancing, to show that they socialise. So, I need to follow her message. It's kind of a tricky thing, because I can't read her mind so I need her to come and sit beside me and choose."*

Whenever they wanted to make decision they just discussed and they managed to reach an agreement so they did not need to vote for decision making:

KME1: *"Yes, it was a matter of discussing, and said, 'This is better. Let's go with it'."*

KME1 also explained as they respected each other and listened to others' opinions, he believed this was the result of their friendship:

KME1: *"One thing I liked about that group it was all open. Anyone was free to talk. There was a sense of respect and listening to each other. ..Maybe because it was an academic experience; maybe that was a reason. And the friendship factor also: maybe because we were friends it was easy to talk to each other."*

The group did not experience any misunderstanding or conflicts during work. it is apparent that everyone supported each other. KME1 explained, *"No. One thing I liked about that group we progressed; we did work the way we planned to do it. We worked so well together. There was never any misunderstanding actually. We kept encouraging each other. We realised we needed each other. I wasn't sure the other guys would help me; so there was more help than conflict."*

Upon realising they can all present, they decided to do this for their presentation. All members presented and each was in charge of one aspect of the KIM assignment:

KME3: *"We actually thought that there's only one person to have to present in front. But when we asked Lecturer KIM1 again she said, 'You can all present. But you have to mind the time'. So, at first we decided to let KME1 and me and KME4 to present, just the three of us – I think; I don't remember. That's how we did it at the beginning. But then we asked Lecturer KIM1 if we could present so everyone did it."*

KME4*: "We thought that since we've separated the parts of an organisation, let's say, and the parts we did in the rich picture we should also do the same in the presentation. Because for example KME1 wouldn't know that well about my part or vice versa."*

Even though English was not their first language and they had different levels of language skills, members did not have any serious problems regarding communication and were aware of each other's English skills and helped each other.

KME3 explained how her English language skill affected her experience: *"Sometimes it's challenging for you because I have to speak English at all times, and then I have to make sure that everyone understands me... I think it's about what you're thinking: when I say happy you might imagine people laughing. I imagine people laughing; but happy to you is like a happy family. So, it's what you think. Interpretation, yes."*

She further explained how she made sure everyone understood her:

KME3: *"Maybe sometimes I'd draw; sometimes I'd show something, demonstrate them."*

KME1 mentioned: *"I'd say yes and no to that, because yes in that you noticed from our Chinese friends that language would be a bit of a barrier, so we'd chip and say, 'When presenting keep it simple. Just say these things'. So, we helped each other, yes. I don't think it was much of a barrier."*

The group mostly used Facebook and email to share their ideas, set meetings and share documents. When KME2 was asked what software they used, she mentioned: "Facebook and email."

KME3 added: *"when we send some messages or Facebook anything to announce, when they are in China they cannot access it – even the email no…..we created a group. It really worked out; especially when I started to construct the rich picture. I would post the progress of the design and say, 'How do you like it? Is it okay? Is it too messy? Do I need to reorganise it?' So, I would always post the rich picture before we get to the conclusions. It's really helpful actually."*

KME3 explained the reason they decided to use Facebook was because all of them had Facebook accounts, even the Chinese group mates (for whom Facebook is blocked in their home country): *"Because everyone is on Facebook. I think they've [Chinese group mates] been here in the UK early 2014, so maybe they had Facebook before the group."*

The only problem was sometimes others did not respond to a message sufficiently quickly for different reasons:

KME3: *"I don't think we had any problem with language when it came to my group. Just the accessibility yes: when we send some messages or Facebook anything to announce, when they are in China they cannot access it – even the email no."*

They took different roles in the group like leader, technical support, peacemaker, motivator, etc.

KME2 explains KME1's role in the group and how this helped the group dynamics: *"KME1, I think he did help us when we were facing the problem. I remember once we meet in iSpace and everyone held a different opinion towards something, I can't remember. And then KME1 he just starts explained that and I think he tried to help us to get a better understanding of that problem. So I think everyone will feel a bit clearer after his explanation, yeah."*

KME4: *"I would say KME1 was, and still is – he's always like that actually – the main role model. Like when he stands up and talks you just can't think of anything else, if you understand what I mean. It's the way he speaks, the way he moves; he's a powerful figure in the group. Meaning that he always used to say like, 'Everything's*

going to be fine. Don't worry. We'll make it. It'll be great'. KME3 was the person who was generating ideas."

KME3: *"he's good in... Maybe because he's a guy, he's a fast learner – that's all I'm saying. I like the way he interprets things and how he delivered information to us."*

KME4 believed KME2 was the peacekeeper: *"I think peacekeeper is KME2 (called by her English name). She's the compere I think. KME5 (called by her English name) was something like KME2 (called by her English name) but in a more sweet way."*

She explained that she believed people took different roles because they have a different culture: KME4: *".... I really believe that. I might be wrong, but the picture I have for Chinese people is they are like calm people; they are always – how do we call those who say yes all the time? Agreeable. Yes. They don't raise their voice; they're always calm. I don't know why, it's like every Chinese person I talk to, and my flatmates, are always so quiet. It's weird. ((Laughs)). Greeks are like really strong-minded and really decisive. Every Malaysian or like where KME3 comes from they're always cheerful and really friendly. And KME1 is just KME1; he's a whole category on his own."*

KME4 was the leader of the group, pushing other members to work harder, booking the room and ensuring the work was on schedule.

KME2 (called by her English name): *"We book the room together but KME4 she will come up with the idea of meeting for example she might say-, suggest "Let's just meet blah, blah, blah." Yeah."*

KME4: *"KME3 was the person who was generating ideas."* And also KME3 was the creative one or as KME4 said creative in technical aspect *"Creative in the technical part. Because I had no idea how to create the rich picture; I hate using the computer to do that stuff. No one else had her experience because her Bachelors was more technical oriented. So, she kept on generating ideas really."*

KME3 explained how they were different in the way they worked: *"I think Chinese are more punctual people. When they do work they do it very, very seriously. KME4 is*

from Greece, I'm not saying she's Greek, but I always think she's European and European people are good in time – that's what I thought. Mine are more laidback people, chill; so sometimes I take it for granted."

It seems KME1 was late to some of the meetings and also the tutorial meeting. It did not cause conflicts, but some members found it irritating.

KME4: *"Yes, actually yes. Every time we were meeting he was at least 20 minutes late. That was something I couldn't stand."*

KME2: *"No. Maybe just one problem, he always late."*

KME1 explained: *"Hmm, let's see – no. ((Laughs)) I think I was late for one or two meetings. There was one we were supposed to meet and I came into the meeting late, and then that one. So, it was easy for them to joke about the previous..."*

They all enjoyed the group work and stayed in touch after the module and it was related that KME1 is still late when meeting socially!

KME4: *"Yes, he's still late. Every time we say, 'Let's meet, go for a coffee' he's always late. I think that's part of his culture."*

KME3: *"I really enjoyed it. I've always enjoyed group work since school. I've grown up to do a lot of group work, so it's not going to be a problem for me."*

KME2: *"I think it's quite helpful because actually doing our work I found that our group we would work very well. We were all satisfied with our work, but I think there might be some groups after they finish their work they still feel confused about how they manage it. They might get the wrong idea and then just present it to all of us, so it's quite important to have a tutor between different stages to help you to find the right direction."*

5.2. KIM THEMATIC ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

In this section themes which are merged from the thematic analysis of the interviews are presented. And quotes fro the interviews are used to support the findings.

5.2.1. CHOOSING GROUP MATES

Until the 2014-15 academic year, the Knowledge and Information Management module was offered to students in the second semester. As such, students had more group work experience and they were more familiar with their course mates. This according to the data had an impact on the way they chose their group mates. Past experience of group work or fellow students, working with friends, working with hard-working students or sitting next to each other in the lecture are some of the main reason in the way students formed their groups.

5.2.1.1. PAST EXPERIENCE

Students had positive and negative experiences working with different students in semester one, so when they were choosing their group mates for the KIM coursework prior group work experience and also their experience of working with the specific students influenced their decision making on choosing group mates. KMB1 had a positive experience working with KMB4 and KMB3 so he decided to work with them again KMB3 asked to bring his girlfriend and KMB2 join them because he was sitting next to them: *"Knowledge Management, KMB4 (called by his English name)… I mean because we've always worked together and then KMB3 (called by his English name), somebody who I've got talking to just on my course in general and in our MINICASE module although KMB3 (called by his English name) was a separate group we ended up texting each other quite a lot about the work and helping each other a bit. So we were sort of quite keen to work with each other…KMB3's (called by his English name) … we seem to think in quite a similar way and he was quite keen to work together with his girlfriend so we sort of said… I sort*

of said to him well KMB4 (called by his English name) was probably going to work with me anyway, how about we form a group…he was also… I think, KMB2 was sitting next to him at the time and yeah, that's sort of how the group formed"

KMA1 also had similar experience he decided to work together with two of his fellow group mates and one of them brought her friend so they formed groups of four: *"because I have a positive experience with KMA2 and KMA3 so we chose to be in the same group. And also because KMA3 has a good relationship with the other girl, yes and we recruited her to our group"*

In contrast, ILC2's bad experience discouraged her from joining multicultural groups and influenced her decision to join an English speaker group: *"Because MINICASE course totally traumatised me and the school's response to that and I didn't want to go through that again. Also my other group mates had traumatic experiences in their other groups. ..In the first lecture when looked around and saw and heard, not only were the Chinese students but non-confident Chinese students, and looked at ILB2 and was like: 'I need to get to know them'. So my selection began at the start of the course."*

5.2.1.2. FRIENDS OR STUDENTS THEY KNOW

Almost all students decided to work with individuals they knew beforehand even if they were not close or they only exchanged simple greetings previously.

KME1 explained how he decided whom to work with: *"I think it was people that I was developing relationships with in class. So, some of the people I would say hi to; some of the people that knew me here. So, when we were asked to form a group it was just the people I already knew and we decided to work together."*

ILA1 explained why he decided to work with a native English speaker group and how they formed their group: *"I think the big thing in the group was not so much culture, but that we were all friends by that point, we'd got to know each well so that made it easier for me. We ended up going to the pub for a drink afterwards… Certainly more than a cultural thing, it was just knowing people and being friends with the people.*

Certainly towards the end of MINICASE you get to know each other, you get a rapport and it becomes less of a hassle."

KMA3 explained in more detail how they decided to work together but he also emphasised that in group work, having hard working group mates is more important than being friends with them. However in his case, all of the members were very serious about their studies: *"I worked with KMA2 and KMA1 (called by his English name) for MINICASE and we got really good results and actually we are really close friends – we spend time together, we go out have fun together, so of course we work together. ILA2 she's very close to me since that time and she was also KMA2's friend with the three of us also. So the group should be arranged from 3-5 so ok, we work together… well I have to be honest if it relates to grade things I would prefer group mates being more serious about our study, but my group members they don't have a problem with that. They are kinda serious too."*

KME3 explained how she met KME4 and formed their friendship as they were alsodt only ones who did not know anyone and later they work together in the group: *"She was alone at that time [intro week]. She was the one who didn't have any friends with her yet so I just went with her. Because everyone else, like Chinese people, they have a bond, friends, so I didn't want to disturb them. So, I just went with someone who was alone like me. I saw KME4 and just said hi, and we got along together."*

KME3 explained it is easier for her to work with her friends: *"Because we were in the same class for the whole semester, so I think it's easier because we're friends, and I don't say, 'I'm picking your friend', so I just say, 'KME4 and I have been friends so why don't we just get along' and then we found another three."*

ILD1 had different experience, her friends already chosen their groups or they were working with students with whom ILD1 did not want to collaborate; as such she did not have a group but was familiar with students who she was sitting next to and as such she asked them to join their group instead: *"... it's actually me that actually joined them. They were sitting next to each other and I didn't want to be... the people I wanted to be with had already been chosen. So, I was going to be with my friend. She's like my closest friend here and with three other guys and I didn't want*

to work with the three other guys. …I didn't want to work with the three other guys...
KMC1 and KMC3 (called by her English name) knew me but then they discussed
amongst themselves and they said it was okay for me to join the group. So, that day
I met KMC4 and KMC2 for the first time."

Other students like ILE1 also mentioned they worked with students who were either
their friends or worked on the MINICASE module together.

5.2.1.3. ACTIVE STUDENTS

Some students employed more strategic approaches in choosing group members - in
addition to knowing them they also observed these individuals' in-class behaviours
to make sure they are hard-working and active.

KMA2 explained why he likes to work with different people and how he usually
chooses them. He recalled that he liked to ask other students questions to which he
knew the answer in order to examine their knowledge and their attitude towards a
question if they do not know the answer. This would give KMA2 some understanding
of the person's personality and knowledge. From this evidence, he would decide if
he liked to work with them or not: *"I've seen some strong class mates and I've never*
had the chance to work with them.. Some people in class I like the way they think and
they answer questions. And if I had the chance in the third semester, I'd like to work
with them because I also know they are very strong characters, so I would enjoy it....if
I go to a class I read the outline, and if I see it's a class where we're going to be
shared into groups, now, you can't control what people say generally, but you can
control their actions. You can also see if they talk. The good thing about questions is
when people answer questions it lets you know if they're smart or not. In a class
where groups will be formed and I do not have any idea who is who, them of course
I'm selfish, I'm going to work with strong people"

5.2.1.4. PERSON SITTING CLOSE TO

Another popular way of forming the group was working with students who were
sitting next to or near each other.

ILB2 explained not only being familiar with each other was a factor which encourage them to work together but sitting close to each other also contributed to the group formation. However it is also suggested that one of the reasons they sat close to each other was they were all native speakers: *"Again it was a matter of sitting together with the people that you knew. In the two situations where we had to have groups, in KIM there was six and it reflected all the home students [researcher says "plus ILC2"] yeah, plus ILC2. … we sat together on the same side and because naturally we all drifted in at …in that room half an hour before it began, we all started talking. So naturally we formed an affinity and at that point when it came to deciding, no-one wanted to break away from one another. I don't think it was intentional, we were just sat together an no-one wanted to say 'I don't want to work with you'. It became that natural reserve that came up, where I think the other students that came in the room bang on time or later, it became harder because you didn't speak to them."*

ILB1 adds that some of the members (ILC2 and ILC3) work together in MINICASE module which was the initial reason of sitting together and then other members join them.

ILB2 explained why he did not work with his previous group mate and emphasised how sitting close to each other played the main role in his decision: "MC1 's (called by her English name) sat in front of us and she said hello and everything, but she was with her friends so she naturally found her group. When it came down to it, it just came down to who you were sat with at the time really, I don't think it was any intentional thing."

KMC1 also mentioned very similar reasons for their group formation process.

"It was a case of who was sitting closest again. But, so at the time there was me and KMC4 sitting together on the same bench, KMC2 was sitting next to us as well. That was the first time we'd met KMC2 that module, because she's part-time, mind you, so is KMC4. KMC3 (called by her English name) was sitting behind, just behind here and she asked could she join? And so we were going to be a group of four originally and then ILD1 approached a few days later and said, 'oh you know I hear you and

*KMC3 (called by her English name) you know are in a group, can I join your group?'
sort of thing. Now we said four because we thought it would be easier to split work
that way, …But you know, at the same time ILD1 did seem to be very keen to join and
I had you know had conversations with her and know her a little bit from semester ….
So I did do and everyone was fine about that and so we became a group of five."*

5.2.1.5. LEARNING FROM THE GROUP

In addition to all of the reasons given above, students mentioned they also
considered choosing their group mates in a way that enabled them to learn from
them or work with them. This can be simply improving their English or new skills or
way of thinking.

KMA3 explained she did not want to work in a monocultural group as she was keen
to speak in English and experience working with students with different culture and
potentially different attitudes: *"I like the atmosphere to work with different
people…students from one country or one particular place their way of thinking
probably they think differently but their way of thinking is kind of similar. But people
from quite different parts their way of thinking I different. I mean it's not about
working things, it's about the route. Your mind is different. I like the way that you
see… ah from your work that's how you see this thing, how you view it. That's
important I enjoy the atmosphere of the international thing, it's like my thing."*

KME2 emphasises that working with "foreigners" would help him to improve his
English: *"So I think it's better for us to choose some foreigners to work with, because
that will be a good opportunity for you to practice your language. Also to find out
their ideas, how they think. … One of the reasons is I was a bit concerned that if all
the members I choose are from the same country we might discuss everything using
our own language. Yeah, that's a problem..."*

KMC3 also mentioned she wanted to improve her English and that was why she
approached KMC1 to join their group: *"In the first class, Lecturer KIM2 ask us to
decide our group members so I… in the first class we sit together so we… and for me I
wanted to improve my English speaking, so I prefer to stay with foreigners."*

5.2.1.6.   NATIONALITY

According to the data, even the majority of students who avoided multicultural group work still believed they did not prioritise prospective group mates' nationality in their decision but rather friendship and familiarity with each other in addition to individuals' ability to perform in the group.

KMB1 explained that he prioritised the ability to work in a group above nationality: *"…I don't care where people are from, it's… I judge people on who they are. And in terms of working, it's not whether I feel they've got the ability it's as a group that there's the opportunity to work well together; that's what's important. I don't care where people are from, it really doesn't make any difference to me."*

Students used different methods to choose their group mates, however they tended to work with those who they had some kind of interaction with. This interaction can be as little as sitting next to each other in the classroom and extend to working with close friends.

5.2.2.   GROUP MEMBERS

As mentioned before, group members' personalities and academic attitudes had an impact on group work performance and experience for students.

5.2.2.1.   PERSONALITY

KME4 explained how KME1's personality helped the group by calming everyone: *"It's the way he speaks, the way he moves; he's a powerful figure in the group. Meaning that he always used to say like, 'Everything's going to be fine. Don't worry. We'll make it. It'll be great'"*

Or KME2 explained: *"KME1, I think he did help us when we were facing the problem. I remember once we meet in iSpace and everyone held a different opinion towards something. And then KME1 he just starts explained that and I think he tried to help us to get a better understanding of that problem. So I think everyone will feel a bit clearer after his explanation, yeah."*

ILD1 explained how her first impression of her group mates' behaviour impacted on

her judgment: *"KMC2 was very friendly and welcoming as she is. KMC4 wasn't. From the beginning and I could tell she would be tough to work with."*

ILA1's group was very quiet in their tutor meeting except ILC2 who answered all of the questions and asked some questions. ILA1 explained how ILC2's confidence helped them when they had a group meeting with their tutor: *"Usually ILB2 talks a lot, but he didn't have time. Obviously KMF1 wasn't there at that meeting, … I mean, ILC2 usually speaks most, she's quite confident like that whereas I would say usually I would be the one who speaks the most, but in a small group I don't mind talking like that."*

ILB2 explained that he is usually more quite and reserve*: "I'm just naturally reserved and if I walked over and say 'hello!' I would feel that I was imposing on their space, aI think from my POV in particular, it's a reserve. But a lot of English people have this, it's not unfriendliness it's just a reserve. … It's just respecting other people's spaces and boundaries. Whereas some cultures it's more together."*

KMC1 explained how KMC4's personality impacted on group decision making and the group dynamics: *"I think KMC4 was very determined that hers was going to be the one and didn't… she clearly didn't see any value in discussing them she did dismiss all the other pictures without even… and she was getting very impatient at the fact that there was even going to be any discussion because it was very clear from the way she presented and sat down and sort of almost you know that there was no discussion."*

ILD1 described how KMC4's behaviour made her uncomfortable and she believed this is because she is racist. KMC4's attitudes caused serious conflicts in the group, however this was not due to racist behaviour but actually being a poor team player: *"I think really it could be a race issue. I mean, KMC1 isn't pure white. You can tell KMC1 isn't pure white. She's mixed. KMC4 is pure white and KMC4 during all our group work, KMC4 will only look at KMC1 and will only converse with KMC1. She wouldn't recognise that KMC3 (called by her English name), KMC2 or I are there. When I talk I look people in the eye and I try to distribute my attention amongst everybody in the room. Now, in that case when I do look at KMC4 she's looking at*

me, she immediately looks down as in she doesn't want to look at me and all those things. We've had a big fight."

KMC2 mentioned how KMC3 reacted to KMC4's work even though the other members believed KMC4 was dominating the work and not welcoming others' opinions even though they believed their work was as good. : *"So, there was that feeling, although KMC3 (called by her English name) keeps appreciating KMC4 with the emails saying 'oh I love you KMC4, that's beautiful.' But actually, that's about okay. We had really brilliant ideas as well"* she also believed KMC4's attitude was childish in terms of being selfish, not listening and storming out of meetings. So even though KMC4 had read more articles than the others, her negative behaviour stopped other group members to appreciate her effort.

For KME1 the fact that his group mates where open to ideas and respected each other was an important factor in their group work success: *"No. One thing I liked about that group it was all open. Anyone was free to talk. There was a sense of respect and listening to each other."*

KME4 explained her group mates' personalities and how they impacted on the group performance and dynamics: *"Creative in the technical part. Because I had no idea how to create the rich picture; I hate using the computer to do that stuff. No one else had her [KME3] experience because her Bachelors was more technical oriented. So, she kept on generating ideas really. ..KME5 (called by her English name) was something like KME2 (called by her English name) but in a more sweet way....Yes, I really believe that. I might be wrong, but the picture I have for Chinese people is they are like calm people; they are always – how do we call those who say yes all the time? Agreeable. Yes. They don't raise their voice; they're always calm. I don't know why, it's like every Chinese person I talk to, and my flatmates, are always so quiet. It's weird. ((Laughs)) Greeks [herself] are like really strong-minded and really decisive. Yes, but always with a critical view; not say something just to say it and to stand up. Every Malaysian or like where KME3 comes from they're always cheerful and really friendly. And KME1 is just KME1; he's a whole category on his own."*

Also she added she always pushes everyone to work harder and took the leadership role explaining that this is typical of her personality.

KME4: *"Yes, we worked really well together. Sometimes I might have been really pushing things, … It's my character; I do the same when I'm working… … It's not because I've had experience in working with groups back in my employment; it's because I'm like that."*

Regarding her Chinese group mates, ILD3 also mentioned that they always complied with her decisions and suggestions: *"They always agree with me. …We were quite happy."*

5.2.2.2. ACADEMIC ATTITUDES

As mentioned before, students have different academic attitudes, which could be related to their personalities.

KME3 and KME2 described how KME4 was serious about the work and she led the group and encouraged them to work harder. However as was mentioned earlier, this attitude could be as a result of her personality: as she mentioned herself (in the previous section) she was 'pushing' her group mates to work harder. But this did not cause any conflict in contrast it helped the group to produce better outcome.

KME3: *"She's very, very serious when it comes to academic."*

KME2 expanded to explain how KME4's attitude help them to work on time: *"She's always pushing everyone to do their work on time. Even though maybe we didn't come up with some new ideas but I think she has the attitude that everyone should do their work on time, don't push it. So, if you can find any excuse to be lazy, you might feel stress from her, so it's quite a good thing because that's how we work together and yeah, then we will discuss our work together to see which part you might be good at."*

ILD3 mentioned she prioritised her individual work: *"I try not to prioritise the work. I do my work and then the group work. It much better for me."*

And ILE1 explained that as his group members (like ILD3) prioritise their individual work he felt he needed to take control: *"Well most of the time, I need to be a leader. I think leader is very important in a group here. Someone must to stand up Yeah. Because the leader's just a title. You need to do most of the works you know. You know the other two guys they are… they put their individual work first. They think their personal things are probably the most important, so they maybe they have done maybe… I think their individual work, maybe the other module work they have finished."*

When KMA2's group came to the tutorial meeting they were unprepared and KMA2 described his frustration at this - he was not in the UK just before the meeting due to a personal issue and his group mates did not do anything before the meeting: *"...your meeting when you're going for the first time y'know… to say the truth, truthfully what I think is these people are just unprepared, this is irresponsible."*

ILD1 explained about KMC4's behaviour in the group and her academic attitude: "She says she can't work in a group. She'd rather work at home, so she'd take the thing, so back home, implement the changes, then come back to you" this behaviour later caused serious conflicts in the group. ILD1 also explained that KMC4 was not open to change and criticism which did not help the group dynamics: *"the thing is that she did it and then we would all say, 'Okay, fine. Let's add this. Let's change this.' But she's very defensive in things like that. She's kind of defensive. So, when we just say a little thing like this she changes. Sometimes she'll just say, 'Fine, fine, whatever, fine,' but then she will go home... we don't implement the changes there and then."*

KMC1 added how KMC4 behaved in the meeting. She also mentioned that she suspected that one of the reason for KMC4's behaviour is that she does not like to present work formally and as such would rather push her ideas forward in-group to avoid doing a presentation, as she had done something similar in her previous group work: *"it was… I mean there were things like when we did… when we had the very first meeting and KMC4 didn't want to get involved in the group discussions, she sat in the corner and showed me a little sketch of something, some ideas that she'd*

done. She showed me and was talking to me and not the rest of the group… The funny thing is that KMC4 is very shy about speaking [in front of the class], now what she'd done in her first group [referencing to previous group work which they were together] we do another module together and the group that she's in, now I think she was expecting something similar to happen to what we did in this group… in that group nobody else had input anything, … I think she was quite pleased about it secretly that that was the case and they'd gone for it. And she didn't like speaking so she said well I've done all this, so I'm not speaking so she was being one of that group that didn't do any speaking. So I suspect she may have wanted something similar here, … but I suggested that we all take part in speaking…. partly to do with fairness and partly also because of questions because yeah, if only people who are confident speaking do the presentation, then that leaves people who are not confident at speaking answering the questions, which can be even more traumatic sometimes."

According to the data, students' personalities and academic attitudes could have a direct impact on their group performance and experience. Even though students did choose their group mates and worked with familiar people, still some of the groups have experienced different levels of conflict which were caused by different personalities and academic attitudes. It can be seen especially in the examples that even if one of the members has very different personality and academic attitude it can cause conflicts and negative change in the group dynamics.

5.2.3. LANGUAGE

According to students, in multicultural groups language affected their experience such as through the way they communicated, contributed to the task or their levels of self-confidence.

5.2.3.1. CHECKING UNDERSTANDING

One of the issues for students in their group was to understand what other members say and mean and also to make sure others have same understanding as them. To do so, they used different methods like drawing, asking questions, monitoring each others' face and body language:

KMC1 explained how her group mates asked her to type the handwritten notes from the meeting as she could not understand them: *"Well because it's scribbled, hand written in a hurry and then KMC3 (called by her English name) couldn't read that so she came back and asked and she said can you type these words up so I can see them? …. So that was the thing about KMC3 (called by her English name)"*

However she adds that she may have made a mistake by assuming that KMC3 would have asked if she did not understand something: *"at the start I thought this will be okay because she'll ask if she's not sure. She's not somebody who would be so shy that she would not say anything. She's asked me questions about things you know from semester one so I had an idea but if she's struggling she should say and if she doesn't understand she'll ask you know and I was confident on that basis that it would be okay. But now, at the other end of the process I'm not actually sure and I don't know really whether… I did get the feeling… I would say in a meeting what do you think KMC3 (called by her English name) and she would say something that you know not always… I don't think she always did get what was being said or was always following the conversation. And possibly a language thing, possibly a lack of preparedness in some ways as well…"*

However, KMC3 mentioned the reason for not talking or contributing to the idea was: *"Hmm answer not very fast because everyone comes… it's an accreditation, it's English speaking so we just discuss with each other and when people show their ideas… I will find I'm not good at speaking listen to them…"*

KME1 explained that he was conscious to make sure all of his group mates understand him. so he ask them questions to ensure they share same understanding: *"I would say yes to that because whenever I'd say something I had it in my mind to make sure that my friends understood. So, I was conscious of that, yes…. Sometimes I'd ask, 'Do you get this?' Actually sometimes they'd ask me or any other member of the group what we really mean, which was good."*

KME3 explains working in a multicultural group can be challenging as one needs to check everyone understanding: *"Sometimes it's challenging for you because I have to speak English at all times, and then I have to make sure that everyone understands*

me… I'm more thinking of what people perceive what I was saying. …But now I have to be more careful to let everyone understand…Maybe sometimes I'd draw; sometimes I'd show something, demonstrate them...I would look at their face or get their eyes, their expression...or body language."

However, it should be considered that it was not only language skill which affected students' understandings on some occasions – at times, it was simply lack of preparation or not sharing common knowledge regarding reading the same resources, etc. KMC2 explains the situation in their group: *"…So when she talks some of the articles, it doesn't make sense to others including me at some times, because the concepts we have not touched in the article that she is talking about. Like if you take this picture and ask KMC3 (called by her English name), 'Oh where does this concept come from?' 'I don't know.'"*

ILC2 mentioned how important it was for her that everyone understood each other and contributed to the group, even though they all were native English speakers, and such common understanding might normally be assumed.

ILC2: *"The funny thing is I felt from our personal group discussions everyone had a say. There wasn't one person that stayed quiet when we were together so I felt a comfort level that somebody's already saying what we've discussed and those are my words and I think that it was understanding that you just said that…"*

5.2.3.2.   SELF-CONFIDENCE

Language had direct impact on students' self-confidence like (as mentioned earlier) KMC3 believed her speaking was not good and she did not put her ideas forward or ILD2 explained:

"For the three of us [Chinese members] maybe the language problem is the biggest part so we can't understand. We have ideas, but we can't effectively just tell them what we are saying or expand on things, but… I don't know.... Yeah. I think KMB2 his English is quite good. So maybe sometimes we have maybe ideas or something which at first we discuss with us three and then we decide which is better ... I try to… I don't know what's wrong with me but every time I talk to them, I feel so nervous."

5.2.3.3. COMMUNICATION

Also, language had an impact on the way students communicated and helped each other.

KME1 mentioned how they considered the English language skills of their Chinese group members: *"I'd say yes and no to that, because yes in that you noticed from our Chinese friends that language would be a bit of a barrier, so we'd chip and say, 'When presenting keep it simple. Just say these things'. So, we helped each other, yes. I don't think it was much of a barrier...I would say yes to that because whenever I'd say something I had it in my mind to make sure that my friends understood. So, I was conscious of that, yes."*

KME2: *"Yes, I think it happened. Sometimes I just feel a bit tired of working. I might have already have got some ideas, but just don't feel like talking at the moment. Or, maybe the language problem, you know we might not have difficulties in normal communication, but if I want to explain an abstract idea, I don't know how to find the proper words to describe it. So maybe I use the word I think is right but that might make others feel confused."*

KME3 explained how she felt when communicating in English and how they managed it in their group: *"For me I actually find KME2 (called by her English name) and KME5 (called by her English name) their English is pretty good compared to other Chinese because I could understand them; not like when I speak to other Chinese. So, I don't think they need help for that....My personal opinion is like when you present, because every one of us English is not their first language, so I think I would like to let everyone have the chance to speak. ...Sometimes it's challenging for you because I have to speak English at all times, and then I have to make sure that everyone understands me."*

KMC3 explained how she tried to get involved in the conversation by listening and trying to do some reading about the subject beforehand, but still she does not contribute much in the meetings.

"At first I listen to them and I think yeah they are have experience ....so actually we have the same thinking yeah, the same thinking, so .... when you do a communication we need to discuss with each other so I can predict which part do we discuss. It's the thing, we do the same readings 'So do it this way.' I don't speak too much in meetings. I can understand some because they are the English speakers, they can speak lots and I just listen to them and sometimes I point some key points that they forgot."

5.2.3.4. SWITCHING LANGUAGE

KMB2 explained a typical situation when his group mates switched to conversing in Chinese. He was not particularly annoyed by switching and he showed some understanding that maybe speaking in English all the time is difficult for his Chinese group mates: *"like KMB1 from the UK, and me and another two Chinese and sometimes they start speaking Chinese. And usually it's not from ILD2 or the third one KMB4 (called by his English name), he usually starts… engages to speak with Chinese maybe. … I just look at KMB1 and I can see that he is like going into his own head, his own thoughts... Maybe the Chinese have more [challenges] because they are not so familiar with using English."*

ILD2 explained why they switched to speaking Chinese during the group work: *"So maybe sometimes we have maybe ideas or something which at first we discuss with us three and then we decide which is better …Yeah [she would be more confident to speak in English all the time if her English skill was better]"*

KME2 noted that sometimes she and other Chinese speakers switched to speaking the language and that they did not ask the others in the group if they minded or not; however, no one expressed any issue with this.

When ILD3 was asked if her Chinese group mates switched to Chinese language conversations she explained:

"Yes. Now, I thought it was kind of rude in the beginning of my work but now I kind of understand because I would do that if I had a Korean friend. But in the beginning of my work I thought that quite rude. They didn't ask for my permission."

5.2.4.   NAME

As mentioned for the IL case, in this group work students were also seen to refer to each other using nationalities rather than names. These are some examples:

ILA2 talking about KMA3: *"Chinese girl she was there in another group in IL"*

ILE1: *"Yeah and the Korean girl, she come to us and wants to join us yeah."*

ILD2: *"...And that Finnish guy."*

5.2.5.   FRIENDSHIP

5.2.5.1.   FRIENDSHIP AND HOME SICKNESS

Some of the students mentioned that they formed a level of friendship during and after the group work. And as mentioned earlier, some who were friends from the beginning managed to preserve their friendship.

KME1 mentioned: The group work helped me make friends. I think they are the people I'm close to in the programme.

And KME2 explained their plan to stay in touch for when they go back home: *"Me and KME3 have discussed about this. She said she can just download web chat, WeChat, it's a Chinese platform."*

Also KMA3, ILA2, KMA1 and KMA2 stayed in touch. ILA2: *"all the members we are friends, we meet even outside the lectures... we became friends during the course, during semester 1 then we go out during weekends. We go out for clubbing and everything, food... the four of us. One Taiwanese one Chinese, one Nigerian and Indian"*

In addition to friendship, international students mentioned the group work helped them to overcome the home sickness and they felt less lonely:

KME1: *"Yes, honestly working in a group helped. That's another very important thing, definitely. I never thought I would struggle with missing home, but I did. But looking at these others and being in a group and you're joking and you're working you feel like you've got someone to lean on. You do."*

5.2.5.2.   SOCIALISING

The majority of students mentioned that during the group work they socialised and sometimes they held group meetings outside university, like in a pub or in each other's' homes**.**

ILA1: *"We ended up going to the pub for a drink afterwards, so it wasn't like 'we've got to go for a group meeting now' but more 'Oh! A group meeting! I'll see my friends and we'll go for a drink'. Certainly more than a cultural thing, it was just knowing people and being friends with the people."*

KMA3: *"That day when we were producing picture we had a party actually it was Saturday or Sunday I was at KMA2's place and other friends. After that we had nothing to do, we played PS3 on the TV and then said 'ok let's bring out the rich picture!' (laughs)."*

This socialising helped some of the students to overcome their low self-confidence and start conversation with others, especially with native English speaking students.

ILD2: *"Well, actually at the first… I feel so nervous to talk with KMB1 because he's the English guy and I worry about my English problem and every time I just keep quiet. And actually, we had a dinner sometime and I did say to him, I get so nervous when I talk to you and he went 'Why? You don't have to something' and just after that everything was fine."*

5.2.6. GROUP TASK DESIGN AND MODULE DESIGN

5.2.6.1. MISUNDERSTANDING

According to the data some groups had difficulties to understand the task or some misunderstood what they were asked to do. For example, students were asked to produce a rich picture, however they were told this rich picture should not be like the MINICASE which shows the information transaction between employees and also they were told the rich picture should not be a process meaning do not drew a flow chart or something similar. However, some groups did have some misunderstanding when they came to the tutorial - there were a few groups which produced flowcharts or information flow diagram or said they did not understand what it meant to avoid making a process diagram

KMC2 explained: *"So the only problem was that the information each had for different concepts, but because mine and KMC3's was a process, so they were rejected straightaway. So that's why we just…"* this actually caused serious conflicts in their group.

KMA1 observed that some of the other groups misunderstood the task and produced the wrong artefact: *"… other groups they kinda misunderstand the requirements or the thing they need to do for the presentation. Because I remember Lecturer KIM1 told us you only need to show your thing on one paper or don't just do it in a power point but somebody still make it very complicated and use many slides on the PowerPoint."*

KME2 confided that even after they finished, she did not really grasp the task: *"…but I felt the rich picture was a bit confused, still a bit confused."*

5.2.6.2. HELP AND SUPPORT

KME2 explained the importance of having extra support during the group work to avoid misunderstanding: *"…They might get the wrong idea and then just present it to all of us, so it's quite important to have a tutor between different stages to help you to find the right direction."*

5.2.7. CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROUP WORK

5.2.7.1. GROUP PERFORMANCE

5.2.7.1.1. PREPARATION

A few weeks before the presentation, groups had tutorial meetings. In these meetings they had the opportunity to ask questions and present their rich picture draft. According to the observation, some groups provided the draft whereas others did not bring anything for mostly two reasons: a lack of preparation, or confusion regarding the task brief. This caused some conflicts in the groups.

KMA2 had been away due to a personal issue and upon returning for the meeting, explained how he felt when he realised his group mates did not prepare anything: *"yeah I was pissed, I was really pissed, so we ended up actually going to the meeting looking, feeling very stupid and I was just drawing from my experience from my Bachelors thesis even though they are kind of unrelated. … Because the truth is, first impression means a lot. And your meeting when you're going for the first time y'know… to say the truth, truthfully what I think is these people are just unprepared, this is irresponsible. You know, I don't like it – I think this is not the way I work, the way we work. … after that it was like a wake-up call – we finished, and we turned everything around."*

ILE1 explained that as his group mates did not look at what he produced he needed to spend time to explain it to her, which made him angry: *"So, we draw the diagram maybe just use one hour in… on this Monday. Yeah. The Korean girl told us to met before to meet you, yeah, to have a meeting before, yeah. So, but is already on Wednesday yeah and she you know, she thinks like… it seems like she didn't…maybe she didn't read my diagram before Wednesday… I just feel very, very, maybe a little bit angry."*

However ILD3 said they did not tell her they were working on the rich picture:
"…Two of our group member maybe they had some time to be together so they did first draft….I don't know why but they didn't tell me."

5.2.7.1.2. PUTTING THEIR IDEA FORWARD

As mentioned before, some students do not contribute their ideas in meetings - this can be because lack of confidence in their English skills (like ILD2 and KMC3) or preparation.

KMC1 explained the situation in her group and also she mentioned this might have been because of KMC4's behaviour at the beginning: *"But there were other tensions as well in as much as I'm here, I can see, I do I share with KMC4 at times the frustration that she felt in the group sometimes contribution from others not being as substantial or as valuable. And it is a tension isn't it in a group and but you know I was never sure whether because earlier on in proceedings I was never sure if it's because people weren't getting an opportunity and I was worried about that you know as somebody who has taught and facilitated group work and things like this."*

KMC2 explained it was difficult to put her idea forward - she is referring again to the atmosphere created by KMC4's behaviour: *"The worst part was again, the unbalanced discussions and not being able to put your ideas forward. So I still struggle with that and I think it's because of the personality, even though I've not come in to conclusion as to how to deal with it. But I think I'm going with the spirit of working as a group. So if I've been given work, I'm just doing it, because I have to."*

However, the majority of groups did not experience serious conflicts due to lack of contribution to the idea development, and it seems members were happy as long as there was an idea.

5.2.7.1.3. COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING

Students adopted varying strategies to make decisions and communicate in their groups. They voted or discussed an idea to reach an agreement (the majority used this method). There were some disagreements or misunderstandings, however for the majority these did not cause any conflicts.

ILA2 explained how they developed their idea. After they finished reading the resources they met and drew all the key points together. From here, they decided how they wanted to illustrate the information. Even though they did not explicitly

use a voting system for decision making, it seems they based decisions on the opinions of the majority: *"…we decided whether we should use mind maps or whether we should use rich pictures since 2 of us were against rich picture since it would take a lot of time and would become really confusing so it would be part of going with mind maps. … we came with the idea of jungle. That was KMA2's idea and we all liked it because it was something new."*

ILA2 explained how KMA2 helped the decision making process and his knowledge of the subject helped them: *"since we had KMA2 who's really good at communicating he's really good at explaining things to others, he likes doing that. So even if I was not able to explain it to him, somehow he knew what I was trying to tell him. I think he has done a lot of research on this topic for his dissertation so he explained the same thing to others"*

KME1 described how they made decision on the rich picture: *" …So, one of us in the group actually brought that idea, so the rest of us decided to drop our ideas and go with that one thing. It was a matter of discussing, and said, 'This is better. Let's go with it'."*

And KME3 explained how they designed the rich picture: *"… there was because when I tried to construct the rich picture I needed to ask them, because I'm the one who did it on the computer. We designed it together. Sometimes I cannot understand what they want. Like I told you we divided everything into specific areas after we have read everything. Then to represent, let's say for the information behaviour, like KME4 wanted the picture of the Smurf kind of dancing, to show that they socialise. So, I need to follow her message. It's kind of a tricky thing, because I can't read her mind so I need her to come and sit beside me and choose."*

However, one of the groups took issue with the decision making which caused serious conflicts in the group.

KMC1 explained how they decided on the idea: *"… in the next meeting, we each presented what we'd individually done. There was a difference, there was definitely a difference in terms of the levels of complexity of the diagrams that each of us had*

produced you know some of us more than… the kind of background with nothing really going on to that state of information knowledge, that was kind of it and then others were very intricate and other things was mix so there was a kind of spectrum of complexity. But they were all kind of quite different and we each talked it through and presented the thing and talked about it to the others and then sat down. …. I think KMC4 was very determined that hers was going to be the one and didn't… she clearly didn't see any value in discussing them she did dismiss all the other pictures without even… and she was getting very impatient at the fact that there was even going to be any discussion because it was very clear from the way she presented and sat down and sort of almost you know that there was no discussion … she just flounced about and she flounced out of so many meetings you know. She just doesn't like to work in a group, I find it very frustrating as well but she's a very, very able student, she's great, in some ways, she was the greatest asset of the group and in other ways, she was the most immense problem, she was both. …But it was just clear that she thought that what she had done was pretty much it and was really quite impatient. So it was awkward and the decision was made, it was not clear how the decision was made, it was basically she just refused to… .. Because we thought we had no choice. Well I thought we had no choice."

ILD1 added: *"I think that was so disrespectful and she said that she feels that we are all attacking her and saying that her work is rubbish after her staying up 'til 2/3 am. I was just like, … With her doing that and storming out, the following week, she was really rude to all of us saying that she doesn't actually like coming in here week in, week out to meet with all of us."*

KMC2 explained how not having a clear decision making system affected the group; instead of voting or holding open discussions, one member actively pushed her ideas forward and got angry or impatient with the rest of the group, who eventually decided to simply agree and proceed with her ideas: *"….It was a very imbalanced discussion and we should have… it's not…So, after that, we came up with code of conduct in a group to say, for any of the such decision making it has to be through vote.*"

However, after the rich picture was chosen they decided to go with the voting system. This group demonstrated how important is to have an appropriate decision making strategy and the role of decision making on group dynamics and students' experience is highlighted by the account.

5.2.7.1.4.   DIVIDING RESPONSIBILITIES

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

According to students the majority of groups used the combination of collaboration and cooperation however it seems students used cooperation for the beginning of the group work mostly for reading material and collaborated to make the rich picture.

ILA1: *"We all went away read some stuff and came together…So it [choosing the area to read] was very informal – what you're interested in mostly."*

KMA1: *"Even sometimes it's hard to put us together. When we worked together we tried to finish it as soon as possible."*

KMC1: *"This was just to go away and work individually on the draft, because I think a couple of people would rather that we were all together, did something there and then as it evolved together. But others, including myself thought it would be a good idea to go away individually and just as a way of us getting to grips with the concept it's a useful activity."*

KMB1 explained why they decided to work together rather than dividing the task: *"I always feel it works better when you're together working because you can bounce ideas off each other and you can support each other much better so."*

DIVIDING THE RESPONSIBILITIES

Students divided the reading between themselves and some did more reading in order to add to the rich picture. According to the students, as some people were working on knowledge-management-related dissertations, these individuals spent more time on reading and contributed more.

KMA1: *"..it was ok. And because my colleagues' dissertations are all related to KIM, so actually they gave themselves more info for this coursework so that's kinda a good thing. But I have to say some people will do more because for example KMA2 he supervises also so kinda voluntarily said if he can talk more it'd be helpful for his dissertation."*

KMB1 explained how KMB2 contributed more: *"KMB2 has been the most influential I guess because his dissertation is in this area, he is already reading. He already had a better grasp of it than the rest of us but KMB3's (called by his English name) very, very good. … KMB4 (called by his English name) perhaps not so much maybe he finds the reading of a new topic a bit harder, perhaps his reading ability's not quite as strong as what KMB3's (called by his English name) is. So yeah, I think KMB2 has contributed most to this group work in terms of his understanding of the topic and we've kind of then sort of added on our relevant parts to his sort of main contribution."*

KME3 explained how they divided the task between themselves: KME3: "KME1 decided on the information to how we cluster it. Everyone did their bit..."

KME4 explained that when they divided the reading list they considered some individuals may need more time to read as their English may not be as good as some, or that they could be slower readers: "Actually KME5 (called by her English name) I think at the beginning said that she might not be able to finish the whole list at the end of the week. But it was okay, we said okay."

ILC2 explained how they decided to work in pairs and divided the reading list: *"I give ILA1 the credit on that. He took the lead in two things: before we got together, he'd read a couple of articles before we met and were talking about some ideas from those articles. I said here's the deal: instead of us going back and forth through the articles, this is the one we're going to stick with, you both read it, why don't we catch we catch up, read it with you and this is where our ideas will stem from and whatever extra material we have, we'll use this as our base. With that said, we already got the theory and perspective and it was easy to break down. And ILA1 said we can split off in pairs."*

PRESENTATION

In this module students were asked to present their rich picture. Whoever in the groups did not present had to answer questions which were posed by the, but if everyone decided to present they all could answer the questions. Some groups decided to all present as it makes answering questions easier.

ILA1 explained why he decided to present and that he enjoyed it: *"Usually I hate presenting, but I did really enjoy presenting it. I like the way it was split so you weren't in front of too many people which was very important and Lecturer KIM3 was quite relaxed about it. There wasn't a lot of pressure, it's like don't worry about making too many mistakes. So that was nice, it was relaxed."*

ILB1 mentioned he was not pleased with the idea of all group members presenting as the time allocated was very short and it did not make sense to him. However, he agreed as it was a group decision: *"Yeah. It sounds a little bit strange I thought with a group of 6 people to have some speaking for 2 minutes at a time but yeah I said, if that's what you wanna do I'll go with that. It's an awful lot of changes to do that and it sounds a little bit unwieldy to me"*

KMC1 (as mentioned earlier) stated that KMC4 did not like to present as she said how KMC4 avoided presenting in the previous group work they had, and why she thought would be a good idea if all were to present: *"… but we didn't and I suggested that we all take part in speaking. Partly as well because of the questions aspect, partly to do with fairness and partly also because of questions because yeah, …. Also, it's good and it's good that KMC4's doing it and you know she's going to be part of… she won't be on her own, it's probably not going to be as nerve wracking for her doing it with all of us doing it, so it'll be…"*

KME4 explained she was anxious about presenting, but as earlier her group adopted a more cooperative approach, the other members were greatly knowledgeable in each other's fields: *"Presenting for me was the worst part. I don't like to present. So, we thought that since we've separated the parts of an organisation, let's say, and the parts we did in the rich picture we should also do the same in the presentation. Because for example KME1 wouldn't know that well about my part or vice versa."*

KMA3 explained how they divided the presentation between herself and KMA2 as they both were doing their dissertation on a similar field: *"Hmmm I should say for our individual work at the very beginning divided the reading list and came the cure. ... The last time we divided our work was when KMA2 and I we decided we are going to do the presentation....I'm doing something for KMS for my dissertation so I did some reading...yes he's doing something for KIM, probably we know more about the KIM thing"*

According to the data, even though many students found the presentation stressful, the majority preferred to present together as a group and this approach did not cause any conflicts.

5.2.8. FEELING

5.2.8.1. ANGRY, FRUSTRATED…

Some of the students experienced negative feelings during the group work due to conflicts in the group.

ILD1 explained how upset and irritated she was when working in her group as KMC4 was not receptive to any opinions from others and was not treating them respectfully: *"she was really rude to all of us saying that she doesn't actually like coming in here week in, week out to meet with all of us. I thought...It seemed as if it was directed to KMC1 which is very surprising. … Everybody was upset. This is group work. It's not about pleasing an individual person… she's very defensive in things like that. She's kind of defensive. So, … Sometimes she'll just say, 'Fine, fine, whatever, fine,' but then she will go home... don't implement the changes there and then. She says that she can't work in a group and who can work in a group, I mean....This just makes me irritated, you know."*

KMC1 related her frustration, confirming the account of ILD1, however, she adds KMC4's frustration was because she did not feel everyone was contributing as much as her: *""…Trying to work on things it was just horrible, horrible, horrible. But there were other tensions as well in as much as I'm here, I can see, I do I share with KMC4*

at times the frustration that she felt in the group sometimes contributions from others not being as substantial or as valuable."

ILE1 explained why he was angry that he needed to explain everything to ILD3 as she was not prepared and did not respond to their email quickly. Also he explained why he did not tell her that he was angry with her: *"I'm feeling I do the very same thing, the same thing to explain her and explain her and oh I just feel very, very, maybe a little bit angry... I didn't tell her....Yeah, I keep it in … but before everything's good, but for right now maybe you know I have to admit to you I have correct maybe some… several mistakes about that girl and I send off and no response."*

Although some students experienced negative feelings, none indicated they did not like the task even if they did not enjoy the group work due to its related conflicts [ILD1] or when someone did not contribute sufficiently [ILE1].

ILA1 explained he enjoyed the group work: *"I enjoyed doing the KIM group work more because I was friends with those people and also the work's assessed so everyone was trying a bit harder. Whereas with IL it was a bit more 'we've got to do this for this class, forget about it!"*

5.2.9. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Students used different tools to share their files and ideas such as Google Docs, Facebook and email. As the majority worked with their friends they also used text messages.

KME1: *"Yes, we all had it. Actually I was the one that didn't use it much. I'm on Facebook but I rarely use it. But when we decided we would use it I would check it often. ..we had a specific group. We shared our files…Actually yes most of the communication when we weren't together happened via Facebook. We did text….Email, texting and Facebook."*

KMA3: *"…yeah because of our group meeting things. We discussed it on Facebook"*

KMC1: *"We said we would take notes and that we would upload them and have a shared resource by Google drive, which we did."*

5.2.10. MEETINGS

According to students they met in the IC, St George's library, iSpace and their own homes. However, data shows the meeting location did not have any major impact on the group dynamics.

KMC1: *"We started asking her questions and she got so upset she stormed out of the group room in IC."*

KMC2: *"we always meet in IC or here [iSpace]."*

KMB1 finding a time that everyone could meet was difficult, so members had to work on weekends and use one computer to complete their work: *"… weekend days were sort of the only days that we can spend pretty much all day together….No, when we were at the point of just doing stuff on paper hand, they've got on the ground floor, they've got some big tables where you can work together as a group. For computer stuff it's why we try to come here if there's no class in there. It works well because you can put sort of five computers together on a table. Last night when we were in St George, because we've got to the point now where we're working on just one picture, we just sort of use a couple of computers and kind of just all crowd round, so… we were able to."*

There were also some misunderstandings regarding the time or the place to meet:

ILE1 explained how they had misunderstanding about the meeting location and how this would affect the group work which was caused by a lack of communication: *"But you know, what I want to meet the Korean girl first and tell her I am in the… let's meet at the front of the Student Union. And she says 'I am in library three' and I thought library three is in the IC…Yeah, so I come to IC and wait her on ground floor and maybe ten minutes later she says I'm in Western Bank library. Yeah."*

ILC2 also mentioned a lack of clear communication regarding students meeting in their group. As some were friends it seems this excluded others from their discussion and ILC2 suggested big groups may experience divisions and miscommunication: *"To*

be honest I think ILB2 and ILA1 mostly took the lead as far as idea wise but I felt it necessary to put it out there … I actually did make the comment: 'you guys have conversations on the side and forgot to include us.' It was a miscommunication about where to meet and there was an ...... it's no criticism but it was just a natural thing. A conversation you think other people hear. But I think that's just the issue for a larger group anyway. But I have given them a lot of credit, stepping forward with the theories, yeah."

ILA1 did not mention the misunderstanding about the meetings. He explained how they decided where to meet - it seems they mix socialising and group meetings together, but they also had some meetings in university buildings as well. However, he explained they were not able to book a room in the IC during the previous group work so they mostly met in the department and then tried to identify a room to use: *"..We had meetings to go through what we'd been doing together but then we'd go for a coffee or to the pub after lectures or just talk after lectures and see what everyone was looking at. …. it was 'we can't get a room in the IC, we'll meet here and this time we'll go and find somewhere we can work'."*

5.3. CONCLUSION

The narrative provided an insight into the groups. Students' feelings and thoughts are shown and its relationship with their performance is illustrated. It is also highlighted how students formed their groups and what criteria they have when choosing their group mates. Narrative also brings out the affect of personality, academic attitudes, language, and etc. on the group performance and group dynamics.

It is also highlighted groups which socialise or members are friends potentially have better group dynamics and they perform better and more smoothly.

Thematic analysis of the interviews also shows the majority of students decided to work with those with whom they were already familiar. However according to the data, students' personalities or academic attitude did have an impact on the group work performance and experience and in some groups it caused conflicts. Students

indicated their language skills had an impact on their general self-confidence and contribution to the group work. In addition, the data revealed students were fairly aware of their own and their group members' English language skills.

As students mentioned, they socialised with their group members and also held meetings in their homes or even pubs. This relationship helped the international students' homesickness.

The majority of students believed all of their group members contributed to the task equally, however some of them (as they were doing their dissertation on similar topic) did do more reading and contribution to the idea. The majority of groups divided the reading list between themselves and then worked on the rich picture together. The majority of groups also decided to all present together.

Students mentioned they did experience some negative feelings during the group work but generally they had positive feelings regarding the task itself. They used email, text, Google Docs and Facebook to share files, ideas and communicate. They met in St. George's library, the iSpace and the IC in addition to their own homes and pubs. Groups also held more than three meetings as the majority mentioned they discussed it after lectures or most of the time they were together.

Also, All groups experienced all four stages of group dynamics. However, some groups had more conflicts and as such the storming stage was more apparent.

| Forming | Storming | Norming | Performing |
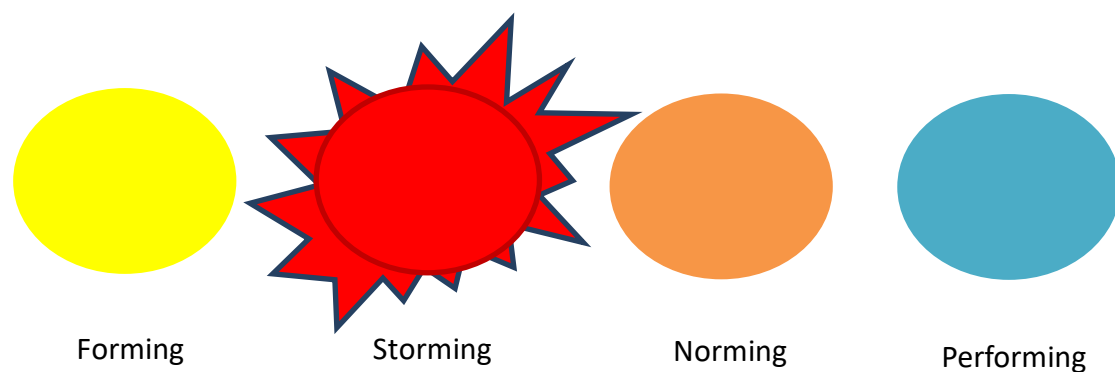
6. CHAPTER 6 CASE STUDY REPORT: THE MINICASE; THEMES NOT RELATED TO A SPECIFIC CASE; CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter includes three main sections:

-Case study report for the MINICASE which similarly to the previous cases includes brief background information of the case followed by the narratives of each group's group process. Following this the findings and themes from the thematic analysis of the case are presented and discussed.

-The section presents themes which are not related to any specific case but include valuable information regarding students education experience, their expectations, etc.

- The last section featuring a cross-case analysis - comparing how themes (e.g. 'feelings') are similar or different between cases.

6.1. CASE STUDY REPORT

6.1.1. CASE CONTEXT

This module was a mandatory module for the Information Management and Information Systems Management courses. The module ran in the first semester and features a three-part assignment comprised of two group work tasks and one individual task. However, all three parts are based on one case study analysis and are linked together. The group work is weighted at 60% of the total mark. Two submissions take place before the Christmas and New Year holiday and one occurs just after the break.

During the second week, students were asked to choose their groups. Each group could have 3-4 members. Students could choose their group mates. Students were briefed about the assignments during the lecture and were given a case study to work with. Each group had a 20 minute tutorial before submission, with a tutor answering their questions.

As mentioned in section 3.2.5.1., this module was chosen as a third because participants frequently talked about their group work experience for this module.

6.1.2. NARRATIVE OF THE GROUPS

6.1.2.1. UNIT 1 2013

This group consisted of two males (both mature home students) and one female international student from China: ILA1, ILB2 and MC1. ILA1, ILB2 discussed this module during their interview. However, as MC1 was not a participant for previous modules she also did not take part in any of these interviews.

ILA1 and ILB2 initially thought they were working with ILC2, ILC3, and ILB1, but learned that they in fact had to work in a group of three, and ILB1 was absent the week they formed their groups. So according to ILB2, they decided that rather than three of the four working together, it would better to split into two groups of two:

"LecturerMC1 said we had to form groups of three so the first thing was deciding, you can't have a group of 3 and a group of 1. So we decided to split up and find a

different partner. ILC1 (called by her initial here) and ILC3 (called by her initial here) worked together and ILA1 (called by his initial here) and I worked together, we thought that was fairest."

Then MC1 (who was sitting in front of them) asked if she could join the group:

"It was actually MC1 (called by her English name) that said 'can I work with you?' She was the one that was looking we would've probably found someone else at that point, not necessarily anyone, but we said ''course we can, yeah!' We swapped email addresses and went from there. And working with MC1 (called by her initial here) was lovely – she turned up, she did the work that was necessarily."

For the second part, they "pulled names" (drew lots) in order to allocate the different sections and members did not express any problems regarding working on the overlap between different sections.

ILA1 says: *"And then for the second part, the individual part we knew how we split the work, talking through it, making sure everyone knew. And I think ILB2 being a teacher is quite good at explaining things simply..."*

ILB2 adds they did not work on the second part together as they did not want to be influenced by each others' work and plagiarise unconsciously.

"No because I've never done that with any individual piece of work to be fair. Because we're frightened of plagiarism and could get accused of collaboration"

For the third part of the assignment, as MC1 had arranged to travel back to China, the group decided that they had to start early. They used the group rooms in the IC for their meetings and did not have any problems or misunderstandings regarding the time and the location of the meetings. They worked five days in a row to get the task finished - according to ILB2 they worked 5-6 hours every day.

ILB2 noted that as ILA1 and he were friends, they spent more time together and discussed the assignment between them a lot, so then they needed to explain what they learned for MC1 in order for her to stay up-to-date:

"Because ILA1 and I sat together we could talk about MINICASE a lot in a sense it made it slightly easier, that we worked very closely on it and probably spent more hours than we actually knew."

However, during the group work there were times that MC1 encountered problems in understanding some of the concepts such as the credit card, so ILA1 and ILB2 spent time to explain these concepts. If MC1 faced any problem due to language, they explained the issue to her to ensure they shared a common understanding.

"When we were sat together in the IC and trying to bring all the work we'd done together, and then the writing the report and trying to interpret it was just a matter of semantics and language really. It was picking out exactly what was meant by each bit, and that was partly me and partly ILA1 because we had to explain our positions ...in order to come together and have a common view. But I think the added slight barrier there was MC1 's (called by her English name) language and not being able to talk about things. When we talked about retail, we were talking about credit cards and well MC1 's (called by her English name) didn't know what a credit card was. She didn't have that concept so we had to explain in quite a lot of detail what it actually was and what it meant. But, it meant more negotiation." ILB2

ILB2 believes it was actually a helpful exercise for MC1 as she learned about UK culture regarding the specific context:

"It was things like that basically, which is good for her actually, because she's understanding more about our culture and how people over here do things."

Group members divided the task between themselves and each started working on their sections and then presented these to other in the meetings. ILA1 and ILB2 had to assist MC1 with her English - especially her written English - as they needed to put all the work together and then submit it, so they spent time going through her work with her to make sure what they understood is what she intended to say and then help her to improve the writing.

ILB2: *"but she was due to go home and it was due in the following week so we spent the last session with her going through her English. We did it sensibly as we could,*

but we felt we couldn't change too much of it while she was present, because we didn't want to upset her."

It seems that for ILA1 and ILB2 it was important to make sure the final product looks coherent to the extent that they even continued improving MC1 's work by correcting her English after she left without her permission to make sure they would not lose marks.

I*LB2: "So we did spend some time sorting the English after she left. But like I said, in retrospect, the subtleness of some of the language we may have got slightly wrong and we may have misrepresented her. Not intentionally, there would been no value in that, but we could've done that. We both thought we had to really because we thought we'd get marked down."*

ILB2 also mentioned their fear came as the module was very stressful and maybe not very clear. Also they were not sure if the marker would consider international students' level of English or not.

ILB2: *"but it's that fear – we don't know who going to be marking it, know what their expectations are (because we were told every different lecturer had slightly different expectations) and especially with MINICASE, I'm not into all that but just to mention what LecturerMC1 teaches and what the book teaches are two different things. With MINICASE, it's a stressful module."*

However, even though it seemed like working with MC1 represented a challenge as her English was not of native speaker standard, her work ethic, subject knowledge and significant contribution to the task made it easier to work with her. As ILB2 said, *"she obviously knew her stuff so we didn't have a problem and were happy to spend that extra time."*

They got a good mark for their coursework and ILA1 and ILB2 worked together in the second semester but they did not work with MC1. ILB2 mentioned she did ask them to work with her for the KIM group work but they already had formed their group. He suggested that were this not the case, they would have worked with her.

The whole group experience was positive and ILA1 mentions he did enjoy working on this assignment as it was like they learned together.

"In the end, I quite enjoyed the group work process because it was something I didn't know anything about. I was completely new to me information systems rich pictures, data flow diagrams and I think it was nice to be learning that with other people in the group so you're working on something and you're showing to everyone else. Working on the same thing, it's not like being on the same course, you're actually collaborating; I think that helped a lot. It was one of the things that helped me learn and MINICASE, was working with other people. If I'd have done it by myself, it would've been much more difficult"

6.1.2.2.   UNIT 2 2013

This group includes three members: two males, with one from Nigeria and one from Taiwan (KMA2, KMA1) and one female (KMA3) who is from China. KMA2 and KMA1 (called by his English name) are older than KMA3 and have a few years' work experience.

KMA2 and KMA1 became friends from the first week when KMA1 introduced himself to him and asked *"Can we be friends?"* he told KMA2 that he was watching him and he looked very relaxed and as he was not familiar with the UK educational system he wanted to be friends with KMA2, who had some experience studying and working in Finland which has similar system. KMA1 knew KMA3 beforehand but he says they were not friends, just acquainted with each other; in one of the lectures he introduced her to KMA2. They used to walk together from their MINICASE lecture to the IKM lecture and sometimes they ate lunch together. This means they developed their friendship before forming the group. As such, it was natural to work together when they were asked to form a group.

"And I remember MINICASE was the second week or the third week they asked us to divide our group. So at that time they were 2 or 3 rows behind me. The teacher said

there should be three people in your group and they were just sat there smiling at me (laughs)" KMA3

It seems the members experienced a very smooth group work experience and received a high mark for their coursework. They first divided the reading list between themselves to ensure everyone had a similar understanding, and then used a Facebook group to communicate. They met in IC or sometimes or at KMA2's residence. Members took turns to cook after meetings and they had food and drink while working which according to KMA3 they called 'coursework with food and drink'

The members met several times and they tended to work together or discuss their ideas and then take the work home and work on it separately, bringing it together for the next meeting. If group members had any disagreement, they discussed it together until a mutual decision was reached. For their individual part, they still they discussed the work together as their areas had overlaps and their individual decisions could potentially impact upon on the others' sections:

"......The store man and the they deal with stock and with customers also. We discussed it together. And I remember after the individual work KMA2 was at the IC and he was asking me to check his picture and it's not uncomfortable at all." KMA3

It seems KMA1 was in charge of setting meetings and making sure they are on schedule. KMA3 mentioned they joked about KMA1 being the leader but she adds they did not actually have a leader:

"it's too hard to say, well, I can't remember in which meeting, we just kept joking 'KMA1 (Called by his English name) is our leader', 'KMA1 is our leader'... but really we didn't have someone who is acting as our leader, like 'ok now let's meet, you do this, you do that' we didn't do it. After each meeting we said 'ok guys let's meet next time at this place...' we had the discussion group on Facebook so posted our times and those things. I can't say who is the real leader because those two, they are not the one, ...It's like 'we all care about our group work' and we didn't want to push the responsibility we didn't want to be lazy so yes, just discuss things together." KMA3

The only time KMA1 and KMA2 argued was when KMA1 was quoting the module coordinator about an issue, but KMA2 was not satisfied by this and wanted to go to him and ask directly; in this instance KMA1 felt KMA2 did not believe him:

"it's for our final group assignment because it was the first time I've had a really kinda serious argument with KMA2 because he didn't believe what I said and because I confirmed with LectureMC2 about the assignment requirement, but KMA2 didn't do any and he still insisted that he needed to talk to LecturerMC2 in person and then the result confirms that I was right. But I felt like 'why didn't you just trust me and why waste more time confirming with LecturerMC2 again?' and he said he only believed the person who wrote the…"

But in general they undertook a successful group work task and did subsequently work together on other modules and also stayed friends.

KMA3 mentioned she does not like working in monocultural groups, even though it is easier to communicate in Chinese. Rather, she believes she can learn a lot from other people when they are different:

"They have different backgrounds, for example KMA2, he's a lot… he and KMA1 (called by his English name) have a different way of working. For KMA2 is like 'ok first let's just go through our own parts, the first section we're supposed to do what..…let's just go straight down. After the fifth section we know aha! We have something wrong and we are going to edit our work'. KMA1 is more 'ok let's finish this then we need to know there's no problem for section 1 then we keep moving'. That's exactly a different way of working. I can't say which is good which is bad it's just a different way of working. It's interesting and I feel I learned quite a lot from them. Probably they're older than me or they are more experienced. Both of them are very affluent students, I learned quite a lot and also group work"

It seems something which made this group work go very smoothly is the friendship members developed. Also as KMA3 mentioned they contributed equally:

"I learned quite a lot and also group work you know it makes me feel it's not only about study, you make friends from group work. I was quite close to those two"

6.1.2.3. UNIT 3 2014

This group was formed of two female members: one British student (KMC1) and one Chinese student (ILD2) and also one male member: MC2 (Nigerian).

When the task was announced and students were asked to form their group, ILD2 approached KMC1 and asked if she can join her:

KMC1: *"You don't know anybody, I mean I didn't know a soul, so on what basis are you going to… I was just sort of looking around as to who's sitting closest to me. Do you want to work in a group together, do you know? But with that one, funny enough it didn't work out with who I was just sitting close to. ILD2 a Chinese student approached me at the end of the session and I don't know why she did it actually, because we were sitting on opposite sides of the lecture theatre. And just approached me at the end and said, "Would you like to be in a group?" I said, "Yeah, that's great."*

ILD2 explained that she decided KMC1 would be good group member as she was active during lectures and also ILD2 wanted to speak in English:

"Because English is my problem and I felt KMC1 was quite good at asking questions and it seems like she always understands the teacher's meaning of the… maybe the modules [unintelligible] I think it's… it would be helpful if I just… because I try to avoid work with Chinese guys because like they all make me just speak Chinese with them during the coursework or things. So, I think I don't like that. I can't say I don't like my people it's just because I chose to study in UK but if I do still speak Chinese like the whole semester I think it is I don't think it's quite good, so I choose KMC1."

However, groups should have had three members, and so MC2 joined them. He wanted to work with another group which was already complete, so he asked KMC1 and another student if he can join their group. The other student was not sure if they wanted him or not. After the lecture KMC1 confirmed that he can join them.

"And there was this bloke who came over from the other side of the room, to try and join a group of people who were sitting in front, but they had already formed a group, so he was sort of at a loose end and he asked me and the guy behind, could he joint he group and I said, "yes that's fine." The guy behind wasn't keen on that idea, he seemed to go, "hmm… no, we need to talk about this." Or something like that and he was being a bit hesitant about whether this join… whether we should be a group. So, it all came together in a bit of a bitty, messy way. I waited outside the lecture theatre with… I spoke to ILD2, and then I waited for the others to come out and just yeah grabbed the other guy and said we will be in a group, because the other guy said he'd be in a group with these other people."

As KMC1 explained, the way the group formed was somewhat random: *"So, it was all just a bit of a mess, though it came together in a random kind of way."*

So they arranged the meetings and they agreed they could meet after lectures. For the start they agreed to read the case study. Then meet up to share their ideas and start working.

KMC1: *"Read the case study, we'll come together and start to put some ideas you know, how we're going to approach it, and what we think three different views are and just you know start to have that conversation. So we'd agreed that and we'd agreed a time and a place and what the purpose of the meeting was."*

However, when they met to discuss the case, MC2 said he did not read it. Furthermore, he suggested that as he was not sufficiently prepared, it would be better if they discussed it later, but KMC1 and ILD2 did not agree since they spent time reading and were confident that they had a coherent understanding of the case.

KMC1 maintained that she does not appreciate this kind of attitude and was concerned that this is the way MC2 typically performs in a group. However, they continued with the meeting and made a plan for the future.

KMC1: *"MC2 had not read the thing when he turned up which doesn't go down well with me, when the first thing you expect to do has not been done. And you sort of…*

there's a worry then in my mind, "oh God is this going to be the way of it?" you know… Anyway and proceeded to say, "well I don't think we can really you know get very far with this today now. I've not read it, I don't want to admit to what the views are and I don't want to say anything because I've not had a chance to read it." And I'm saying, "well, I'm sorry but you know… I've read it and more than once you know. I'm quite confident that what I'm suggesting is okay." ILD2 had read it and she was quite confident and you know we're sort of looking at each other thinking, "God." So we did what we could in the meeting and made some plans and I said we'd have meetings, regular meetings, keep records of meetings and decide what we were going to do and you know try to approach it in quite a systematic way. Which seemed to be agreed in the session and I also made sure because at that time I was working as well as studying."

As KMC1 was working part-time, she specified when her group mates can contact her. However, when MC2 and ILD2 were studying in the IC they became confused by the work and had questions regarding the task, so MC2 started calling KMC1 at work - he asked for clarification regarding what they need to do, etc. even though all members had agreed this in their previous meeting. This actually irritated KMC1, but she chose not react to MC2.

"I was working part-time and because that was only possible because the attendance was concentrated into Monday and Tuesday. So I was very clear with the group, my availability because I said I'm working in the day time on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and I'm not contactable.   I'll be contactable evenings, weekends and I'm in the university all day Monday and all day Tuesday, I'm happier to come in earlier and finish later if they need to meet, you know. So I was very clear about that. But then, it seemed to be ignored; I mean just seemed to be a battle with them, so then I'm getting these phone calls… these ten phone calls when I'm at work on my mobile and I was just ignoring them. MC2, ringing, ringing, ringing, "I'm in the library with ILD2 and we're looking at this and what about this, what about that," and I'm saying, "MC2 I'm at work, I'm sorry I can't speak to you, I'll look at it later." Oh my lord, it carries on into the evening, it was just completely ignoring you know? I was just

getting so pissed off. And then we'd asked… we'd said what we'd do in terms of preparing notes, and sketching things"

For the first part of the task they divided responsibilities, but MC2 did not do his part. They as a group had decided which sections should be finished by a week before submission but MC2 did not finish his work and he was not contactable. The other group members tried to call MC2, but he did not answer any calls, which made KMC1 and ILD2 angry. In the next lecture, KMC1 approached MC2, who responded that he was unwell and he failed to provide a good reason why he did not inform them. Two days before submission he had still not sent his part.

… Oh there was putting the rich picture together, we were each going to have a go at a rough draft and then you know bring them together…we were going to upload them, that's right and sort of share them and then make comments and um it would just take forever to tell you all the things… the upshot was what we'd agreed we were going to do… MC2 rarely did what he said he was going to do. Anything that was supposedly agreed in a meeting just seemed to be ignored as if it hadn't been said. When it came to submitting the first part of the assignment, we had all said which bits we were going to do and he was going to do the description. That's right because the rich picture I'd pretty much done on the computer. Obviously with input from them, but because I'd actually sort of done it on the… using the software and everything that I'd used, I'd sort of made the adaptations based on what they'd said but made the changes on the thing I'd originated. ILD2 was going to do the description that's right but it needed, I can't remember the exact breakdown of the work, but we'd broken it and each taken responsibility for certain sections. And we'd also built in time to review what each other had done before finalising it. So, I think the submission… yeah the submission was on the Friday and we'd said by Wednesday night everything needs to be in our individual sections. Because we need to look at it before we submit and we've got Thursday then to make any changes or… back and forth I said I will respond to emails on that Thursday in my lunchtime and all this. But then, Wednesday comes, there's nothing from MC2, oh that's right, but the weekend before he was supposed to have done something and just hadn't done it at all. And he was non-contactable and we'd tried to ring him and nothing was happening…on

that Monday lecture, I was livid and I went over to him and I said, "where's your stuff, what's been happening, where've you been?" "Oh I was ill." "I said could you not tell us? Could you not email or…?" He just made this face. I was just so cross. So he knew that I was not happy about him not doing things and not communicating. But then when it came to that Wednesday and nothing from him still what he was supposed to have done and our hand-in was on Friday. And it was just awful."

On the Thursday of submission week, MC2 had still not sent his group mates and so ILD2 accepted that she would have to submit the whole section that she and MC2 were working on after finishing her own part and they (KMC1 and ILD2) communicated via email to finish their sections. They decided that ILD2 would submit whatever MC2 sent them.

Thursday night we'd get these emails oh it's coming in, ever so sorry, I'll send it, I'll send it. ILD2 said she would be the one to send the thing in on the Friday and was going to sort of put it all together in one document and send it off, bless her. We had spent Thursday evening between us having email conversations and looking at things and what about this, what about that? And making tweaks and changes to our bits and she still needed to finish a little bit of her individual writing section which she was doing. But MC2's thing was still not there and it got to midnight and we were still up having email conversations at midnight. I said to ILD2, I've got to go to bed now, are you alright doing the hand in? Whatever comes in from you know from MC2, it's just got to go as it is, there's no time to change it now. He sent something…"

However, the next morning KMC1 learnt he did send something which was more than twice the specified word count and ILD2 stayed up for the whole night to edit it. Subsequently they decided they were just going to submit it as it was impossible to change. This really made KMC1 angry.

KMC1: "seven o'clock in the morning and there's an email from ILD2. "Oh KMC1, I'm so upset I tried to ring MC2, I was trying to ring him until 1.30 in the morning and he sends me something at 2.00 o'clock, it was 800 words, it should have been 300. I've been trying to edit it down all night, I'm so tired, and I've got to sleep." She's been

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up all night with this. I was so angry at what he'd… I thought no, no more, this is just outrageous, so… And I'd said to… I'd sent an email to ILD2 and an email – you just let it go, let it go, for better or worse, you cannot do… just send it, whatever state it's in, it's got to go. You can't be doing any more to it now. This is not fair"

ILD2 did not tell MC2 that this behaviour was unacceptable. As KMC1 said, ILD2 emailed him *"oh it's all okay now, we managed to send it in,"*

ILD2 noted that she does not like conflict and if she can avoid it, she will. *"I try to avoid conflicts, maybe we can just explain our opinion"*

Furthermore, ILD2 reasoned that MC2 did actually do the work he was required to, the issue was only that he was late submitting it.

"… we can't say he didn't do anything it's just he missed all the deadlines we set for each other. He always delayed and can't say he messed things up but he's not so helpful to make him as a group member."

This behaviour confused KMC1 as she was had decided to stop working with MC2 in the future, but she also did not want to pressure ILD2 to do something she was uncomfortable with. However, KMC1 decided she cannot work with MC2, and so she talked to the module coordinator on the following Monday in the lecture room.

KMC1: *"And so, on that Monday I went to see LecturerMC1 after the lecture and just said you know I need to… and the problem was as well that in my mind the problem was clearly MC2. But ILD2 when she'd sent earlier emails had said things in her emails like, "oh it's all okay now, we managed to send it in," it's kind of all fine sort of thing. This was the feeling I was getting from this email. So I was really in a dilemma because I was thinking… is ILD2 okay with this behaviour from MC2? I am not, I am absolutely not happy with this guy at all. But if ILD2 is happy to work with him, I don't want to put ILD2 in a position of saying you know I'm going to see LecturerMC1 about this guy, because ILD2 might feel you know mixed loyalties or what's going to happen? I was thinking what am I going to do? I thought I'll just have to see LecturerMC1 and I will ask to come out the group and I'll do the work on my own for the whole thing because I'd rather that than have to go through this palaver of*

chasing this guy all the time who's letting me down and it's coming in and it's shit, it's not what it's supposed to be. So, I went to LecturerMC1 and said can I come out of the group and work on my own basically and he said, "no, it's too much work, it's far too much work tell us what's happened." So I gave him a very quick overview and he said come and see us at four o'clock and we'll work something out."

However, KMC1 decided to ask ILD2 if they would like to leave the group along with her and go to the meeting to discuss this. They agreed it is not fair on them if MC2 continues this behaviour and they end up doing his section as well.

ILD2 said she would have done something if she had support and in this case KMC1 was the support, also she thought if she was making decision she would have given him another chance. But when KMC1 asked her to go with her she decided to do so.

ILD2: *"… I can find support or something, then maybe KMC1 will go with me. But if I can't and she could, then I'll go with her…. I chose to not change anything, to give him one more chance, but KMC1 suggested that we should maybe just come out of the group. If I like I can go with her, yeah, so I thought about this and I think, yeah, maybe we should do this."*

KMC1: *"So then I saw ILD2 and I said to ILD2, "you know I've had a word with LecturerMC1 this morning, I'm really not happy with the… MC2's contribution and what's going on here. I'm not prepared to work with him anymore. It's as simple as that. I've asked to come out of the group and I'm going to go and see LecturerMC1 at four and he said he's going to suggest some options." And she said, "I'll come with you." So I thought, okay, good. I said to her you know, "I didn't want to put you in a position, I didn't know how you felt about it, whether or not you'd want…" Because I didn't want to do a thing of let's try and kick MC2 out of the group if she felt uncomfortable about doing that you know? But at the same time, I can't sort of stay in there"*

 So they met the module coordinator and he agreed they can work together as a group of two. And also he will consider what they did for the first part of assignment separately from what MC2 did.

KMC1: "So, we went to see LecturerMC1, he was very fair, he said there's three options. You know you could stay… we could discount MC2's mark altogether, I said, "no that's not fair," we both said, "no that's not fair because he did do something," it wasn't what it was supposed to be, but he did do something. It was late and all but he did do something. He said he could give a differential mark or you could put loose work together as a pair and I'll find another group for MC2 to work in. And we both you know, ILD2 and I agreed that that would be the way to go. By far the best option. So that was fine and LecturerMC1 scaled the assignment slightly so that we were considering two views rather than three, so that the work was more proportional and yeah, so…"

The module coordinator asked them to not tell MC2 and he said he will do it. However, he did not. This caused awkwardness and made MC2 angry.

KMC1: "But it was awkward, very awkward because then I said to LecturerMC1 should we tell MC2 what's happened? Because that's the thing isn't it? It's like…and I think you know, I would have had the brass balls to do that because I'm not, you know… I can be horrible when I need to be…I wouldn't have done it horribly, but I could have been assertive enough to explain what had happened and why. I don't know whether ILD2 would have felt comfortable about doing it or not. LecturerMC1 said, "just leave it." LecturerMC1 advised to leave it, he said they usually suss out in these situations what the problem is and all the rest of it. But of course at the next lecture MC2 comes bouncing over and I'm like, "you need to speak to LecturerMC1, you need to speak to LecturerMC1."

ILD2: "He forgot to tell him Yeah. So MC2 was quite angry with us – yeah he was horrible, oh I can't…I just said I'm sorry but… I'm sorry, I'm sorry I don't know how to say… you can't just directly say to him that he didn't do anything, so… we think LecturerMC1 will tell him, because LecturerMC1 promised. But… I don't think so."

ILD2 added the situation got better later on, as MC2 accepted what had happened and they now even exchange greetings when they see each other: "But then I think now it is getting better, he's walking past. We do say "hello" yeah."

KMC1 said the problem with MC2 was not because of cultural differences it was because of his personality and not contributing.

KMC1: *"I don't know how much was just due to being a young lad who's just thinking that other people will just let him get away with stuff. Because, the communication… I mean okay, there was some things maybe you could put down to being cultural, but they weren't the problematic things. Things like an email saying, "thank you sweetie", you know it was strange an email because it would be a strange sort of mix between quite imperious you know. "Please do this and get it done now" kind of thing and then on the other hand, "thank you sweetie, you are such… you and ILD2 (called by her English name) are such nice girls." You know, this sort of thing where you're thinking, "yeah, okay." But I mean, so I mean that you can put down to a language sort of thing, and you know the kind of tone… it's hard to get tone right isn't it you know in language and things. But there was no problem at all, the problem is not doing the bloody work, if you're not prepared to do something to come forward and say, "I can't do it because I'm ill" or, "I can't do it because of this" or, "I'll do it…" you know. Don't commit to things that you can't do. And I don't think that's a cultural thing, I think that's just a personality thing, maybe an age thing to be honest with you."*

It seems KMC1 and ILD2 worked well together as a group of two and managed to complete the task in the end:

KMC1: *"ILD2 and I work very well together. ILD2 is fine there's no problems, she's very, very committed. She's always in touch, we texted each other, we emailed. I mean that helps as well I think with the written communication sometimes that you know she said she learnt from having email conversations with…She's really good and I don't know why she worries, she's very capable and she is a pleasure to work with, you know, she really is."*

However, these students did not establish a friendship and did not work together in the second semester.

6.2. MINICASE THEMATIC ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

This section presents the themes, which emerged from the thematic analysis of the interviews. Similar to the previous chapters quotes from interviews are used to support the arguments.

6.2.1. CHOOSING GROUP MATES

Students chose their group mates in different ways such as by working with students they already knew, choosing randomly, selecting the students they were sitting near or next to, or a combination of all of these!

The majority of students indicated that they liked to work with other students who they were familiar with. However, if they did not know anyone due to the module being offered in the first semester, did not get the chance to work with their friends or students they knew, etc. they tended to choose individuals who were sitting close to them or approached students randomly. Nevertheless, some students still looked for common characteristics in their potential group mates like native speakers or hard-working students.

6.2.1.1. FRIENDS OR KNOWN STUDENTS

ILA1 explained how he chose his group mates. He was with three other native English speakers but for that task only three students could work in each group. So they decided to split, however ILA1 and ILB2 stayed in same group and MC1 - a Chinese student - joined the group. She was sitting in the front row and was asked by ILA1 to join their group:

"Me and ILB2 were in a group because we'd obviously just met but we sat together and were getting on quite well. It was MC1 (called by her English name), we were looking for a group it was just two of them sat in front of us so I asked 'do you wanna be in a group?' She was like 'yes', so ok then! It matches, we needed someone else, she needed a group to join... It just happened to be that MC1 (called by her English name) was there."

KMA3 explained that she decided to sit in the front row to show she is serious about her studies and she met KMA2 during the lecture; they started talking and she remembered KMA1 from the registration day, so when they were asked to form a group of three it was the obvious choice for her to work with them.

KMA3: *"I told you in the first lectures I was… ok it was the first lecture so I thought 'I need to sit at the front of the class' and that means I'm serious about my studies (laughs) I sitting in the second or the third row, I can't remember it was a big room and on my right hand side was a guy from Azerbaijan he was doing MINICASE and on my left was KMA1 (called by his English name) and KMA2 they met during the registration week so they were talking and I know Chinese and KMA1 (called by his English name) … And I remember MINICASE was the second week or the third week they asked us to divide our group. So at that time they were 2 or 3 rows behind me. The teacher said there should be three people in your group and they were just sat there smiling at me (laughs)"*

KMA1 explained how his group was formed: *" I chose one Nigerian and one from China…yeah KMA2 and the other one you know, KMA3. And they are really great. No. we kind of knew each other, but not really well. For the MINICASE module you need to choose your group members at the very beginning so. At first we had a good beginning with each other and then we put persons into groups and actually it was a really bad choice because we both very responsible to our assignment. That's a good thing we all take it seriously"*

ILD3 explained she decided to work with her flatmates, as she already knew them: *"Oh, it was okay. I did it with two Chinese boys who live together. We live together in same... we rented the house"* ILA2 explained she decided to work with those students she knew, and as she took similar modules for her undergraduate degree (the same as one of the other group members) it seemed like a good idea to work together as this would make it easier: *"yeah because one of the girls was doing her Bachelors with me at the same time and the other one was the Chinese girl who I made friends with in week one….. it was a core module and the assessment was different, …. Because I knew that she knows the case study well we really wanted to*

be in the same group and we took the other girl because she asked to come with us. She wanted to work with us."

6.2.1.2. PERSON SITTING CLOSE TO AND RANDOMLY

As mentioned earlier, this module was offered in the first semester and as students were asked to choose their group mates very early in the module, the majority of students did not know each other beforehand.

KMC2 only chose students who were sitting near her as she did not know anyone: *"Yeah, you just choose people around you."*

ILC2 mentioned why ILC3 and her accepted the other Azerbaijani member: *"We did. He joined our group because the numbers ran out quick. Some people had four, some had five, so then it got down to two and he didn't have a group number, so we said 'ok, no problem…. because I think it's personality over whether or not you speak English."*

KMC1 explained how she formed her group, ILD2 approached her at the beginning and then the other Nigerian member joined them *" '… who the group is?' You know it was straightaway in, so out. But of course you don't know who anybody is. You don't know anybody, I mean I didn't know a soul, so on what basis are you going to… I was just sort of looking around as to who's sitting closest to me. Do you want to work in a group together, do you know? But with that one, funny enough it didn't work out with who I was just sitting close to. ILD2 (called by her English name) a Chinese student approached me at the end of the session and I don't know why she did it actually, because we were sitting on opposite sides of the lecture theatre. … And there was this bloke who came over from the other side of the room, to try and join a group of people who were sitting in front, but they had already formed a group, so he was sort of at a loose end and he asked me and the guy behind, could he joint he group and I said, 'yes that's fine.' The guy behind wasn't keen on that idea, …. So, it all came together in a bit of a bitty, messy way. I waited outside the lecture theatre with… I spoke to ILD2 (called by her English name), and then I waited for the others to come out and just yeah grabbed the other guy and said we will be in a group, because the other guy said he'd be in a group with these other people."*

ILD2 explained why she decided to work with KMC1 - she liked to work with native students to ensure she did not misunderstand the task and also her desire to speak in English rather than only in Chinese: *"Well, because English is my problem and I felt KMC1 was quite good at asking questions and it seems like she always understands the teacher's meaning of the… maybe the modules … because I try to avoid work with Chinese guys because like they all make me just speak Chinese with them during the coursework or things. So, I think I don't like that….I can't say I don't like my people it's just because I chose to study in UK but if I do still speak Chinese like the whole semester I think it is I don't think it's quite good, so I choose KMC1."*

6.2.2. GROUP MEMBERS

6.2.2.1. PERSONALITY

As mentioned before, students have different personalities and their personality could potentially affect the way they work in the group and their own group work experience.

ILC2 experienced bad group work due to the conflicts she had in her group. She explained that she is always prepared to be accountable for her work, but this time she was very unsatisfied and upset: *"I take responsibility if I don't do something well, but I'm very upset with the programme."*

ILD2 explained that she would not change her group if she had to do it on her own, even though she had problems in the group. She explained she did not like conflicts and usually avoids them. As such, she decided to not confront other members and tolerate the problem on her own, but with another member (KMC1) sharing similar feelings to her own, she felt emboldened and more inclined to change the group: *"I try but, maybe we can just explain our opinion and if we… I can find support or [unintelligible] something, then maybe KMC1 will go with me. But if I can't and she could, then I'll go with her… I try to avoid conflicts, maybe we can just explain our opinion"*

Because ILD2 felt she could not voice her opinion, she became involved in an awkward situation - still she could not tell her group mates that MC2 did not contribute so they left his group: *"I just said I'm sorry but… I'm sorry, I'm sorry I don't know how to say… you can't just directly say to him that he didn't do anything, so… we think LecturerMC1 will tell him, because LecturerMC1 promised. But… I don't think so."*

KMC1 explained how she differentiated the personality problems from cultural differences and how MC2's attitude affected the group work: *"I don't know how much was just due to being a young lad who's just thinking that other people will just let him get away with stuff. Because, the communication… I mean okay, there was some things maybe you could put down to being cultural, but they weren't the problematic things. Things like an email saying, 'thank you sweetie', you know it was strange an email because it would be a strange sort of mix between quite imperious you know. 'Please do this and get it done now' kind of thing and then on the other hand, "thank you sweetie, you are such… you and ILD2 (called by her English name) are such nice girls.' You know, this sort of thing where you're thinking, 'yeah, okay.' But I mean, so I mean that you can put down to a language sort of thing, and you know the kind of tone… it's hard to get tone right isn't it you know in language and things. But there was no problem at all, the problem is not doing the bloody work, … Don't commit to things that you can't do. And I don't think that's a cultural thing, I think that's just a personality thing, maybe an age thing to be honest with you."*

ILC2 explained how her group mate's lying about his English made her feel: *"He was very honest – he said my English is not so good, and I said 'that is not a problem' and I still don't think that would ever be a problem because I think it's personality over whether or not you speak English….however their English conveniently worked when they side conversations when people were walking by and not actually doing the assignment…we were very supportive, very open, like I said different ways we can talk about it, write it down in your own words, we can work on it as a group, don't worry about the English, we'll fix it, that kinda deal All those attempts tried came back with nothing, 'my English isn't good'. I mean you qualified to get here, so it's gotta be something."* And later when they had the serious conflicts and she

complained she described her feeling as: *"I felt very abused as a native English speaker trying to compensate for the claims of someone else."*

6.2.2.2. ACADEMIC ATTITUDES

As seen above, students have different ways to approach the group work which could be because of their different personalities or their academic attitudes.

ILB2 explained that as they had similar academic attitudes, the other two native speakers were comfortable working with her, but they corrected her English mistakes or made her writing better: *"It was only more challenging in the respect that their written English and negotiating some of the things she hadn't come across. If you haven't come across it, how can you incorporate it into your work? So it was just chucking about ideas and sorting it out, but like I said she obviously knew her stuff so we didn't have a problem and were happy to spend that extra time. I know some people came across, not necessarily the language barrier, but having an attitude of doing everything at the last second whereas MC1 (called by her English name)… ILA1 and I are quite similar in our way of working, …That's traditionally what happens in group work anyway, different people have different attitudes. Some people can turn out an essay in a week, it takes me…weeks."*

KMA3 explained how her group mates worked and how this was different from her style. She explained these differences did not cause her stress or discomfort, and she actually learned from them: *"They work so hard it makes me feel bad (laughs). It's like they're so focussed on the lecture and answering questions and I feel they work harder than us that's how I feel, probably they were more technical. They're just serious. …. For KMA2 is like 'ok first let's just go through our own parts, the first section we're supposed to do what and section 5 we're supposed to do what…let's just go straight down. After the fifth section we know aha! We have something wrong and we are going to edit our work'. KMA1 (called by his English name) is more …'ok let's finish this then we need to know there's no problem for section 1 then we keep moving'. That's exactly a different way of working. I can't say which is good which is bad it's just a different way of working. It's interesting and I feel I learned quite a lot from them. Probably they're older than me or they are more experienced.*

Both of them are very affluent students, I learned quite a lot and also group work you know it makes me feel it's not only about study, you make friends from group work. I was quite close to those two"

6.2.2.3. GROUP MEMBERS IMPACT ON EXPERIENCE

Students' experience in the group could be directly affected by their group members - the way their work, treat each other, etc.

ILB1 emphasised that his multicultural group work experiences were best ones: *"out of the 4 group activities that I've done, the two that have been most successful (the ones I feel most positive about) have been the ones with multicultural groups."*

ILE1 explained having good group mates made the task easier: *"I find a good partner. Because you know LecturerMC1 will give us a lot of work to do and you know if you can't find a good partner, you will rely on yourself, yeah."*

KMA3 described how she learned from her group mates and they become friends and she enjoyed the group work: *"…They have different backgrounds… learned quite a lot and also group work you know it makes me feel it's not only about study, you make friends from group work. I was quite close to those two"*

ILD3 explained that even though she cried during the group work due to the situation of living with her group mates and the constant pressure to work (much time was spent on the task by the group) she did enjoy the group work: *"Two of them I haven't finished, but MINICASE work was favourite. Even there was so many complex, I cried. It was big help for me, because I cannot leave my house, but I have to be together with them… and we had arguments so many times."*

6.2.3. LANGUAGE

6.2.3.1. CONTRIBUTION AND COMMUNICATION

Language was one of the key issues in the group work for participants. It caused serious conflicts in some of the groups and in others, native speakers edited international students work without telling them. Additionally, in ILC2's group, some members used language as an excuse to avoid contributing to the group. ILC2 explained her frustration with her group mate and how he used excuses to avoid working: "*I felt that way with the MINICASE group I had. There were three of us and one ally who was quite neutral and I appreciated that. …and I was working with another student who was from a foreign country who often claimed their English wasn't good, however their English conveniently worked when they side conversations when people were walking by and not actually doing the assignment. Even when I complained I said I would be more than happy to re-write what you have to say, I tried so many formats I said 'just tell me in your own words and then I'll capture what you said and we'll capture that in the paper'. They said 'I can't think like that, I can't talk like that'…was a complete total game because we were more than fair to help this person interpret whatever they needed to. …All those attempts tried came back with nothing, 'my English isn't good'. I mean you qualified to get here, so it's gotta be something.*"

KMC1 explained how even ILD2 was worried about her English she was very good and working with her was pleasant: *"She's really good and I don't know why she worries, she's very capable and she is a pleasure to work with."*

6.2.3.2. SWITCHING LANGUAGE

Students reported that some of their Chinese-speaking members switched to their first language during the meeting mostly without asking other members. This mostly happened when there was misunderstanding or the task was complicated and they felt more comfortable to speak in their first language.

ILD3 mentioned her group mates spoke Chinese during group work: *"they did speak Chinese without asking me…Because there was no right answer. If I have opinion I have to make them understand to reflect our own report .. It was difficult to make each other understand. Two of them could speak in Chinese and they didn't want to put effort to make me understand because they already agreed each other."*

However, there were groups in which students did not switch language as a sign of respect to the other members; this mostly happened when members were friends. KMA3 mentioned that even though both her and KMA1 speak Chinese, during meetings they never switched: *"During the meeting of course we can't, but when we go out together of course we speak Chinese. He's from Taiwan so we speak Chinese."*

6.2.3.3.   HELPING EACH OTHER

Students with better English language skills helped others in some groups, like with ILA1 and ILB2 checking MC1's work or as ILC2 explained: *"We were very supportive, very open, like I said different ways we can talk about it, write it down in your own words, we can work on it as a group, don't worry about the English, we'll fix it, …."*

6.2.4.   GROUP TASK DESIGN AND MODULE DESIGN

6.2.4.1.   VIEW TOWARD THE TASK AND THE MODULE

The majority of students mentioned they did not like the task or they thought it was not suitable for the course.

ILC2 mentioned that she did not receive feedback (even formative assessment) during the semester and that she would have preferred there to some sort of feedback to confirm whether her understanding is correct and if not, how she could improve: *"The assignments are due at the end of the course, so there's no way to understand if I'm gathering information correctly throughout the course so everything's depending on one final assignment, my final grade. …"*

KMA2 explained that he thought the module is not for IM students but rather for IS students: *"I don't like it [assignment]. I was in another group I really didn't see what to do I was like 'dude it's yours because I don't know what to do'. It was the first time I did a rich picture and knew what the ideas were but this was too technical. I was like 'I'm not doing information systems but I'm doing MINICASE ...'"*

KMB1 explained how confusing it was that they needed to work on the second part of the assessment individually but this had a direct impact on the final part (group work task): *"Oh yeah, we did although it was individual work we did have some meetings where we were put together to work out how we would approach those individual bits, so that it kind of made sense as a whole. But again, with that whilst mine and KMB4's (called by his English name) I think work as one, MC5's (called by his English name) sort of approach to his bit was a bit different, but that was one of the things I didn't like with that coursework. That is an individual part yet we were advised to work together, we can't say... I can't say to somebody else or somebody can't say it to me, how you're doing it is wrong. It's an individual part. So, when we got to the final part, the third part we sort of found that mine and KMB4's (called by his English name) was kind of compatible, worked well together, whereas MC5's (called by his English name) was a bit out of place. It was just a weird assignment the whole thing."*

ILA1 however, found the task useful, especially since he did the task in a group - he believed the group helped him to understand the task, but he did not like the module: *"I didn't enjoy that course [module].... ...I think it was nice to be learning that with other people in the group so you're working on something and you're showing to everyone else. Working on the same thing, it's not like being on the same course, you're actually collaborating; I think that helped a lot. It was one of the things that helped me learn and MINICASE was working with other people. If I'd have done it by myself it would've been much more difficult."*

ILD2 mentioned she enjoyed the task but she did not have a positive view towards the lecturer and the way the module and groups were handled: *"Although everyone said they hate MINICASE, but actually, I like it. Because I won't say something about*

the teacher [laughs], but the working experience and the whole module I think is quite…(laugh)"

6.2.4.2. HELP AND SUPPORT

For this module the students had two group tutorials but they also met with the lecturer for more support. Some students believed they did have not receive enough support during the module and some found it difficult to understand the module due to a lack of support and the confusion in the module.

ILC2 believed their group tutor could not do anything for the conflicts or any group's problems and also she believed they did not have received enough support throughout the group work: *"My tutor was Tutor2. I had no problem with the tutor, but he only had limited power…. Also I blame the structure of the course, which was a disadvantage to the group. With our group work we only get to work with the tutor two times…. first of all the group thing didn't work and then to me the grade wasn't fair, and with the opportunities to get help it wasn't there, and they told us to do it one way and then… you know, two opposing ways."*

In addition, according to data some students believed what was said in the lecture was different from what is in the module reading which some students found it stressful as they were not clear how it is going to be assessed and the tutorials did not help them much:

KMB1: *"…..it's that fear – we don't know who going to be marking it, know what their expectations are (because we were told every different lecturer had slightly different expectations) and especially with MINICASE , I'm not into all that but just to mention what LecturerMC1 teaches and what the book teaches are two different things. With MINICASE, it's a stressful module."*

6.2.4.2.1. COMPLAINTS

Some of the groups complained to the module coordinator as one or more of their group members did not communicate or contribute to the task. However, data shows doing this did not work - even though the lecturer raised the issue with other members on a few occasions the problem was not solved. Additionally, in some instances, the lecturer did not help as they forgot about the issue.

KMC2 emailed the module coordinator to report that her group mates were not responding; for the first part these students received a notice from the coordinator, but again for the third part they did not work so she submitted it on her own:

"…and submitted it with all three names and I emailed LecturerMC1. I've not had an active participation from these two people and I think, even though I'll be able to do the second part, which is an individual one in the third group assignment, I fear that I'll miss deadline….And so he just had a meeting with them… and then I emailed LecturerMC1 saying, 'Oh, that was really kind of you to email them and not letting them know that I've told you this is what I feel.' But then the third group… third part of the assignment, they just didn't respond to me at all….I don't know, somebody marked it and she said, 'What's happened and I've only received just one?' and I said, 'I've told LecturerMC1 I'm just doing on my own, because they've not responded me back and things and this and that, so…'"

ILC2 explained she complained with her other group members about the member who did not contribute. However, she was sceptical as at the beginning of the module the lecturer expressed his negative view toward students who complained:

ILC2: *"I complained prior to handing in the final assignment along with my other group member. We brought our complaints to the professor, but that was a group concern. My concern with the course was bigger and to be fair I don't think it was a very pleasant environment … early on in the semester the professor came in and complained about people that had complained. So that's a form of power that you exert over, so already I feel like it's a losing battle he's already put it out there 'don't say anything against me'."*

KMC1 explained how the group members complained to the lecturer about MC2 not contributing to the group task and decided to leave the group. As a result of complaint, their work was marked separately for the first part and the lecturer agreed to find another group for MC2, but he forgot to tell MC2 this which caused stress as MC2 was angry with them.

ILD2: *"we tell LecturerMC1 first. Yeah and LecturerMC1 just suggested us to not to tell him and he did it. He forgot to tell him? So MC2 was quite angry with us – yeah he was horrible, oh I can't [could not finish the sentence]"*

KMC1: *"LecturerMC1 said, 'just leave it.' LecturerMC1 advised to leave it, he said they usually suss out in these situations what the problem is and all the rest of it. But of course at the next lecture MC2 comes bouncing over and I'm like, 'you need to speak to LecturerMC1'….."*

6.2.5. NAME

Students often referred to each other by nationality even if they knew each other's name. As mentioned earlier, this is not limited to the students from different countries but even those from the same country who used each other's nationality as a reference point instead of names. Also, some home students believed it would be better if international students adopted a western name.

This quote by ILB shows that even though his Chinese group mates taught him how to pronounce their name, he still prefers to use their English name and he believed students with English names were more willing more to blend. He also emphasised that as the assignment was assessed, they spent more time together and this helped them to develop some kind of friendship: "2 Chinese students and a South Korean girl, there was a Chinese boy and a girl called MC3, and MC4 (called by her English name). MC4 (called by her English name) did tell me how to pronounce her real name… It was much more involved than the IL course we're still in touch and we nod when we go past in the corridor and we're actually going for a coffee next week but of course it was the assessment bearing module, it was high stakes. The fact that

they both used English nicknames was significant. Neither of the Chinese students in information literacy made that concession or having a name which we were easily able to pronounce and remember."

ILA2 refers to her friend and group mates by their nationality even though she knew her name: *"yeah because one of the girls was doing her Bachelors with me at the same time and the other one was the Chinese girl who I made friends with in week one."*

6.2.6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROUP WORK

6.2.6.1. GROUP PERFORMANCE

6.2.6.1.1. COMMUNICATION AND DECISION MAKING

KMA3 explained how they made decisions in their group by discussing and listening to each other's views. They took responsibility for the section they liked and respected each others' decision. When they faced conflicts, they discussed them and reached an agreement: *"… At the very beginning we said we need to read the material and after that we met together and we draw a very draft rich picture thing and then we identified the three systems. We are all like 'ok you pick the one you like I don't mind' both are like that. 'You guys pick first you can give me the most troublesome one I don't mind'. ….We had a little bit of conflict at first though, …. we're discussing, arguing our point of view, yeah but at the end we just combined them together. I can't say who is the real leader because those two, It's like 'we all care about our group work' and we didn't want to push the responsibility we didn't want to be lazy so yes, just discuss things together."*

KMC1 explained how everything they decided in their meeting was ignored by MC2 and it made her angry: *"So we did what we could in the meeting and made some plans and I said we'd have meetings, regular meetings, keep records of meetings and decide what we were going to do and you know try to approach it in quite a systematic way. Which seemed to be agreed in the session and I also made sure because at that time I was working as well as studying. I was working part-time and*

because that was only possible because the attendance was concentrated into Monday and Tuesday. So I was very clear with the group, my availability …. So I was very clear about that. But then, it seemed to be ignored; I mean just seemed to be a battle with them, so then I'm getting these phone calls… these ten phone calls when I'm at work on my mobile and I was just ignoring them. MC2, ringing, ringing, ringing, 'I'm in the library with ILD2 (called by her English name) and we're looking at this and what about this, what about that…' Anything that was supposedly agreed in a meeting just seemed to be ignored as if it hadn't been said."

KMC2 mentioned that from the beginning her group mates did not respond: *"Yes, but the same module, MINICASE, I had two Chinese people and they were just horrendous, to be honest here. They just didn't email me back with, you know when… what they were doing, what they were not doing. So it was a rich picture and I did it all by myself."*

ILA1 explained how they reached agreements in his group by discussion and explaining concepts for each other: *"A lot of talking and explaining, and it was just talking through things really. And then for the second part, the individual part we knew how we split the work, talking through it, making sure everyone knew. And I think ILB2 being a teacher is quite good at explaining things simply, which…"*

ILB2 added it was easy to discuss the coursework with ILA1 as they were both native speakers, but to explain their views to MC1 they needed to spend more time due to a language barrier: *"Because ILA1 and I sat together we could talk about MINICASE a lot in a sense it made it slightly easier, that we worked very closely on it and probably spent more hours than we actually knew. When we were sat together in the IC and trying to bring all the work we'd done together, and then the writing the report and trying to interpret. It was just a matter of semantics and language really. It was picking out exactly what was meant by each bit, and that was partly me and partly ILA1 because we had to explain our positions in order to come together and have a common view."*

ILD3 mentioned she tried to persuade her group mates that her solution to a particular problem was right but this did not work: *"I just couldn't... I don't know. I thought my answer was right but they didn't think that was right."*

KMB1 and KMB4 had disagreements with the third group member, so they decided as two (the majority) thought one solution would be better the group should follow that: *"I think between us, me and KMB4 (called by his English name) carried on talking things through, our ways of seeing it and to be honest it was two against one you know. Two of us felt it's got to be this way and he kind of went with it."*

6.2.6.1.2. CONTRIBUTION

According to the data, the majority of the group experienced a lack of contribution from one or more group members.

KMC1 explained that from the first meeting MC2 was underprepared before he then submitted his work late and that this was longer than the allowed word count: *"…..So we'd agreed that and we'd agreed a time and a place and what the purpose of the meeting was. What we were going to do beforehand and tail off and a guy called MC2, ILD2 (called by her English name) who I've mentioned and me, just the three of us in that group. MC2 had not read the thing when he turned up which doesn't go down well with me, when the first thing you expect to do has not been done. … Anyway and proceeded to say, .. he sends me something at 2.00 o'clock, it was 800 words, it should have been 300 …. I was so angry at what he'd… I thought no, no more, this is just outrageous, so… And I'd said to… I'd sent an email to ILD2 (called by her English name) and an email – you just let it go, let it go, for better or worse, you cannot do… just send it, whatever state it's in, it's got to go. You can't be doing any more to it now. This is not fair."*

ILD2 added: *"Because… we can't say he didn't do anything it's just he missed all the deadlines we set for each other. He always delayed and can't say he messed things up but he's not so helpful to make him as a group member."*

A similar experience was shared by KMC2, ILC2 and ILB1 as their group mates went back home or simply did not contribute.

6.2.6.1.3.   GOING BACK HOME

As the Christmas break took place before submission, several international students went back home. Some did warn their group mates, but others left without giving notice as at that time some students were working on the second part of the assignments which was individual, but some had moved to the third part which was a group task.

ILA2 explained why she did not tell her group mates when she left: *"I went back to India and discussed on Skype and we exchanged our documents so that you can understand what's going on… it was the individual assignment. We had Skype so it's fine we can use Skype and call you."*

ILA1's group worked harder before MC1 left so they could finish on time while working together: *"The first time we met at the very beginning of the year it was when MC1 (called by her English name) went home, so we had to finish early I just sent a message round saying 'do you wanna meet at the IC tomorrow?' They said yes so I booked a room but the way we did that was we worked 5 days in a row in the IC to get it finished. So at the end of the day we'd go on the website, get together and decide when we wanted to meet."*

ILB1 explained that his group mates went back home - one did mention this in advance to the group, but ILB1 simply forgot about this. However, another group member simply left without notice. Nevertheless, ILB1 decided to include this student's name on the work:

"The fourth member of the group, MC3, he went back to China in China - we never saw him again, he never got in touch by email and I think he's dropped out of the course….Because MC4 (called by her English name) the Chinese girl had gone back to China so she wrote part of it…..She mentioned it back in December but I think we'd both forgotten, so when she mentioned it the second time she mentioned it on the Friday and she was leaving on Monday……….We finished as a threesome, and we had a conversation at the end, …it's too late now to flag it up as a problem, so yeah we put his name down even though he hadn't done anything."

KMB2 explained the experience of his group mates leaving. Their group faced some difficulties as two of the members went back home and did not have access to Google applications there: *"There were two Chinese and me in the group. And, I took like responsibility we had like Christmas break for example and I came back home from home over here a couple of weeks before that… a week before the deadline. So I wanted more time for group work and finish it properly. But then I realised the Chinese guys they were like staying in China at the end of the semester. And they had like… they couldn't use the Google from there. Yeah, so I was like, alright how are we supposed to work the group now?"*

6.2.6.1.4.   DIVIDING RESPONSIBILITIES

COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

For the first part of the task, students divided the work between themselves, for the second part they were ask to choose a sub-system to work on individually and then for the third part they were supposed to merge all of their individual work and improve it. As such, for the third part in most groups each of the members was still in charge of their own sub-system.

KMA1 explained how they started the first part: *"because every time before the meeting we asked each member to read through the articles we have for the textbooks, that's what LecturerMC1 recommended us at least we all read the materials at least once, or twice or more."*

KMA3 explained how they worked on the second part: *"…We took every sub-system and we divided it. At the very end we said 'ok we are clear about our work, let's write"*

ILA2 explained how they divided the responsibilities for the third part: *"that's easy but because we had to divide into different sub-systems it was just one system and with this one we had to divide into three and then each one of se had to do a different sub-system. Obviously people who are doing one system know more about the system, so we decided to work together for the individual so we started really*

early, because the submission was in January and I was back in India. So we discussed it, I went back to India and discussed on Skype and we exchanged our documents so that you can understand what's going on."

ILB1 explained how they used both collaboration and cooperation to overcome the issue of the missing group member: *"The previous two parts of it were much more collaborative than the final part was. That was because of the dynamics at that point – MC4 (called by her English name) was in China, MC3 disappeared, we did it pretty much in a rush. I was sat at my computer at home, the morning it was due, getting emails with attachments, different parts of it from them. That's how we did it in the end. There was some overlaps, but mostly it was cooperation rather than collaboration….Yeah it was. The final section of the assessment, the South Korean girl and I did together, well we did it separately communicating by email because MC4 (called by her English name) the Chinese girl had gone back to China so she wrote part of it. Mostly it was me and the Korean girl. …In the end we got a good mark for it so I think it was successful."*

HELPING EACH OTHER

Students helped each other during the task. This could be seen from completing the individual part together or including the name of the person who did not contribute. Sometimes they did more to stop group's mark suffering because one person did not do enough, like ILD2's group.

KMC1 explained how ILD2 stayed up for the whole night to correct MC2's work: "there's an email from ILD2 (called by her English name). *'Oh KMC1, I'm so upset I tried to ring MC2, I was trying to ring him until 1.30 in the morning and he sends me something at 2.00 o'clock, it was 800 words, it should have been 300. I've been trying to edit it down all night, I'm so tired, and I've got to sleep.'"*

ILA2: *"coursework we realised that she doesn't really understand the course but then we still divided the work equally but then when we had to collaborate with the work with had to make a lot of changes to her work."*

ILA2 and her group mates completed the individual part together: *"Yeah we three helped each other because it as a collaborative thing, all three systems so we all used to sit together and work on our individuals"*

6.2.7.   GRADES

Students valued their grade as they discussed if they were concerned or disappointed about it and how group work hindered their mark or helped it. They also seemed to identify a successful group work as being one for which they received a strong mark:

ILB1: *"In the end we got a good mark for it so I think it was successful."*

ILC2 explained how she was disappointed that because they had conflicts in their group and these were not solved, her grade suffered and she was also disappointed that she did not get the chance to redeem herself. She strongly believed that the grade does not reflect the problem she faced during the group work and she emphasised that this is not fair: *"I'm really hurt because I felt my grades suffered. I take full and complete responsibility if I felt I didn't do something correctly, but the problem that I have is that that particular course it felt that to me I was set up to fail and I don't appreciate that…In the meantime when all the politics is going on I feel my grade suffers. I take responsibility if I don't do something well, but I'm very upset with the programme. But not allowing the opportunity that I could even redeem myself…in the tutorials none of the professors agreed with what was what and so they just gave you a grade. I had a horrible problem with my group. … What bothers me is that when results come at the end it's not going to reflect the problems I went through, it's going to reflect what one or two people in this ecosystem that they have what they felt about me as a student, which wasn't my work solely. It was other peoples' work and all those issues, that's what that grade is going to reflect"*

KMA3 explained how happy she was with their grade and how the group overcame their disagreements to solve it: "I think we'd do it the same. Our group work was not bad because MINICASE was my best grade I got 76 for that one and for those two I also got 75s. The only difference for the individual, I got 79 for the individual and I

also got 70+. Yeah I was quite happy with it, I heard from my classmates that the grade is not so good but our group got for each part 70+ so it was a kind of happy experience to do it. We had a little bit of conflict at first though, we're discussing, arguing our point of view, yeah but at the end we just combined them together."

6.2.8.   CONFLICTS

6.2.8.1.   **ARGUMENTS**

Some groups experienced serious conflicts and arguments and they mostly asked the lecturer to intervene (as mentioned in the sections Help and support 6.2.4.2 and Complaints 6.2.4.2.1).

KMB1 mentioned they had arguments in the group to reach an agreement, but they decided to go with majority: *"That was me, KMB4 (called by his English name) and another Chinese guy MC5 (called by his English name). Very different, and yeah we had some arguments...So we like done a lot of work, got our understanding on paper, started to produce whatever it was we were producing and then he starts questioning a lot of things. … me and KMB4 (called by his English name) carried on talking things through, our ways of seeing it and to be honest it was two against one you know. Two of us felt it's got to be this way and he kind of went with it."*

Some students argued when trying to make decision, as there was no correct answer they needed to discuss their point of view to reach agreements.

KMA3 explained how they managed their disagreement: *"We had a little bit of conflict at first though, … we're discussing, arguing our point of view, yeah but at the end we just combined them together."*

However ILD3 mentioned her group mates switched to Chinese and did not include her: *"Yeah we fought. Because there was no right answer. If I have opinion I have to make them understand to reflect our own report and because we have... one is we have different culture background...It was difficult to make each other understand.*

Two of them could speak in Chinese and they didn't want to put effort to make me understand because they already agreed each other.".

ILC2 had problem in her group as one of the members did not contribute and used his English skills as an excuse to avoid the work (mentioned in the language section 6.2.3.1) so when she complained and submitted the group work log, it became a serious conflict and she explained how she was insulted because there was not IS students in her group work after she raised the issue in her reflective:

"As a result of our complaints, they didn't request a reflective report which would've been nice even, to give that person their perspective. But they [module coordinators] didn't want us to make a log. So what happened towards the completion of our assignment, I did turn in our log, I emailed it for everybody's approval and of course the person we had problems with didn't like it. It was fine, I was more than happy to include this perspective, which I did, it just so happened that it was a very rude email towards me and I included my response. He accused me of knowing I was going to turn in the email first so I only wrote nice words and I got to turn his mean words, or something crazy like that. … So what I did, was in the log I said on this day we met, we discussed this, this person had to leave suddenly, me and so and so continued the… so he interpreted that as I should've told them when he left. … the little input that we did get from him, I even included that in there, so it as completely fair, and still he had a problem, so that why he sent me those nasty emails... They told me to 'shut up, I don't even know what I'm talking about anyway'. And my response to him was 'you're exactly right and that's why I'm here on this course."

In KMC1's case she was upset, as her group mates did not do anything:

"On that Monday lecture, I was livid and I went over to him and I said, 'where's your stuff, what's been happening, where've you been?' 'Oh I was ill.' 'I said could you not tell us? Could you not email or…?' He just made this face. [I do not care] I was just so cross. So he knew that I was not happy about him not doing things and not communicating."

6.2.9. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

Facebook and email were the two most used communication tools. However, Chinese students had some difficulties accessing these tools when they went back to China during the Christmas break. However, Skype (like ILA2 used) and Google Docs were used as well, especially when students went back home during the Christmas holiday. However as mentioned earlier, as Google applications are filtered in China, some groups had problems communicating when the Chinese members went back home.

KMA3: "we had the discussion group on Facebook so posted our times and those things."

ILB1: *"Yeah it was. The final section of the assessment, the South Korean girl and I did together, well we did it separately communicating by email because MC4 (called by her English name) the Chinese girl had gone back to China so she wrote part of it."*

KMC1: *".... ILD2 (called by her English name) and I work very well together. ILD2 (called by her English name) is fine there's no problems, she's very, very committed. She's always in touch, we texted each other, we emailed. I mean that helps as well I think with the written communication sometimes that you know she said she learnt from having email conversations with…"*

6.2.10. CULTURE

In some groups students had different perceptions or understandings of a phenomenon due to different cultural backgrounds. In most groups this did not cause any conflicts but some members had arguments.

ILD3 mentioned they held different understandings of debit cards (which they needed to discuss) however two Chinese group members switched the language and did not make effort to include her: *"Because there was no right answer. If I have opinion I have to make them understand to reflect our own report and because we have... one is we have different culture background. We talk about examples; when we talk about debit card, when you get the letter from the debit card, we have*

different concept but it is more similar. Sometimes you get the letters before the month and sometimes after the month but different concept about debit card. It was difficult to make each other understand."

Or similarly MC1 had no understanding of credit cards so ILA1 and ILB2 explained the concept to her. ILB2: *"When we talked about retail, we were talking about credit cards and well MC1 (called by her English name) didn't know what a credit card was. She didn't have that concept so we had to explain in quite a lot of detail what it actually was and what it meant. It was things like that basically, which is good for her actually, because she's understanding more about our culture and how people over here do thing"*

ILC2 explained the conflict in her group could be because of cultural differences: *"I think there's a couple of cultural issues, it was native English speaking against non-native, and I think it was Eastern and Western. The culture clash, I felt personally, I don't know much. I felt very much in that moment because the conversation towards me was very derogatory, demeaning and that's not… he said it with such ease he said it like 'that's the way, what are you challenging me?'…It's not like he's a youngster, this guy is nearly a middle-aged man, that could have a lot to do with it as well, but I'm no spring chicken either, I'm 32."*

However she added she did not like when all bad behaviour was treated as cultural differences in the department: *"A guy insulted me and a few people came at me 'oh there's cultural differences!' I said no – the States and England are not that far apart, literally everything is almost the same minus a few things here and there. Culturally it's tiny little things, but I'm worldly enough to understand how this…"*

KMC1 explained they had some cultural differences but the main conflict was because he did not contribute: *"Because, the communication… I mean okay, there was some things maybe you could put down to being cultural, but they weren't the problematic things. Things like an email saying, 'thank you sweetie', you know it was strange an email because it would be a strange sort of mix between quite imperious you know. … But I mean, so I mean that you can put down to a language sort of thing, and you know the kind of tone… it's hard to get tone right isn't it you know in*

language and things. But there was no problem at all, the problem is not doing the bloody work."

6.2.11. MEETINGS

The majority of groups met many times, as they could not remember the number of instances they met.

ILA1: *"we probably met 1000 times"*

KMA3 explained that as the group members were friends, they worked and had meals together: *"Sometime we go to KMA2's place to eat and do the coursework together so it's like 'coursework with food and drink' (laughs) yeah it's so funny!."*

Some of the participants mentioned it was very difficult to find a place to work:

ILB1 highlighted the difficulties they faced to find a group room and had to cancel some meetings or meet in one of the university cafes: *"Towards the end of the semester we had to meet in Western Bank because all the rooms in the IC were booked up. Yes there was one point we had a space booked in WB which was occupied by other students studying as a group so we didn't actually meet there in the end. There was one meeting I was on time someone was late, went home and then it was the holiday I think. For the very final meeting we ended up sitting in the café in the Arts Tower because there was nowhere else."*

6.2.12. DIVISION IN THE GROUP

There were some division in the groups. According to students these divisions were: division between IS students and IM students, friends and other members, and students from the same countries and other countries.

ILC2 explained earlier how she felt she was an outsider by her group mates as she was an IM student and they were Information System students:

KMB1 mentioned he worked closer with one of the group mates as they were friends:

"I think between us, me and KMB4 (called by his English name) carried on talking things through, our ways of seeing it and to be honest it was two against one you know. Two of us felt it's got to be this way and he kind of went with it."

ILD3 mentioned how she was left out of discussion as her group mates switched *"Two of them could speak in Chinese and they didn't want to put effort to make me understand because they already agreed each other."*

6.3. CONCLUSION

The narrative showed how students formed their groups. Also the group formation relationship with the time that students were asked to form their group. As the module was introduced in the first semester and students were asked to choose their group members very early in the semester when they did not know many of their classmates.

Also the narrative provides an insight into the groups process, the cause of conflicts and the ways students handled the conflicts. In addition, it demonstrates how students interact and communicate in their groups. Also, the role of the group task, assessment, language and etc. are highlighted by the narrative.

Thematic analysis For the MINICASE group work shows, the majority of students preferred to work with those they knew but when this was not possible, they worked with those who were sitting near them. Students' personality and academic attitude had an impact on their group performance. English language skill was a main issue for some of the groups in terms of communication and contribution. Groups had two group tutorials, but students indicated that they needed more support during the group work task.

Most groups used a combination of cooperation and collaboration. Even though they were asked to do the second part of the coursework individually, some groups decided to work on it together. To do the task, they met many times and used Facebook and email to stay in touch and share files. However, as the submission for

two parts of the course work was after Christmas, a few international students went back home which in some groups did cause complications. As Chinese students do not have access to Gmail or Facebook in China.

Almost half of the groups mentioned that one or more group members did not contribute and this caused conflicts. In two groups, other members left the group. Students did mention how important their mark was to the extent that they considered it good group work task if they got high mark.

For this module's group work, groups experienced all four stages of group dynamics. However, some groups experienced a bigger storming stage which resulted in a dissolution of the group. In addition, in this module storming stage was still present even when students were norming and performing.

Forming   Storming   Norming   Performing
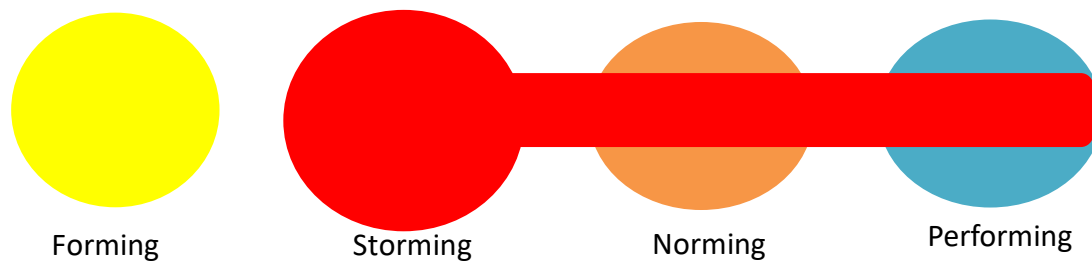
6.4. THEMES NOT RELATED TO SPECIFIC CASE

INTRODUCTION

Participants pointed other factors which affected on their education experience. These factors are listed separately as they did not directly impact on students' group work experience but it can be said they influenced on students' attitudes during their study and consequently affected their group performance and their views towards group work.

6.4.1. STUDENTS' EXPECTATIONS

Students had different expectations before they started their master level, these expectations effected on the way they approached their group work and their course mates. Students mentioned they did not expect so many students in their course, so many international students, or what the module offered are not those they expected. These expectations were influenced by their previous work experience, age, culture, and etc.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS

KME1 explained he did not expect to see there are so many students in his course as he compares this course to typical Master curse in his country: *"I didn't expect it that way. I was so surprised. It's typically of undergraduate programmes in my country to be that big; but Master's programmes are pretty small. And people who came here previously were telling me stories of how small classes were, and I was expecting that."*

NATURE OF THE COURSE

Students mentioned they had different expectation from the course, some found it very theoretical, some expected it to be more focused on other related aspect (e.g. more traditional library modules for Librarianship course or more business related modules for IM course), and some believed unrelated modules wasted their time.

ILE2 expected different modules during her course and she mentioned she thought the course is more traditional Librarianship comparing with other universities, which

offer similar course. However, she mentioned she did enjoy the technical aspect as well: *"I don't think I thought… I thought there'd be more kind of specialist modules, like in terms of like music Librarianship or law Librarianship, like on specific sectors kind of thing. I thought that would be more involved and I wasn't expecting like the information retrieval module, because that was a bit technical. But I'm now doing a technical module this semester, so in a way, it was a good surprise to have that kind of thing, but most of what we've learned about is what I expected….But I think I expected more about traditional stuff, like the cataloguing in and classification kind of side as well which I know is the focus of some of the other courses, like the one in UCL is more kind of traditional Librarianship skills so... People I expected and as I say, there's a mix of ages, most people have done the traineeship so yeah, it's kind of what I expected but some aspects not."*

ILE1 explained some of the modules were too theoretical and he expected more practical modules: *"I don't want to study the knowledge management and too you know… Yeah, more practical. But it's quite theoretical."*

KMB2 mentioned he expected more business-oriented modules: *"… like the study didn't say anything about information literature is an important skill in the business environment. But it needs to be taught and the words is being… that are used in my information literature need to be changed accordingly so that business people can understand it… Yes, but information management… it is a skill set and it is actually a profession in the business world as well… Yeah, but the thing is, I mean there should be more…."*

ILC2 expressed her opinion regarding the first semester. Her view was formed by her expectations and assumptions she had regarding the modules which were 'useful' and related to her degree: *"The first semester was a complete waste in my opinion, being forced to take completely irrelevant courses"*

NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM SAME COUNTRY

KME2 mentioned she did not expect to see so many Chinese students: "In the first week, I was so surprised [seeing so many Chinese students] and then I just I think

I've got used to that and it won't be a problem, but it's a pity to lose the chances to get involved to a boring life."

ILA1 also point out that he was told before the course that the majority of students are from China but he was still surprise: *" Yeah because when I came to the open day I talked to [one of the lecturer] and he told me if you're doing information management the majority of people on your course will be from China. I was quite surprised how much of the course was made up from people from China…."*

MODULE ACTIVITIES

ILD2 explained how she expected different activity in the course, as the master degree is different in China: *"the poster is not so helpful to the module. It's just like a new experience and doesn't… because well in China if you doing a Master degree we won't do that. Just probably write essays or give presentation of something, we don't do this poster thing."*

AGE AND NOT MIXING

ILB2 also mentioned he was a bit scared that he is not going to mix with other students as he was older than others: *"I think so, if necessary I would have. Before coming on the course my greatest fear was being by myself. As Masters students, you tend… I knew that having spoken to people who've done Masters degrees before, they've said 'well, it's not like undergraduate' it's very much you by yourself, and I understood that. I was a little bit frightened that I wasn't going to mix or that I'd be too old for people to relate to, or whatever. I was that bit apprehensive, I was steeling myself before coming …"*

EDUCATION SYSTEM (WAY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING)

KMA3 compares her experience of studying in china with the UK and how she felt underprepared as she did not know how things work in the UK higher education and she could not understand the lecturer accent at the beginning as such she missed some guidance from the first session and consequently she was unprepared for the following week: *"…it was MINICASE LecturerMC1 thought it is like I have never heard his English is not bad he has got that pronunciation right [European] pronunciation now I can understand at that time but I have never heard that accent before it was*

like o my god what is he talking about. (laugh) I can't understand I didn't do [the reading before the lecture] because in china undergrad it was quite like people mm its really free you have some pressure just before the exam two weeks ahead you just prepare for exam and take the exam then forget everything. (laugh) yeah we don't have stress or pressure on daily module and off course we are not doing any pre study or these thing and undergrad was just like a play. So I didn't do the pre study before that module and you didn't even know … didn't even know that I can see the slides on mole I didn't know it its like mm when I went there some student print out the slide 'omg what's that I feel so terrible I don't know I don't understand the lecturer and my classmates still work so hard they already have the slides and I don't know where to get them it was so terrible (laugh)'"

STEREOTYPE

These expectations were not limited to the course or master degree, in general these expectations also include international students, other students performance, stereotypes and etc. some of these assumption and stereotypes are mentioned earlier in specific modules finding such as past experience (section 4.3.2.2.) for the IL module.

KMA2 talked about his pre assumption of Chinese students which was formed by his previous experience of working with Chinese students and how it changed after working with them: *"If I say I have a stereotype about working with Chinese, I would be lying, because I was in Finland for a long time for education, and what that translates into is that you get the worst of the lot, and that's the truth, because it's free. It's probably people who couldn't get into UK schools or US schools, or schools where they had to pay and it's free, so every Tom Dick and Harry comes there. So we got really lazy Chinese students in Finland. As a student it was very hard, as a teacher it was even harder trying to mark their scripts and understand where they were coming from. It's always very hard working with them, so I would be picky. If I was choosing a group, I would probably not be picking a Chinese person unless I knew that person. It's a kind of stereotype. …"*Students also mentioned about their expectation from what they achieve during the master and after. In some occasions

these expectations affected the way they work in the groups especially when they were so focused on obtaining high marks for the modules.

GRADE

ILE2 explains why she wanted to have distinction to show her parents she was successful in her Master: *"To be honest, the grade is nothing… for me as an individual it's important to me, to get a distinction. It's not… I'm not aware of it as being important in terms of me getting a job, but I want to get a distinction….Yeah, it's my personal feeling towards it, so because I think I feel that I kind of… well my family have put a lot of money into me being here and my kind of.. their way of understanding that I've done well is to get a distinction as well. I mean it's not…there's not that pressure there but in my mind it's like…"*

SUPPORT DURING STUDYING IN THE UNIVERSITY

KMB2 explained his reasons for doing his master in the UK, he later mentioned he expect to receive very good support as he was paying for his tuition fees in the UK: *"… The reason for… I mean yeah the only reason actual is economic reason. In my country a Master's would take two years and… but it would be free, no costs involved. But here, I have to pay the induction fee but that would be, with the length of the Master's is less than one year, so I calculated actually that my income it matches my income and living costs in Finland and UK and then I realised that after I graduate from here after one year and go back home, for example and start working straight away. I should get my money back earlier than I would be like on full-time students for two years. So I'm going to save money this way when I finish this in UK, just because it's one year….I think that having Sheffield in my resume would give a nice boost because they are not really much of like a unemployed jobseekers who are like UK university in their…"*

This table illustrates the different expectations found in this research and the reasons for them. Reasons are identified from the interview data and the observation.

Expectation	Reasons
Number of students	Other people told them, comparing with other courses or universities
Nature of the course	Comparing with other courses or universities, university marketing in different country
Number of international students from same country	Assumption, or lack of knowledge
Module activities	Comparing with other universities, comparing with different educational system
Age and not mixing	Assumption
Education system (way of learning and teaching)	Comparing with different educational system
Stereotype	Previous experience
Grade	Personal preference and academic attitudes (Achieving)
Support during studying in the university	Paying tuition fees

TABLE 6.4-1 EXPECTATIONS AND THEIR ROOTS

6.4.2. LIBRARIANSHIP STUDENTS

During the interview students talked about their experience studying with students from Librarianship course, and also Librarianship students' experience of working

with IM students. This was particularly interesting findings as their perception towards each other and the way they treated other students was one the reasons for division in the classroom and during group activities. In addition,

ILB1 explained his understanding of Librarianship students' academic culture *"My cultural response to the librarians who are all English and white is sometimes less conducive to group work if that makes sense."*

KMB2 explained his observation of Librarianship students and his opinion of why Librarianship students do not blend with other students. He mentioned the Librarianship course and its focus maybe one the reason that Librarianship were united: *"They're a different module, doing different modules when they are meeting in iSpace here for example they're always coping off with themselves since they have form their own groups and they are working and chatting, screaming and yelling loudly when I'm reading here….haven't worked with them, I really haven't had many modules with them, but when I've seen them here, I usually tend to… I think… I don't know, in modules maybe at the university the course is more structured, so that's the way that they are working together. And they are not really so many options for them to choose from outside the library and so their books and their library buildings…so maybe theirs is opposite way. They are selecting all those modules that have something to do with library and that makes them… and there are fewer of those modules available, so basically they are always on same modules I think. So that could form them as a close working group more, more than..."*

Findings indicate in various occasion Librarianship students' attitudes gave the impression to other students that they know more than them. And they did not wish to have proper class discussion with IM students. This attitude in some occasions damaged other students' confidence.

KME2 explained her experience of working with Librarianship students and the way they made her feel, as it seemed they do not like to have discussion with her. She guessed this may be due to her language or nationality: *"I remember when I was sitting between two-, three students from Librarianship course that subject and you know that model, I'm not very familiar with that because that was a different one.*

So we have to discuss something about the structure in the library in the high institutions, so it was a new area for me. But I have tried to find some useful information before that lecture, so I think I've got enough ideas to share with each other but it's a bit embarrassing because we finish our discussion quite much earlier than it should be and then we just stop. I don't know what we should talk and I don't know how we continue our communication. So I tried to talk somebody else like 'What's your major? Blah, blah.' Things like that and I don't think they are interested in that, and then it stopped again... I feel I am not treated equally as the other students who have the same nationality as them. Yeah, I think they might think English is not your own language so if I talk further more you might not understand my point so we just stop... A little bit but I quite enjoy that lecture, it's really helpful and yeah, I really enjoy that but just how we interact with each other that makes me a bit...Self-conscious?"

ILA1 explained he felt Librarianship students know more than him so he made sure he was prepared for the session and at the end he realized as he did the reading beforehand he did know more than them: *"In the end it was good, but at first the most intimidating because I made... no I worked. I'm sure I got to know some of the librarians better but I assumed that the librarians would be experts on what we were doing... and I didn't know anyone. That was when we were given groups as well. It was about open access which they didn't know much, I think I knew more about it than them. Because to get ready for the course I'd done all the reading that was suggested. It wasn't much, it was read this book and this book so I did because I thought 'they're going to know everything'."*

KME3 explained how she believed Librarianship students knew more than her and how this impacted on her self-confidence and her contribution in the class: *"I think the students from Librarianship will speak out more because they have experience. They understand everything going on in the academy: every research library, workplace, special library. So, like me I'm a new learner so I can have less experience – not less; I don't have any experience at all. And then I tend to understand based on theory things. Like them, they have experience; they have worked with research library, so they can just speak out what they think about. They will be more criticised*

because every time we go to class we have this session, pre-session we call it, and we need to read an article. There was one time that we had to read about circulation service, I think. It's about how you manage users of the library; how you... like research library. They tend to come to you and ask for some research. Me I never experienced it. Some of the Librarianships did and they have worked in the library, so they can be criticised; they can just say, give their opinion and make up with richer things....I kind of feel less confident to come to that class because I feel like everyone knows what they are learning but not me. Most of the time I will listen to them. [Lack of confidence?] No, I think it's because they know more than me because they're here. I would love to listen more to them because they have experience."

ILC2 mentioned that she thinks Librarianship students had different perspective and the course suited them but did not suit her and she added that she believed Librarianship students did not have a clear view of the real world as they were excited about their course: *"I know the library students enjoyed it very much and that's awesome, but in business...yeah....If I mixed with the librarians, I don't think I would've had the same experience because I felt like it was a different world, like opposite sides. I don't think I would've got through if I had had that perspective. I felt the course for them that they loved it, but for us it was [nervous laugh] 'ok!'... You could see on the librarians' faces that it was new to them and I think the personality and experience of a person in information management is they already come to the table so different. I feel that the librarian section of the students was a bit sheltered, very enthusiastic about libraries, but I don't think aware of how the outside world uses the library and so I felt like it was like a false start for them."*

Finding also showed librarian students were reluctant to blend with other students. It is also highlighted in the Librarianship course home students do not blend with international students.

KMA2 mentioned that he Librarianship students did not blend with other students: *"Librarianship is mostly English people. The girls in front of me, the librarians I call them the 'type of' girls because they're always together. They're always together."*

Same as KMA2 KMA1 was surprise how Librarianship students stick together: *"it was the first few classes, because we have Librarianship and IM students merged in these classes so I think we have so many British people in the class, but how come they stay in the same group?"*

KME2 also mentioned international student in the Librarianship curse do not blend either: *"I noticed there are some students studying the additional library and they came from European countries. And they were sitting together and they don't have too much interactions with the others."*

ILD1 also mentioned she did not believe Librarianship students wanted to blend with other students: *"No, no I didn't but I could see my friends who did and the experiences were just... it wasn't good with the Librarianship. They're funny characters, so we say, because they just... with my friends they wouldn't want to really... they participate but they were participating out of obligation not because, 'Okay, we're in a group. Let's get to know each other. Let's get to talk.' No, no they just... it's all business and we were trying to get to know each other and trying to... because it's Information Literacy one of the... it was September, trying to make friends and also like that. They literally don't want to be our friends so..."*

KME4 mentioned she did not blend with Librarianship students especially home students and she speculated that it was because he was not home students, female and from another course. She added that this maybe because they are very competitive as she had similar experience during her bachelor degree: *"I know. The situation is like this: there is also a Greek girl doing the same modules, so the atmosphere is like I talk to her more, and I talk to specific male British people there….Yes. The rest of the people, female British, may say, 'Hi. Hello' but that's it. And I don't know whether this is because I'm not in their course or because I'm a woman, and a non-British woman….Competitive, yes; they are more competitive. And this is true because I've experienced this when I was doing my Bachelor in Librarianship: we had the same thing, even among friends."*

ILE2 [Librarianship student] explained why she did not make an effort to talk to international student at the beginning. She mentioned language barrier as one of the

reason and she believed it is easier for Chinese students if they mix with Chinese than others : *"I try to, but sometimes you come across language barriers which are a bit difficult. There's a Japanese girl on the course who I'm working with in a group as well and she's really nice and we talk about certain things that our cultures have in common. … But I wouldn't say... I think I should make more of an effort sometimes to get to know them. But I think there is a tendency anyway for people to kind of go off into their own kind of groups of where they've come from, especially if they speak the same language, I think it's easier. I mean because there is such a big population of Chinese students I think it's just easier for them to go off and speak in their own groups than it is sometimes to mix. Whereas if there was maybe one or two people maybe from different countries, they'd probably be 'forced' to if that makes sense. But it also depends on their level of English…I think, I think… I know I'm guilty of it as well with just that assumption that people know… And you kind of forget sometimes that people don't have those experiences but the thing is, I suppose that's lack of cultural awareness for home students what isn't in other countries or do you know what I mean?"*

6.4.3. DISCUSSION IN THE CLASS

Data revealed most international students are less likely to contribute to the class discussion. This was due to lack of self-confidence either because of their language level or their knowledge.

KME2 mentioned, as she feels self-conscious in the module with Librarianship students she is less likely to answer any question in the lecture however in Information Governance module as she is with IM students she contributed even if she was not sure about her answers, as the subject is more familiar to her.

KME2: *"Yeah...We have got lecture on Friday for Information Governance and I think most of the students are from Information Management...Yeah I'm okay because no-one answers the questions. I feel a bit more comfortable and I just don't feel if I try to answer the question even my answer sounds stupid, but that makes me get involved into the module. Chinese students and I think the lecturer, the questions given by the lecturer sound a bit easier to answer and this yes, I mean the subject is familiar. Yeah*

and the one given by Module lecturer [Library related module] is unfamiliar so I'm not sure, I'm not certain sure about my answer....I think it doesn't matter, but I just don't feel self-conscious [when subject is familiar]."

ILB2 explained his feeling regarding international students not contributing in the lecture: *"I think it's the lecturers (here) that don't take this into account. They expect students to talk and so we end up doing that. But they do try to talk to the Chinese students, but then there's silence in the room. And yes, the home students could answer the questions, but then we'd feel as though we were dominating. So there's our reserve and their reserve. And we've talked about this as a group and we've said we should ask the questions, we're here to learn too and we're trying to get the best from lecturers so why shouldn't we? But we do feel collectively guilty for doing it. You don't feel like asking that of the Chinese students because you don't want to appear racist or prejudiced. It is that barrier."*

KME3 explain when there so many students in the lecture she felt less confident to contribute and also when the course is very multicultural she felt more relaxed to answer questions: *"If I know the answer I could just raise my hand. I will naturally have the confidence to talk about it because I know about it. But sometimes when the class is too big, so many people in that class, I would be less confident to speak, even if I know the answer. ..Yes. Maybe one of the reasons I feel less confident is because this is multicultural, international. But when I was in my undergraduate I would always participate in class, always raise my hand."*

KME3 also added with Librarianship students as she thought they knew more about the topic than her she was self-conscious and less confident to contribute: *"I think the students from Librarianship will speak out more because they have experience. They understand everything going on in the academy: every research library, workplace, special library. So, like me I'm a new learner so I can have less experience – not less; I don't have any experience at all. …. I never experienced it. …. I kind of feel less confident to come to that class because I feel like everyone knows what they are learning but not me."*

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6.4.4. LEARNING FROM THE MULTICULTURAL GROUP WORK

Students mentioned that they learned from working in the multicultural groups and it was not limited to the language or culture.

KMC3 mentioned she learned to manage her time: *"I do not want to work with Chinese people, because Chinese people are not very good at time management and... time management and work plan. So we always do things it's the first time, I really, really like the work here and KIM group they make it very, very clear for them, but we have the group meetings."*

ILE1 mentioned it could help him to improve his English as it also mentioned in the previous sections (e.g.4.3.1.2.1): *"Because you know so many Chinese students. I am going... I go abroad for study with the foreigners, not for the Chinese students, yeah. So you know and maybe they are British maybe, I think. They can... they have a very good British accent yeah and I can practice my... our English, yeah. That's a good point and you know if you are in an international group you need to communicate in the English yeah. So it is... you are forced to do it."*

Similar to ILE1 ILD2 mentioned working with home students helped her to improve her English.

KME3 mentioned one could learn different culture by working in a multicultural group:

"It will bring you a lot of benefits; it's something new. Like for me it's something new because you get to mix with people, and people from different backgrounds. Sometimes when you all get together you get to learn their language or their culture – even if it is outside your objective of the group. You get the chance to know them.

6.4.5.   HELP TO MIX STUDENTS

Students also pointed out that it would be better if they had the opportunity to get to know each other before the course. As they believed it would have helped the group dynamics and also help home students to blend more with international students.

ILB2 talked about his ideas about introducing students before the course and how it could have impacted on their relationship: *"I think not that specifically, something more subtle than that in that you just do it to begin with, you just have a few more exercises perhaps in that intro week or those first two weeks, because I know a lot of the international students have orientation in September, but that's separate from the home students and I don't understand why because surely that would be a much better environment to mix people. Otherwise you're just sat in a massive lecture theatre in October with lots of people that already know each other from different cultures but as a home student you're isolated because it's assumed that you know everything anyway so you don't attend and that's silly in my view. .. it might be optional. I do think that that would've been a lot better. I think the understanding would've been better to begin with and the understanding would avoid that awkwardness at the beginning, especially because you're doing this course in a year and it's such a short year....That comes down to the fact that the culture of UK universities and UK HE is not explained in any way. It doesn't necessarily have to be a lecturer, it comes down to if you have a large number of international students and a small number of home students, they should use the home students more to orientate...building those cultural bridges. It would take out some of that awkwardness, because everyone hates group work, people say that at the beginning 'oh no, group work' because when you don't know anybody on the course - speaking from a home personal perspective - when you don't know anyone... think it is key that people make links beforehand and easier to do that with people who speak your language naturally than people that don't. ... I think it is that language barrier, and language carries a cultural affinity.....With multicultural, you at first have barriers, your own barriers that you've put there because you don't wish to offend, you have a*

reserved boundary....But then I think as I said there has been generally a separation us, which is sad, but its happened."

ILC2 explained in the second semester she got the chance to hear everyone's names as the guest lecturer asked everyone to introduce themselves: *"This semester we had a guest speaker who asked us to give our names and name something. First time there were 25, 30 students and I head everybody's voice, I didn't even know some of them were in the class."*

6.4.6. VIEW TOWARD GROUP WORK

Students shared different views on group work, some had more positive view as they believed it helped them to get to know other students, it will be helpful their future career and etc. and some had more negative view as they believed they had far too many group work that it lost its effect.

NEGATIVE:

CONTROL OVER THEIR MARK

Majority of students who mentioned they do not like group work believed group work would jeopardise their marks.

KMB1 mentioned that the group work should not bear the whole mark for the module, as he liked to have control over his mark. He suggested when working in a group does not have control over the outcome: *"I do enjoy working in a group when it's a group where the dynamic's good. Like the group we have for Knowledge Management, I enjoy it because it's a really good group. I suppose ultimately I do prefer to have my destiny in my own hands. If I'm honest. But, all of the modules for group work is... it never counts for 100% of the module, it's only a proportion of it so I think as long as you have that balance that's fine. But I certainly wouldn't want a module where 100% group work is there's always that risk so."*

ILB1 explained why he felt out of control in the second semester as the modules were heavily group work oriented and he felt he does not have control over his time and the amount of work he needed to do: *"Yeah. I'm very conscious that I need to do*

more reading for the academic thing because the way we're doing different strands I feel 'ok I've done this strand, but I've gotta look at other things more' mostly. I've really felt out of control so far this semester, I think that's because it's been so heavily group work orientated, I think that's one of the reasons for that. When you're working towards individual assessment obviously you're working for yourself, to your own schedules and stuff, nothing the deadline. But yeah, the e-government one has been the best so far"

KME4 mentioned she prefers working in a group if it is not assessed, as she wanted to achieve higher mark and she preferred to have control over her mark.

POSITIVE:

Students provided various reasons why the group work could be beneficial, these reasons include: learning from other students, working with people with different perspectives, help with their future career, and shared responsibilities. Also, some students mentioned they do not find group work difficult as they are used to work in a group during their education. Also, some of the participants mentioned module and the group task impact on their view towards the group work.

LEARNING FROM OTHERS

ILG1 explained he likes group work as he can learn from others and group can solve problems better than one: *"the group work is better than the individual because it expands my thoughts so that I can know something that I can't think of from the other people and use their ideas, I can learn from them so I think group work is better than individual work."*

DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

KME1 explained being part of the group enabled him to see different perspectives and learn from others and he believed group work should be encouraged: *"I think good in that it gave me an opportunity to see different perspectives; how people from different countries see things. But one challenge I can point to is just getting to gel and bond and work, because you're from different places, there's that time when you have to really get to know each other and work it out. I consider that a bit challenging. But the good thing is that most of them spoke English, so language was*

never a barrier...Not really. I like the whole thing of working in groups, and it's something I think we should do back at home in my country. It's good. It should be encouraged. I think it should be encouraged."

HELP WITH FUTURE CAREER

KMC2 mentioned she liked the group work as she could relate it to her work as she experienced some challenges working with a group in her work place: *"I like it. Because I can easily relate to my work culture, because the lady I'm working with, who is holding my post until I you know… she'll be there whatever… She thinks its… she has this problem with sharing stuff and so it has nothing to do with any..."*

ILD1 explained even though she does not like working in groups as she does not like to be in contact with people who do not work well in the group but she did appreciate the advantages of the group work for her future career: *"I personally don't like group work but I appreciate group work for what it is because for me I just keep on saying, it's a learning experience. In this world when I am working outside... you know, when I am no more student but I am employed, I obviously will have to work in a team. It could be a multidisciplinary team. It could be multiracial team but I will have to work in a team. I think group work here in my studies, in my classes, all these academic group work, is preparing me for the working world. But being a student I don't like it because of the different personalities and the characters you come in contact with. We are all so different.....Some people can't and the kind of person I am I like doing things and I like doing group work, but you get some people who will hide under the other group members. They get cover like that. To some certain extent I can understand because maybe that subject they're just weak. If it perpetually happens then you kind of get irritated by that. I mean, I guess it is what it is."*

DIVIDING RESPONSIBILITIES

ILE1 believed group work is important element in his learning, as he would be asked in his future career to work in a group. Also, he believed by working in a group students would have less responsibility as they share the responsibility: *"Because I don't want to… I want to… you know team work is very important, in the… yeah in*

the society, so not only in the university, even in the future we can… we will work outside in the company so, so that will influence our ability to co-operate with each other and you know, individual I think also need several assessments, you know. A part maybe not only rely on the final, you know, final report is not very good….Yeah. I think it's good. It's good because… and you know another advantage is the group work maybe… it can reduce your… reduce your task maybe."

Then he explained study that is like a battle and students with their group mates stand better chance of winning the battle:

"Yeah. And you can… it is not… you fight… fight yourself maybe you feel just as… it's just like a battle, you know? [Laughs]….Yeah, battle when you feel… when you meet the lecturer or the model it's just like an enemy, yeah. You need to yeah, secure him, yeah by yourself or by… with your… with other mates, yeah. It's better with other mates I think. Before you rise. So I say it's just like you need to prepare the gun."

BEING USED TO GROUP WORK

Some students mentioned they like or used to working in a group as they had group work activities throughout their study. KME3: *"I really enjoyed it. I've always enjoyed group work since school. I've grown up to do a lot of group work, so it's not going to be a problem for me."*

DEPENDS ON THE MODULE

There were students who simply did not like to be involved in any group work and some students believed it depends on the module if they like it or not:

However even though ILA1 mentioned he did not like group work but he enjoyed learning with his MINICASE group: *"I'm not a big fan of group work anyway…. In the end, I quite enjoyed the group work process because it was something I didn't know anything about….It was one of the things that helped me learn and MINICASE was working with other people."*

6.4.7.   CONCLUSION

This section highlighted the factors, which affect on students performance in the groups and their experience as a students. It shows the role of students' expectations in their performance and their view not only towards the group work but the course as a whole. These expectations include the nationality of their classmates or number of international students, the modules, the size of the module and the course (number of students in the module/course), their grades and etc.

Also, majority of students talked about their experience of working or being classmate with Librarianship students. Data showed that majority of the Librarianship students did not blend with other students and their behaviours in some occasions made other students feel uncomfortable or caused low self steam. It is highlighted, that students were under impressions that Librarianship students know more than them.

Another theme discussed is the contribution in the classroom from both international and home students point of views. Actors such as language, confidence of knowledge and other students' contribution affect on students contribution in the classroom.

Next theme is learning from the multicultural groups. International students pointed out multicultural group work help them to improve their English language. Also, it was mentioned by students that multicultural group work could potentially help students to learn about different cultures.

One of the issues raised by students was the lack of contact between international students and home students before the course. Also, it was pointed out the lecture rooms linear layout does not help student to get to know each other.

The last theme is students view towards group work. Students have different views some did not like the group work due to various reasons such as lack of control over their mark, having to rely on other students' performance. And some of students mentioned working in a group means shared responsibility and less work, learning

from other members, and they believed the experience is similar to real world work environments which employees need to work in groups as such they found it helpful.

6.5. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

As the nature of each module and their group tasks was different, students performed and experienced issues differently. Students chose different strategies to form their group and they performed differently in each group.

However, when group tasks shared similar characteristics such as bearing the majority of the final mark findings showed students behaved in similar ways for example making more effort or prefer to work with their friends.

In this section the similarities and differences between findings across the cases are presented.

6.5.1. CHOOSING GROUP MATES

Students were allocated to their group of three for IL group task and the majority of students mentioned even though they did not experience conflicts during their work, they would rather work with the students they know. Also, data showed students do like to work in a group which they share an element with their group mates e.g.: all speak same language, all of them are international students etc.

For KIM, the majority of students worked with those they were friends or familiar with. However, in groups the majority of students knew each other and one or two other students joined them as they were sitting near them in the lecture room. Most of the group were between 4-6 members.

MINICASE was offered in the first semester, as students did not know each other as much. The majority of groups were formed by students sitting close to each other or randomly. Nevertheless, some students chose their group members more strategically by observing their behaviour during lectures and if they were active students and ask question during the lecture they would try to join them.

In all three modules, international students mentioned they like to work with home students or those who spoke a different language, as they wanted to practise their English and push themselves to speak English during group work.

6.5.2. LANGUAGE

Language was one the main issues for students in all three cases. In the cases it was mentioned that some Chinese students switched between English and Chinese without asking other group members' permission. This irritated some of the group members, but, according to the data it did not bother students when working in IL group work. Students with different first languages had some problems understanding the concepts proposed by other group mates. Also in some groups, language caused division in the group as international students switched to their mother tongue. In addition to these, in most of the groups the majority of international students avoided answering questions during the exhibition.

 During the MINICASE group work some students did not contribute as much or some used language skills as an excuse to avoid contributing. In a few groups home students corrected the English grammar for their international student group mates without telling them.

As with the IL case, language did not cause serious conflicts in the KIM group work. According to the data it seems students were more open about their English level and also their group mates were more considerate and tolerant toward the language barrier. When dividing the reading list, the majority of groups considered their language skill and allocated appropriate time to read the resources. However, students mentioned low language skills caused low self-confidence and as a result students did not contribute to group work in some cases.

6.5.3. ACADEMIC ATTITUDE AND THE TASK

The majority of students mentioned they do not make effort if the task is unassessed. As such, the majority of groups during IL group work took the task very lightly. It was also mentioned by students that making a poster (or anything using hand) was 'childish'. Almost all of mature students and some of the international students mentioned they did not like the task for the above reasons (unassessed and poster).

However, as the KIM group task was weighted at 40% of the final grade, they mentioned they did invest much more effort to complete it. Even though some students mentioned they did not like the task but they all made sure they work hard to get a good mark.

Similarly to the KIM group work, the MINICASE group task involved the majority of their final mark students putting more effort into the group work. The majority of students mentioned they did not like the task.

For both KIM and MINICASE, students mentioned some of their group mates left their part to the very end which was stressful and caused irritation. Also, a lack of preparation for the tutorial meeting and group meetings was raised as one of the elements, which caused irritation for some group members and in some groups in MINICASE this caused serious conflicts. However, as IL group task was not assessed, students did not mind if one did not contribute or was not prepared.

In general, data revealed students are 'mark driven'. The majority of students would not make an effort if the given task is not assessed. As a result, students mentioned work harder during MINICASE and KIM group work.

6.5.4. COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

In all three cases, students used both cooperative and collaborative approaches. In IL some decided each of them would work on the career they want and then they put it together. In KIM, they divided the reading list and then they shared their understanding and produced the rich picture together. In both the KIM and IL groups used collaborative approach more than cooperative. It seems the early stages were more cooperative and the rest collaborative.

In the MINICASE group work even though they adopted both collaborative and cooperative approaches, it was mostly cooperative as they allocated each sub-system to each group member and then they put it together.

6.5.5. ROLES IN THE GROUPS

In IL group task majority of groups did not have a leader but a person who encourage others to work, however in KIM group work the leader role was more apparent also students took different roles as peacekeeper, person who explains everything, etc.

In MINICASE group work majority of students did not mention if the group had a leader or not.

6.5.6. CONTRIBUTION

In all three cases students mentioned there were some group members who did not contribute to the group work. In the IL group task students did not mind if one of the members contributed little or no input, as the task was not assessed.

But during the MINICASE group work, students were more serious about their contributions and if any group member did not contribute as much this caused conflicts and in some cases the problem was raised with the lecturer. However, during the Christmas holiday some international students went back home and groups needed to adjust. In some cases, they finished before the holiday; some finished the task without those members but still include their name and some communicated from their country and continued the group work. But the majority of groups did finish the work without those members.

For the KIM group work students mentioned they were satisfied with their group members input. However, it was mentioned some group members still contributed less than other, which was explained by students, as they were not confident in their English they did not contribute to the ideas as much.

6.5.7. MEETING

Students did not meet more than four times to finish IL group task. However they did meet more to finish the MINICASE and KIM group tasks. It was mentioned by students that they used iSpace , IC and St George's library more to have their group meeting but it was also mentioned that some groups had difficulties to find a available group room. However, few groups decided to have their meeting in a pub or their homes. These groups were closer together and they formed some kind of friendship.

They usually booked the group room together but in all three cases there were groups which experience some kind of misunderstanding regarding their meetings either time or location. This was caused in lack of clear communication, not paying attention or not being able to find the meeting room.

6.5.8. FRIENDSHIP

Even though IL group work was one of the first group work students were asked to do and many of students did not have the chance to meet other students it did not encourage students to make friends. Majority of students mentioned they may have said hello and acknowledged their IL group mates after the group work but they did not socialize or did anything together. Also, majority of the students did not work together again in other modules.

For MINICASE group work as it mentioned before students chose their group mates and some of the worked with their friends and students they were familiar with. However except one group none of the students formed any friendship. Majority of students did not work with same students again.

However, for KIM group work it seems they formed stronger friendship. This also could be because they formed their group mostly with their friends and as KIM was offered in the second semester students had developed their friendship. However in 2014-2015 which the module was offered in the first semester still some the group formed a strong friend and they stayed friend after the group task.

It was also mentioned the friendship formed during the group work and also the group work itself help students with their homesickness.

6.5.9. SOCIALISING

There was no socializing during IL group work. As it mentioned above they did not get close together. But during MINICASE group work not the majority of groups but some of the group did socialie. And these group members also worked together in the second semester for the KIM group work.

KIM had the most socializing between students. They did go out for meal. Some groups partied together went to pubs or coffee together.

It seems socializing help international students to overcome their lack of self-confidence caused by language skill level by enabling them to talk more with their group members or in one case by openly addressing their shyness regarding their language skill and discuss it with others.

6.5.10. HELP AND SUPPORT

For all three cases lecturers and tutors played vital role in students' motivations, solving the conflicts or helping them to understand the tasks.

During the IL group work it was mentioned that the tutor's response to students' complaint regarding a missing group mate had a negative impact on student's motivation.

In the KIM group work tutors helped the group to understand the task and in some cases avoid conflicts as some of groups had misunderstanding regarding the task.

However, in MINICASE group work it was mentioned the tutorial and support was not enough and students felt they needed more support during the group work. In the case of conflicts however the lecturer helped students by changing their groups or giving notice to students who did not contribute. But in one of the group when the lecturer forgot to inform one the members he is no longer part of the group this caused awkwardness and confrontation between students. Also, it was mentioned by students that the lecturer did not encourage them to complain and raise their issue as at the beginning of the course it was mentioned that he does not like students who complain.

This is also noticeable that across all three cases what students considered as help and support was limited to the face-to-face support they received and all module documents and available resources (including video tutorials, slides, hand outs, FAQs, etc.) were overlooked and none of the participant referred to them

6.5.11. CONFLICTS

There were no serious conflicts in most of IL groups however there were some misunderstanding due to the cultural differences.

In the KIM group work majority of groups did not have serious conflicts. Most of disagreements were solved by discussion in the groups. However, one the groups experienced serious conflicts which was not solved completely but the group changed its approach.

However, unlike IL and KIM, the majority of groups experienced conflicts during the MINICASE group work. Most students here mentioned they raised the problem and some of the students did change their groups.

6.5.12. GROUP WORK EXPERIENCE

Majority of students mentioned they did not like the IL group task but many of them (mostly international) mentioned they did enjoy working on the poster as it was not assessed and there were no pressure and could be creative.

Most of the group did enjoy working on KIM group task and majority of students did enjoy working with their groups.

For the MINICASE group work the majority of students did not enjoy the group work as they experienced some kinds of conflicts and they did not enjoy the module. Some noted they could not understand the reason for the module, or that the module was too technical.

6.5.13. COMMUNICATION TOOLS

During IL group work majority of groups used Google Docs and email to communicate. Most of the students did not exchange their number or add each other on Facebook.

However during MINICASE Facebook and email were used by most of students to communicate which in some cases when Chinese students went back home during Christmas holiday caused problem as both are blocked in China. Some students did exchange numbers and text each other.

For KIM group work students used Facebook and created a group on Facebook to share their idea. They also used Google Doc and email. Majority of students did exchange numbers and used text messages as well.

6.5.14. DIVISION IN THE GROUPS

In IL group work some groups experienced division in their group this was because in some groups, Librarianship students tend to speak to each other or Chinese students tend to switch language and speak in Chinese.

In MINICASE group also some groups experienced division similar to IL group work I was because students from same course tend to stay together and same for students who speak same language. In addition to these also when two of the group members were friends they tend to stick together.

During KIM group work none of the students mentioned there was any division.

6.5.15. GROUP DYNAMICS

Students experiences different stages differently in each case. In IL case as students were allocated to their groups the Forming stage was very brief. Groups mostly skipped Storming stage as the task was unassessed, students tended to ignore any issues arising which potentially could cause irritations. They went trough norming and performing stage almost immediately after they were given the task brief.

In KIM case, student experience the Forming stage longer as they choose their group mates and most students were very careful in their decision to ensure the group can achieve higher mark. Most of them worked with students who were friends or familiar with as such the Storming stage was not as big for them. However, some of the groups experience much bigger Storming stage. But, all groups passed the storming stage and they had similar Norming and Performing stages.

In case of MINICASE, forming stage was present however; the nature of selecting members was different as mentioned in section 6.5.1. . Majority of groups experienced Storming stage and most of them did not pass the storming stage and they had the stage throughout the Norming and Performing stages.

The diagrams which illustrate the group dynamics for each case are in sections: 4.4, 5.3, and 6.3.

6.5.16.   CONCLUSION

Across the three cases, there were clear overlaps in terms of factors affecting group work. The most prominent factors cutting across cases were English language ability, the personality or academic attitude of group members, and the students' desire to work in a group with those they are familiar with.

Where pressure on the students was relatively low, groups operated healthily with members generally contributing and enjoying the work. This is particularly the case when the work was unassessed (i.e. in IL), but when pressure was present even within this environment - such as the need to talk about the IL poster - then certain group members avoided responsibility. Conversely, when the pressure in the module was particularly felt by students (MINICASE) conflicts could occur and students generally reported having a poor group work experience. Certain group members here would fail to communicate or would only submit their part of the task as late as possible and intervention from academic staff was occasionally needed. In the IL case, the low pressure of the task brief meant students would meet less and were less motivated as there was not the incentive of a high grade. As such, other academic work took priority.

Within groups, international students were seen to be keen to work with home students for reasons such as learning about culture or practising their English and though they didn't express the same desires, many home students were seen to establish positive professional relationships with international students. However, it was perceived by many international students that it was necessary to adopt a Western name and use this in group work when working with home students. Home students in turn, would rely on this Western name and not attempt to learn international group mates' real names. When communicating in group meetings, Chinese students would sometime switch language back to their native tongue and this caused irritation sporadically, but never actual conflicts.

Many groups formed acquaintances rather than friendships, and were content not to develop the relationship further. However, in the KIM case, one group worked closely together, studying in each others' homes and forming friendships, which did

not occur in IL or MINICASE. Group members communicated and met each other more for KIM and MINICASE, with email, Facebook and Google Docs being the most popular tools. However, this caused a potential problem when the software was filtered in China, affecting the ability group members to communicate.

Table 6.5-1 illustrates a summary of the cross-case analysis:

	Case 1	Case 2	MINICASE
Choosing Group mates	Allocated	Friends/familiar /acquaintance	Random self-selected
Language skills	-Not very important -Students avoided presenting the poster -Switching language caused division	-Did not cause conflicts -Students considered other members' English language skills -Impacted on self-confidence	-Lack of contribution -Students correcting other students' work due to language skills
Academic attitudes	Achieving	- Achieving approach -Members' lack of preparation & submitting work as late as possible caused annoyance	- Achieving approach -Members' lack of preparation & submitting work as late as possible caused annoyance
Cooperation/collaboration	Collaboration	Collaboration	Combination of both
Roles	No specific roles except	Leadership role was apparent	No specific roles

	encourager		
Contribution	Students were unconcerned if others did not contribute	- Lack of contribution due to English language skills - Most members contributed equally	-Caused conflicts and resulted in dissolution of the group
Meetings	Less than 4 times	Many times	Many times
Friendship	No friendship formed	Members extended existing friendships	One group formed friendships
Socialising	No	Some groups socialised but members were already friends	Some groups socialised but members were already friends
Help & Support	-A tutor caused demotivation	-Tutor clarified the task and minimised conflicts	-Lecturer caused negative experience -Lecturer could not resolve the conflicts
Conflicts	No conflicts	Only one group experienced conflicts	The majority of groups experienced conflicts
Group work experience	Negative due to the task	Mostly positive, as members liked	Negative due to the task and

		the task and fellow group members	poor group dynamics
Communication tools	Google Docs, Email	Facebook, Google Docs, Email, Exchanged phone numbers	Mostly email
Division	Divisions present due to language, course, nationality etc.	No division	Some divisions present due to language, course, nationality etc.
Group dynamics	-Small Forming stage as students were allocated to their groups -Very small storming stage	-Forming stage was more present -Some groups experienced storming stage	-Forming stage was present -Bigger storming stage - Storming stage was present throughout Norming and Performing

TABLE 6.5-1 SUMMARY OF THE CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

6.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides analysis of the MINICASE and highlighted other important themes, which emerged from the data.

The cross-case analysis highlights the similarities and differences between cases. It also demonstrates how students' performance is affected by different factors and students have different priorities in different tasks. For example students were less sensitive regarding their group members' language skills in unassessed group task than an assessed one. These differences highlights that in studying multicultural groups it is very important to understand the context of which group are performing in.

7. CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

7.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, common elements of each individual case in the sections 4.3, 5.2, and 6.2 such as feelings, group members, age, academic attitude, etc. are merged to create themes which span all cases.

The literature is then incorporated to compare and contrast the understandings of the research findings. This comparison illustrates the value of the research findings and to what extent they reflect or evoke previous research studies. It also helps to identify whether new knowledge has been created and the areas in which this has occurred.

7.2. GROUP FORMATION

Data revealed students have strong opinions regarding group formation. In these three cases, students experienced different examples of group formation, the significance of which are discussed below.

In the IL module, students were allocated to their groups by the lecturer; the allocation was not random, with the lecturer deciding to mix the students by age, gender, nationality and course membership.

For the MINICASE students did choose their group mates. However, as the module was offered in the first semester and students were asked to form their group early in the module, the majority did not know other course mates or they had not formed any kind of friendship, so they chose group members randomly from those individuals who were situated nearby. However, some students were more strategic in their decision-making and observed students during the lecture, subsequently approaching only the more-active students. Additionally, some international students approached home students, as they wanted to improve their English and identified the group task as an opportunity to do this.

In the KIM module (as until 2014 the module was offered in the second semester) students had already developed friendship relationships or had gained experience of working with fellow course mates, so they in turn also formed their opinion regarding who they like to work with. However, some groups were randomly formed for various reasons such as not knowing many students, or not having the chance to join a friend's group.

Almost of the participants stated that they would rather to choose their own group members. This preference is mentioned in Chapman et al. (2006), K. Kimmel & Volet (2012) and Volet & Ang (1998). However, a few participants mentioned that they felt relieved by not being made to choose group members, since that would push them to work with their friend or students from their own nationalities. By being allocated to the group they avoided any tension between friends. A similar issue regarding students feeling obligated to choose their friends is discussed by Slavin & Ashman (1980).

However, when group membership is allocated, data revealed students prefer to work with those with which they have 'something' in common. This could be nationality, language, course or simply being an international student. It seems students felt safer or within their comfort zone when they decide they are not different from other group members. This phenomenon is also mentioned in (Karen Kimmel & Volet, 2012) who notes students tend to opt to work with course mates who share the same nationality, first language, etc.

Also, findings show students may not feel comfortable if they do not know their group members beforehand: some participants felt scared, apprehensive or stressed. This is mentioned in Strauss et al. (2011) who note that group formation could affect students' anxiety levels and being allocated to the group could potentially create stress for students. Furthermore, research findings show some mature students were apprehensive regarding joining their groups as they were unsure whether they would fit in, whether they would be much older than their group mates or if they would not know how to effectively work with international students. Some of the participants pointed out that in their previous educational

experiences they did not encounter so many Chinese classmates. This issue was discussed by Peacock & Harrison (2009) who found that that mature students may have different perspective toward multiculturalism. In addition, the majority of mature students decided to work together later in the course, a decision consistent with findings discussed by Peacock & Harrison (2009) who note that mature students tend to work closely together as they often have similar backgrounds. Also, according to Dunne (2009) younger students view mature and international students as being in a separate group to their own, as they see both groups to be culturally different to themselves, and similarly mature students view themselves as being separate from younger students. In this research, only some of the mature home students mentioned that they felt significantly different from younger home students at the beginning of the course, and none of the younger home students mentioned this. However, younger home students (who were mostly Librarianship students) tended to work with home students in similar age range.

Home students mentioned when allocated to the group, would they rather belong to the majority of the group (e.g., three home students / one international student) to avoid group division. Students felt that such a split would encourage the international student to converse in English. In most of the literature, scholars did not discuss students' preferences in mixed groups, meaning 'how mixed' they like the group to be. Nevertheless, research findings show that some international students - especially Chinese students - found working with home students to be intimidating, as they did not have confidence in their own English language skills. As such, some Chinese students preferred to work in homogenous group as communication was easier, this is also discussed in (Volet & Ang, 1998). Other Chinese students however, tried to work in multicultural groups - preferably with home students - to improve their English language skills. This though was not discussed in Volet & Ang's (1998) work. However similar findings are discussed in Cathcart et al. 's (2006) research as Chinese students expressed their desire for working with home students for similar reasons as those mentioned in this research.

Even though students had some negative feelings toward being allocated to the group, almost all students mentioned they had a positive experience. This finding is

similar to B. Rienties et al. (2014) but contrasts with Chapman et al. (2006) who claims that allocated groups usually have a difficult group dynamics. Nonetheless, findings show students prefer to choose their own group members - this aligns with Chapman et al. (2006) findings. When choosing the group mates, students used different strategies which changed from module to module according the task, past experience and also getting to know more students. Some students decided to work in native English-speaking groups as they had bad experience working in a multicultural group. These issues are discussed by Volet & Ang (1998) that even good experience does not mean students try to work in the diverse group.

In addition, students who did not have a good experience of working in a multicultural group in the first semester tended to go for monocultural/mono-language groups. This finding is consistent with Summers & Volet 's(2008) findings which indicate students early experience of working in multicultural group can play vital role in their attitude toward diverse groups; this means if their initial experience is not positive, they are less likely to join a multicultural group later. However, students also mentioned that when they had the opportunity to choose their group mates, they avoided working with students who did not have a good reputation as group members. This finding echoes those of Karen Kimmel & Volet's (2010) who which suggested students avoid working with students who have bad group work record.

One of the way students choose their group was by observing other students and selecting more active and hard-working students as they wanted to avoid working with free-loaders and make sure the group is capable of achieving higher mark. This also discussed by (Bacon et al., 2001, 1998).

Task had major impact on the way students chose their group mates and performed. It seems students are more open-minded when the task is not assessed or does not include major part of their final mark. When they were allocated to their group, the majority of students did not mention that they were disappointed with their group composition at the beginning, however some groups later experienced division, free-riding etc., which was found to be highly unpleasant.

In the literature it was highlighted that allocating students to groups can potentially help them to form friendships (P. Kelly, 2008) however findings show the majority of students did not form any kind of friendship and they did not work together later. Friendship will be discussed later in this chapter in section 7.14.

Findings show that group formation potentially impacts on the group performance and dynamics as was mentioned by Chapman et al. (2006). However, it is discussed in the literature B. Rienties et al. (2014) that self-selected groups - specially homogenous groups - could be less creative and allocated groups are more creative, but the findings of this research show this is not solely dependent on the group formation but on the task, the level of familiarity between group members, and support they receive during the work. Chapman et al. (2006) claim that allocated groups suffer from a weak group dynamics. However, these research findings contrast with that claim as despite being allocated to their group, the majority of students mentioned they enjoyed working with their group and the process was enjoyable, however what was more influential on students experience was the unassessed task which will be discussed later 7.8.1.

As mentioned earlier, the random self-selection of group members is not discussed in the literature; as such there is little evidence on how this method affects group performance and students' group experience. However this research findings show that when students randomly choose to work with other students (e.g. those sitting next to them) there is a higher chance of conflicts and free-riding in the group as they do not know each other very well.

The findings show that students prioritise friendship and academic skills above nationality and perhaps English language skills. Also some students pointed out that they prefer to work with other nationalities than their own, as they believed that in doing this they would have a better experience. This contrasts with Volet & Ang (1998) findings, who suggested that students prefer to work with those from same nationality. However as Volet & Ang (1998) research was on undergraduate students the difference could be related to the level of study.

Also, research findings highlight that, however students choose their group mates, most of the time, if not in all cases, they aim to maximise the group's success by choosing the most capable and compatible group mates. This finding echoes Hinds et al. (2000) who also suggest people choose familiar group mates to maximise the group's success rate.

Findings indicate even though students choose to work with friends and students they are familiar with, they are aware of the advantages that multicultural group work could bring for them such as employability, getting to know a different culture and etc. Nevertheless, as mentioned above they would rather work with a self-selected group even though it does not reflect real world work place group work. This finding contrasts with Ippolito, (2007) findings which claims that, after having had the advantages of multicultural group explained to them, almost all students said they would rather to be allocated to multicultural group as it stimulates work place group work.

The factors which influence student group member selection are similar to those discussed by Taha & Cox (2016) which affect international students' network formation. For example, they discussed the role of learning motivation, language, nationality, culture, and similarities.

Significant findings of this research which are not discussed in previous research are discussed below.

This research discovered three methods of group formation:

1. *Allocated groups:* in which members are allocated to their groups by lecturers or tutors. This method is not popular with students. This research showed members of allocated groups usually do not form any friendship.

2. *Self-selected groups:* in which members mostly choose their group mates based on similarities, friendship or academic skills. This method is one of the most popular methods, as students prefer to stay in their comfort zone and work with students who are familiar with. If students decide to not work with their friends they use various strategies to identify the best group mates they prioritise friendship and

academic skills above nationality and language. For example, when they want to recognise other students with advanced academic skills, they may observe other students to understand their academic skills and if if satisfied, then they would approach them and ask them to join their group.

3. *Random self-selected groups:* in which members randomly select other students who are sitting close to them or who do not have a group. Students adopt this method when they do not know other students in the course or the module. Random self-selected groups experience more conflicts and have poor group dynamics.

Another significant finding is that the group work task has major impact on students' group formation. For tasks with higher complexity and a greater number of marks, students choose their group members more carefully. Students are also more likely to experiment with choosing new group members when the task is unassessed. In addition, findings highlighted when the task is assessed students are more likely to be creative especially when members are friends and they receive sufficient support during their group work process.

Also, it is highlighted that the composition of the group has impact on the group performance and dynamics and there is a lack of research in this area. Composition here refers to the mix of students in a group, how many international students and home students, should be in a group to achieve the successful group.

7.3. GROUP MEMBERS

Research findings shows group members have direct impact on students' group work experience and the group work outcome. Students' personality, experience, and academic attitude shape the way they interact with their group mates and perform in the group.

7.3.1.   AGE AND EXPERIENCE

Findings show students who had experience working with people from different cultures or with different personalities were more open-minded and patient dealing with the group task and their group mates. Home students with more experience of interaction with people from different cultural background such as extended family, teaching English in other countries or the UK showed more understanding and sympathy toward international students especially when they encounter language barriers. In contrast, home students who did not have this opportunity since they worked in monocultural working environments or whose undergraduate degree was dominated by British students were less likely to work with international students and they were less understanding of the cultural differences: they preferred to work with students who are more familiar and speak better English. This phenomenon has been discussed by N. Harrison & Peacock (2010). The scholars suggested when students have more contact with international students; they are less likely to be prejudiced toward them. This research finding aligns with this claim in a broader context, as when students have more experience interacting with people from different cultural background they are more likely to work and interact with international students.

Moreover, when students experienced communication difficulties in their groups, mature students were most likely to explain the issue for international students. They explained they feel comfortable doing it as they some worked as language teacher, school teacher or in organisation which they needed to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds. However, younger home students (mostly Librarianship students) mentioned they were not patient to explain an issue more than twice as they found it waste of time.

In general, most of the students with work experience were more patient and tolerant with their group mates. However, they did not necessarily have a more positive experience or take greater satisfaction from their group work.

And also, findings show that students' performance can be affected by their age: as mentioned earlier they could be more patient or open-minded. On some occasions

also mature students mentioned working in the groups helped them to understand the module better as they could use other members' expertise. Younger students mentioned they learned from more experience students as well, especially in taking notes or managing their reading. This is aligned with Payne & Monk-Turne's (2006) claim that age can potentially impact on their performance as in their research older members of the group believed younger members learn from them however younger members believed they contributed something more meaningful to the group. They also claim older students are less likely to admit if they learned from younger members Meaning some older students may also feel they learn from younger member of groups even if they don not admit it.

Nonetheless, having greater experience did not always play a positive role in the group work, as experience brought expectations. In some groups, students with more experience in related fields found the task to be insufficient or childish.

Also, Librarianship students (having more experience in a similar field) intimidated IM students and it was mentioned by students they did not feel comfortable contributing to the group as they felt they were not treated equally and were 'looked down at'.

7.3.2. PERSONALITY AND ACADEMIC ATTITUDE

Research findings show that students mostly have different academic attitudes and as a result they adopt different approaches toward their group work. As such, they consider their group mates' personalities and academic attitudes as one of the most important elements in the group work performance and experience. This is consistent with Pfaff & Huddleston's (2003) claim that students have different approaches toward their group work which could be caused by their approaches to the learning and this may affect their group dynamics and group performance.

However, findings reveal that regardless of all different academic attitudes that students had, findings from the observations and interviews show that majority of participants adopted an achieving or strategic approach to their study as the characteristics of their learning approached matched Biggs's (1987) achievement

approach characteristics. Their approach manifested itself when students mentioned they do not see the point in doing unassessed group task. Additionally, in the group formation, the majority of students pointed out they attempted to choose group members who were hard working, interested and engage with their study. Also, some international students mentioned they would like to work with native speakers to ensure they understand the task better and potentially achieve better mark. Findings also highlighted that one of the reasons that students prefer individual assignment is to have control over their mark and avoid relying on other students' performance.

 Moreover, findings indicate students' personalities have direct links to their academic attitude and the way they approach the group work task. This is supported by Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham (2003), Kichuk & Wiesner (1997), Jeffery a Lepine et al. (2011), Mann (1959) and Noftle & Robins (2007).

Findings show students found the presence of different personalities and attitudes toward group work relatively challenging. Specially, students who were more organised, eager, and motivated found laid-back, late and unorganised students irritating. In some cases this also caused conflicts. For example, group members' preparation before meetings and tutorials was more important to some group members than others. As such, the disparity in preparation sometimes caused stressed, anxiety or anger. This is also supported by the work of Kichuk & Wiesner (1997) who suggested the combination of different personalities has the potential to impact on group performance as each personality trait performs differently in the group; however this does not necessarily mean group of students with similar personality would perform better (Neuman, Wagner, & Christiansen, 1999). Also the finding is consistent with Popov et al.'s (2012) finding which also reveal that different academic attitude and personality have impact on students' group performance and satisfaction.

However, different personalities and academic attitudes in a group also had a positive impact on the group performance. Students who were more driven encouraged, or 'pushed' other members to perform better. According to the

findings, in the majority of groups this did not cause conflicts especially when the group members established a friendship relationship before the group's formation. This is consistent with D. A. Harrison et al.'s (2002) claim that when people spend more time together eventually the impact of their differences would be decreased as they get to know each other more.

In addition to encouraging other members, students showed different attitude towards communication in the group. Some students were more patient and relaxed than others regarding helping other group members to the extent of doing their part. Also findings highlight that these students were generally more sympathetic and understanding toward other students, they were more likely to take time to explain a context for other members or help international students with their English. However, some of these actions such as assuming other group members' responsibilities were simply present as the student wanted to avoid conflicts in a group or they did not want to confront other members. These personality characteristics also are discussed as five-personality traits Kanuka & Nocente (2003), Kichuk & Wiesner (1997), Mann (1959), Nguyen et al. (2005) and Ahmed et al. (2010) specifically discussed the different personalities approaches to conflicts.

Additionally, student behaviour in the groups affected other group members' behaviour or performance. This phenomenon was especially apparent when students were asked to work on the unassessed activity as some did not make any effort and others stopped making effort or vice versa. This is also discussed by (Jeffery a Lepine et al., 2011; Jeffrey a. Lepine & Van Dyne, 2015).

Furthermore, students' personalities have impact on the role they take in the group activities. Students not only explained their role by referring to their own personality, but also justified their group members' roles in a group by their personalities. This is discussed in the literature, but most of the researchers focus only at the leadership role in the group such as Mann (1959).

Nevertheless, some students did take other roles in group activities for other modules. This phenomenon is not discussed in Kichuk & Wiesner (1997) and Neuman et al.'s (1999) work. However, O'Connell & Cuthbertson, (2009) suggest

that members of a group cautiously negotiate their roles according to the group task and fellow group members' skills.

The findings of this research discovered some significant factors regarding group member characteristics, which impact on the group performance and dynamics:

Group members' age impacts on the way they perform in their groups, for example mature students are more likely to be more patient and help their group members, and younger students usually find repeating themselves or helping other students with their English to be more challenging.

Group members' previous experience, which includes both work (such as teaching in a foreign country) and life experience (such as having a family member with different culture) has a direct link to the way they communicate in the multicultural group. Those who have experience working with people with different cultures are more patient and sympathetic with international student. However, it is also discovered that students (especially younger students) sometimes may use their experience to imply they are more knowledgeable than other members and consciously or unconsciously intimidate them. This latter finding was more apparent when Librarianship students worked in a group with IM students.

7.3.3. GROUP SIZE AND GENDER

Research findings show that the group size and students' gender did not have a significant impact on group and student performance.

Most groups were composed of three to six members; students did not report that the size of group had impact on their performance. However, students did explain that in a group of six they worked more cooperatively than collaboratively, meaning they divided the group into subgroups and each subgroup was responsible for part of the task, and at the end they put merged all parts together. In addition, students did not express any preference regarding the group size. These findings contrast with previous research, for example Bossert, Barnett, & Filby (1985) who claim that students perform better in smaller groups as they potentially receive more support from their tutors. Or as Webb (1989) suggests, the risk of free-riding is lower in

smaller groups. In addition, it was found that students have higher quality communication in smaller groups (Webb, 1984; Wilkinson & Fung, 2002).

Findings show the majority of participants did not indicate gender preference when choosing their group mates. Furthermore, gender did not impact on the group performance. Findings show there was no indication of different performance between female and male members and also there was no indication whether members took specific roles in the groups. These findings differ from some of the previous research in the group work field (Lee, 1993; Underwood, 2003). Underwood (2003) highlighted some of the issues related to gender: she claims female members are less likely to receive help or put their ideas forward in a male-dominated group. However, Underwood (2003) also adds issues regarding gender are not always apparent in all group work.

7.4. CULTURE AND IDENTITY

The research findings show students were mostly aware of the cultural differences present between students. Nonetheless, on certain occasions they had difficulties understanding each other. This was not due to the language barrier, but rather cultural differences such as different copyright laws and prevalent views in China opposed to those in the UK.

No serious conflicts between group members occurred solely due to cultural differences, but there were some complications explaining different concepts. For instance, when choosing a theme for the IL poster, home students evoked commonly understood childhood stories like Jack and the Beanstalk, but this story was unfamiliar to Chinese students and as such the group had to compromise, the result being that the poster included a combination of all members' understanding of the story. This led to one group member calling it 'weird'. The finding is consistent with S. Schneider & de Meyer, (1991) and Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner (1998) who argue that people from different cultures view a problem in alternative ways and may propose other solutions. This is also consistent with different definitions of culture such as those provided by Geertz or Levi-Strauss.

On certain occasions students (both home and international) mentioned that the way group mates or students from other countries referred to them was odd. For instance, one male Nigerian student referred to female home and Chinese students as 'sweetie'. Another example is when one of the Chinese female students told the other member (female home student) that she likes her work and she 'loves her'. On both occasions other members found the experience strange but they either joked about it or ignored it since they understood this is only 'a cultural thing'.

Wang, (2012) suggested that Chinese students could acculturate when working in multicultural groups. Meaning that they would adopt more 'Western' ways of working in a group such as expressing their ideas, self-autonomy etc. However, the findings of this research even though students did learn from each other but there was no noticeable change in students' culture due to multicultural group work. This can be due to various reasons, in this research the majority of group members are international students and as the focus of this research was on Master's level students they only spend one year together. However, Wang (2012) studied undergraduate students.

There were also issues not identified by students as being culture-related, but that was in fact caused by underlying cultural differences. However, 'culture' here transcends race and ethnicity and encompasses the course, age, and class. One issue raised by students was segregation in the class, groups, or the course as a whole. It seems students had aligned themselves with different social networks such as: Librarianship students, Information Management students, Information System students, native English speakers, mature students, home students, international students and Chinese students. Some students were members of more than one group, like mature native English speakers. The minority of international students formed their own social networks consistent with claims by S. Bochner, Hutnik, & Furnham, (1985) and Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, (2011) who call such a bond 'shared foreignness'. Brown (2009a) justifies this by stating that when international students are cut-off from home students they are encouraged to form their own group (either friendship or work) which offers them a level of belonging and identity.

These findings complement those of Bart Rienties & Nolan, (2014) who claim students tend to make their friendship groups with people from similar cultural backgrounds. However a minority of international students do form their own grouping. Bart Rienties & Nolan, (2014) also added that students usually form their social network with those from similar study specialisation.

This finding echoes Forsyth, (2006) who claims that people categorise themselves and others in different groups and each person can be member of a few groups. H Tajfel & Turner, (1979) call this, 'social identity' and explain people classify or categorise themselves and others into different groups and as such people are be divided into 'us' and 'them' following the self-categorisation process. These categories also called 'in-group' and 'out-group'. People in 'in-group' may not always be welcoming to those who are 'out-group'. This is how the stereotyping forms whereby those 'in-group' usually share a common view toward those 'out-group'.

Students from each of the above mentioned social networks tended to behave similarly, especially Librarianship students. Almost the entire non-Librarianship participant population referred to the way they were treated by Librarianship students and how that particular cohort separate themselves from other students. This attitude in students can be understood through Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical model: it seems students from different courses in different social networks defined themselves contextually in a specific way and acted accordingly. As Goffman explains, when people align themselves to a specific role, they play the role accordingly. As such, one can expect to observe similar patterns in behaviour between students within the same social network, however in this research this behaviour was more apparent between Librarianship students.

Research findings show that a student's approach and view towards group work depended on the particular group activity and the given task rather than their cultural background. There was not an evident pattern in the way students from shared cultures approach group work. This finding contrasts with the assumption of

cultural impact of group performance and student view toward group work which is mentioned in Geert Hofstede (1980) and Y. Turner, (2009).

However, findings also indicate that when students categorise themselves into groups such as Masters students, IM students, etc. they also would have specific expectations from the course, module design, group work and their course mates. For instance, students mentioned they found making the poster by hand to be childish and not suitable for Masters level study. As such, when students' expectations were not met, it affected their performance and the group dynamics.

This finding reflects how Hogg, Terry, & White (1995) and Stets & Burke (2000) note that when people categorise themselves into groups they also associate specific characteristics with the group and subsequently expect these characteristics to be apparent.

The summary of significant findings of this section is as follows:

These research findings specifically revealed that students from different cultures (as they do not share a similar background) have different understandings of different phenomena. For example, students may not share same childhood stories and so when they are required to develop a concept based on a particular story, it may cause confusion and misunderstanding between group members. This issue is not discussed in previous research in this field or considered in terms of cultural differences and is not discussed in more detail.

This research also indicates that there is no shared approach towards the group work influenced by culture, as it is previously suggested by scholars like Hofstede (1980).

Additionally, another interesting finding is that students consistently categorise themselves and other students into groups according to age, course, culture, etc. and act accordingly to those categories. This research shows especially Librarianship students tend to act in very similar and distinctive ways. This categories also create expectations in students, for example when students categorise themselves in

'Master's student' categories they do not expect to be asked to make a poster by hand rather than using a computer-based programme like PowerPoint.

In addition, when students categorised themselves and others into different categories, it affects their group dynamics and performance.

7.5. NAME

According to the findings, international student names (especially those of Chinese students) play a significant role in the group dynamics and the way they develop their relationship with other students, particularly home students. Home students believed that international students who choose a Western name are more willing to blend with other students from different countries. They justified their claim by explaining that they are more able to pronounce and remember the Western names than foreign names as a result there is a bigger chance of conversation occurring between them.

This phenomenon seems acceptable for both international and home students, as neither had negative views toward this. Also excepting two or three individuals, all Chinese students adopted Western names. However, those who had studied English language before the course were actually given the names by their tutors.

Even though the adoption of a Western name was recommended to all international students with names that were difficult for non-native speakers to pronounce, it was only Chinese students who were willing to adopt names other than their native ones.

This issue has been discussed in the work of Edwards (2006) who argues that changing name in Chinese culture is not uncommon, however adopting an 'English' name is a consequence of taking English language classes. Students are strongly encouraged to adopt an English name or in some cases are given the names as language teachers (in China or the UK) believe this will help them to learn English better by developing an 'English persona'.

Norton (2000) believes that for Chinese students, changing name is a way to move away from being Chinese to be more Western.

However, neither Edwards, (2006) or Norton (2000) discussed the impact of this change on the Chinese students' intercultural communication as the focus of their research was on the actual change of name and its relationship to identity rather than the way Chinese students communicate with others.

Another interesting finding relates to name and the way students referred to each other is using their nationalities rather than their names. This was not only because of names being difficult to pronounce as students who were from same country or close friends still referred to each other by their nationality such as the Chinese girl, The Korean girl. Peacock & Harrison (2009) discussed similar findings however in their findings they only discussed this issue regarding how UK students refer to their international classmates.

Students' names and the way they referred to each other are other significant findings of this research. This research identified that most Chinese students adopt an English name. This phenomenon is not discussed in previous multicultural group work research. However, this research highlights that names that students use, could have an impact on the way they are perceived by other students. Also, the research indicates that even when students are friends they prefer to refer to each other by their nationalities even when they are from same nationality. This issue and its root also, are not discussed in related fields.

7.6. DIVISION IN THE COURSE AND WHITIN GROUPS

Division between students in the course and within groups was one of the issues that the majority of students highlighted.

Divisions between students both within groups and in the classroom were identified by this research: these were associated with differences in nationality, language, age and course. Two levels of division are found in this research: the first one is division

in the course, which here means division between students from different course taking the same module. However, it should be noted that participants shared some modules with students from other courses such as Librarianship and Information Systems; as a result participants sensed the segregation between students from different courses. The second level is the division within the groups. However, in most groups this did not concern students even though in some groups the division affected the group dynamics.

Rather than in-group divisions, participants were more concerned about the level of interaction they experienced with students from other courses, especially Librarianship students. Almost all of the IM students mentioned they did not have much interaction with Librarianship students - there interactions were mostly limited to a smile, a 'hello' and polite conversations. This finding is consistent with those of N. Harrison & Peacock, (2010) and Peacock & Harrison, (2009) who called this minimum interaction between home and international students '*passive xenophobia*' and added students may not be aware of their behaviour but they do not feel close or comfortable with students from different countries. This division is also mentioned in the work of Taha & Cox (2016) who note that students form their work network and friendship network with those from the same programme as them as they are potentially more accessible and available.

Divisions in groups - as mentioned earlier - were due to group members' different native languages, nationality, course, age, or friendship between some of the members. In some groups, the division was caused by more than one of these elements; for example, one of the groups included two Chinese students from the IM course and two home students from the Librarianship course. During the group work, two Chinese students formed a sub-group and two home students formed theirs. In this group, the division was due to nationality, language and the students' respective courses. Students noted that from the beginning, students from the Librarianship course mostly talked between themselves and Chinese students switched to Chinese language and talked between themselves. Students provided different reasons for this, such as familiarity with one of the members, or the ease of

using their first language. However, in most groups this division did not cause serious conflicts.

Of all the elements here, language is found to be one of the main reasons reported by students as source of division. Chinese students were found to prefer to speak in Chinese, however it should be considered that these students were the only international student group who had the opportunity to work just with other students from the same country. Some of the students felt excluded when their group mates started speaking in Chinese, but the majority had a very understanding approach and believed Chinese students only switched the language when they have difficulties understanding the concept of discussion.

Switching the language during the group work will be discussed in language section 7.7 in more detail.

Different course affiliation was the most serious factors in terms of the group dynamics and student experience. Research findings show students are more concerned when the divide is mostly due to the course. Some students mentioned they did not feel they were treated equally when working with students from different course. In one case student was treated as she has less understanding of the coursework as she was from different course and with less technical background.

As mentioned earlier, mature students would rather work together and as such when working in groups naturally they formed their subgroup. Yet this division was not as apparent for other students. However, friendship was mentioned by students as another cause of division for instant in decision making those who were friend or closer discussed the issues between them and then discussed it with others so it was 'Us' and 'them'.

As noted earlier, students had different reaction to different divisions. It can be said each division had different weight but this weight was changeable according to the group task and group mates. Meaning students showed different level of tolerance toward division in different group work.

In addition, groups which were formed by close friends or students who were more familiar with each other did not experience any division even if some of them did have another common language rather than English. However this only happened with group of students from the same course and the majority of students did not make friend with students from other courses. Friendship issues will discuss later in the section 7.14.

This finding can be justified by similarity attraction theory by (D. Byrne & et al., 1971;Donn Byrne, 1969). Byrne discussed that individuals are more likely to be attracted to those who have similar characteristics to their own, however these similarities should be characteristics which matter most to the individual ('salient characteristics') meaning there is a higher chance for students to be attracted to students who are from same country, speak same language, or are from same course rather than students who only share the same first name. Of course, it can be assumed when students work with their friends they share more similarity and they are more likely to form the subgroup with them. This issue is also discussed by Strauss et al. (2011) as people value the input of others with similar background more.

Yet, Ward et al. (2001) claim that it is less likely that individuals find more similarity between themselves and other individuals from very different cultural background and Hofstede's (1980) culture-distance theory suggests when these two groups work together they find it more challenging. However, Ward et al. (2001) explain in a situation that the characteristic of 'out-group' is more important than the in-group meaning there are more important similarity with 'out-group' than 'in-group' students would redefine their group membership. This statement is consistent with the findings of this research as Chinese students - when forming their friendship with students from other countries - were more likely to work with their friends and the whole group of friends formed an 'in-group' in this case and as such there was little or no division in such groups. This phenomenon is also aligned with Ylijoki 's (2000) work which explains that students from one discipline developed their social identity according to that discipline and are more likely to be attracted to (similarity attraction) and trust students from their own discipline. Ylijoki specifically

highlighted the tension and mistrust between the information science and library disciplines which is the case for this research.

Division in groups is not extensively discussed in the multicultural group work literature - most of the research discussing this phenomena did not do so in detail such as Bacon et al. (2001) who only mention that when students choose their group mates there is a possibility that one member who is not as close as the others would be left out. Also, K. Kimmel & Volet (2012) indicate familiarity in group or the classroom could cause segregation (with less familiar individuals).

The significant findings of this section are summarised as:

As mentioned in the related previous studies in this field, segregation in groups and in a broader context such as in the classroom is mostly overlooked. However, this research highlights the importance of these divisions between students as they impact on the group formation, group process and group dynamics and as such on students' experience.

7.7. LANGUAGE

Language in multicultural group work was the element most talked about by students. Both home and international students cited language as one of the most crucial factors (if not the most) regarding the group work experience. Some language issues were not only related to the level of English, but also the way students pronounced words and their accent.

Language was the centre of most group mate relationships. It was one of the main elements to consider when choose group mates as was discussed earlier. It was also one of the sources of division in groups. Furthermore, language played a major role in student intercultural communication and friendship networks.

Some native speaking students - as mentioned earlier - showed more understanding and patience toward international students' English language abilities.

The findings of this research identify different issues related to language such as communication, group performance, individual contribution to group and the class, and also friendship. Some of these issues are interlinked and impact upon each other, such as contribution to the group and group performance.

However, it should be noted the majority of international students had little experience of living in the UK, hence their lack of English language practise. This contributed to these participants experiencing a lack of self-confidence in speaking in English, which consequently affected their social and academic life. This issue was more apparent between Chinese students as they had lower level of English language. The findings are aligned with those of Peacock & Harrison (2009) who highlighted the link between language and self-confidence in international students.

A language barrier in communication is (as observed) an issue between students. Some international students found it difficult to explain their ideas in the groups and home students mentioned they had to speak slower and clearer to ensure that all their group members could understand them. This was not easy for all students - not all home students were willing to do this as they felt it was wasting their time, or they simply did not have the patience to repeat themselves. In some groups though, although the presence of different accents made communication difficult, students were willing to repeat themselves or adopt other methods such as spelling to clarify their point.

Communication here is not limited to in-group communication, both home and international students reported there was very limited general communication and interaction between students on the course for various reasons - some of which have been discussed earlier. From this, language was found to be the main reason for international students wishing to isolate themselves or only socialise with students who spoke the same language as them. As a result of this poor communication, many students failed to establish friendships with students from other countries. Conversely, students who were more comfortable with their language skills were those who interacted with other students more.

This finding is consistent with that of Peacock & Harrison (2009) who suggested students who have better language skills are more likely to be able to establish friendship with others. Also, Brown (2009a) finds a good level of English language skills can potentially decrease the level of foreignness and encourage more interaction between home and international students. However, this does not mean an international student with a high level of language will definitely be able to make friends with home students.

The majority of students mentioned language as one of the main factors affecting group success, as findings indicates that poor language skills resulted in poor communication within the group and in some cases, less contribution to the group - especially when the groups were developing ideas. This is because the majority of international students with low English skills tended to stay quiet and avoided getting involved in the group discussions, as they did not want to embarrass themselves. As a result, they did not contribute as much to group work and other students perceived this as free-riding. As such, students avoided working with others who did not have the perceived sufficient level of English, fearing that these individuals may bring their mark down. This finding reflects Peacock & Harrison (2009) which explains the link between language and self-confidence and its impact on student communication and contribution in groups. Also, Strauss et al. (2011) and Popov et al. (2012) highlighted the role of language skills in group forming, performance and dynamics. Their findings are consistent with the findings of this research.

Some groups were able to overcome the language barrier when group mates had significant experience in the field of group work, or when members showed a willingness to learn and demonstrated that they were hard-working. This finding is similar to that of Ippolito (2007) who suggests students would make compromises for the sake of good group performance. In a few groups, students with a higher level of English or native speakers were also willing to correct other group mates' work. This occurred for two main reasons: first to make sure their poor English would not impact other members' grades and also as a friendly gesture to simply provide support. The latter only happened when students were friends or the

contribution from everyone was equal. This finding is consistent with Karen Kimmel & Volet (2012) who found that students are more likely to provide such support if they know each other. Also, as Catherine Montgomery & McDowell (2009) state friends are more likely to help each other with their assignments this help includes proof reading, discussion their work, etc. as such when groups are formed by friends, as the finding of this research indicate students potentially support other members more than when they are not friends or have close relationship.

In some cases, even though students identified the difficulties they experienced understanding each other in their groups or during discussion as being a 'language barrier', the problem was in fact mostly due to cultural differences. Students from different cultural backgrounds had different understanding of phenomena but when trying to explain their own understanding to group mates, they were not always understood as members did not all share a common view. This is found by Devita (2000) who claims that language is the 'most prominent' configuration of culture. As such, it is understandable why students would assume certain misunderstandings are due to language skills rather than cultural differences.

From the findings, one of the most frequent issues regarding language was 'language switching', whereby students switched between their first and second language. This happened mostly during group work when the task was complicated and on most occasions there were one or more students who switched because of an insufficient level of English. Excepting two groups whose members were close friends, all groups experienced language switching more than once. However, the majority of students mentioned they were not concerned and only on one occasion did a group member feel left out due to others speaking their first language and excluding her from the conversation. Between all three cases, students switched language more frequently and for longer in the MINICASE group work and explained this was due to the complicated nature of the coursework and members' unfamiliarity with it. However, in the unassessed group activity, the length of the change was reported shorter and for only a few sentences. All of the 'switchers' mentioned they did not ask for permission before switching, as they did not see it necessary. However, this did not cause overt conflicts between members.

This finding is consistent with Qi (1998) who discovered that the nature of the task has a direct link upon the language switching undertaken by students. This means the more difficult and complicated the task, the more frequently students switch between languages. Furthermore, Kobayashi & Rinnert (1994) indicate the frequency of language switching defines the cause of subsequent switching.

Language played an important role in defining students views toward multicultural group work and the cross-cultural interactions that occurred within this. Native English speakers showed sensitivity toward language issues generally, however in some cases, they believed certain international students used low-level English language skill as an excuse to avoid contributing to group work. Some native speakers also pointed out that if they noticed one international student's language skill had not improved from the first semester to second semester, they would avoid working with them as they believed they did not make any effort to improve their English skills. These findings are aligned with Montgomery (2009) who identifies language as one of the main elements in group work success. However, as Montgomery finds, students in this research also showed different understandings of what sufficient language skill is. This means as mentioned above, a specific level of English was sufficient for one group work but not for the other, depending on the task, level of interaction and students' relationship and familiarity.

As mentioned above, language is considered as one of the main factors which impact on multicultural group work performance and group dynamics. However, language switching is not extensively discussed in the related literature. It is considered as one of the significant findings of this research, as findings indicate students switch their language frequently in multicultural group work when more than one members speak same language. Also, finding suggests this could be due to the task complexity in addition to low level of English language. This switching could potentially isolate other students when they are left out of conversation. Also findings show the frequency and length of the switching depends on the task. This link between task and switching and its impact on multicultural group dynamics is not discussed in the literature.

7.8. Curriculum design

Curriculum design is identified as one of the elements which impacts on group performance and dynamics. In this section design of the task including its complexity, assessment, and task briefing, in addition to help and support which students receive during the group work are discussed.

7.8.1. Group work task

Student willingness to work in a group had a direct link to the task - both home and international students indicated that they would rather be solely responsible for their mark. However, it was also mentioned by students that if the task is too big and complicated, then group work would make it easier. These findings are consistent with the work of (Feichtner & Davis, 1984; Forsyth, 2006; Karau & Williams, 1993; Zander, 1985). In addition, the research findings reveal there is not a distinctive difference between home and international students' opinions toward working in groups. This contrasts with findings by (Cox et al., (1991) and Gatfield (1999) and Hofstede (1980) which suggest Asian students are more willing to work in the group, as in this research there was no apparent pattern linking the attitude toward group work to a certain nationality.

Unlike the vast body of literature such as N. Harrison & Peacock (2010) and Popov et al. (2012); Volet & Ang (1998) which identifies language and culture as the most important factors on student performance in the multicultural group, this research finds that the nature of the group work task has a key impact on student performance.

Students shared the same view towards unassessed group work tasks. They did not enjoy this formative assessment exercise and furthermore did not see the point of investing time in any activity, which is not mark-bearing. This achieving learning approach is also discussed in section 7.3.2. As they did not agree with the concept of a unassessed assignment, group members did not spend much time on the task and did not make as much effort as much as they did for assessed assignments. This

finding aligns with Rust's (2002) explanation of how students' investment is linked to the assignment's grade/mark.

"… if work does not have marks attached many students will either not do it at all or only do it in a perfunctory way"

This can be understood through Stajkovi & Luthans (2003) claim which states performance and rewards have a direct relationship. The majority of students mentioned reward has a direct impact on the effort they put in the coursework. Furthermore, they also mentioned if the reward is only box of chocolate it is not going to make them perform better as in the context of higher education they would rather to receive a percentage of their final mark for the activity even though it is only one percentage.

The link between student motivation and unassessed tasks is also highlighted in (Dobozy, 2007; Lemanski, 2011). Here, the researchers also point out students are less motivated to engage in unassessed group work.

Task complexity and student knowledge of the task also impacted on group performance. In more complicated tasks like MINICASE, students experienced higher levels of conflict within their groups and also were more concerned about other members' contributions. This was because of two main reasons: first the task requirement was a significant challenge and they needed everyone's input in order to succeed, and also students were not individually assessed but rather were assessed as a group. As such, members did not want to lose marks because of fellow group mates.

This finding is consistent with Gibson (1999) who also highlighted the impact of task design upon group efficiency and performance.

This is actually one of the main reasons students cited in order to justify their dislike of the group assignments. Participants explained that they like to have control over their grades and do not feel comfortable sharing the working process with other students, especially if they do not know them properly. Similarly, in the literature "Free-riding" is identified as one of main elements which cause negative views

towards group working between students (Bacon et al., 1999; Maiden & Perry, 2011; Popov et al., 2012). Students did not specify whether their concerns were only present when they worked in multicultural groups, but they mostly believed that in general, group work could be unfair. However as mentioned previously, the language barrier could have been one of the causes for perceived or actual free riding, and it was also noted by students that they would avoid working with students with a low level of English as they may end up assuming the majority of the workload.

Bruffee (1987) believed there are three main elements in successful group work, which should be considered when designing the group work task, 1) willingness to grant authority, 2) willingness to take on and 3) exercise authority and a context of friendliness and good grace. Successful group work here means achieving good grades and maintaining good group dynamics. These research findings showed the groups which exercised these elements, were more successful. These groups were mostly formed from group of friends, they had open discussions and respected each other, they trusted each other's work and managed to maintain professional yet friendly atmosphere. However, groups which did not trust each other to divide the responsibilities or accept other members' opinion even though they received good mark but they had poor dynamics.

Another factor related to task which impacted on group performance is the clarity of the brief, meaning how straightforward the task is for students to understand. On many occasions arguments occurred when students could not understand the brief fully and had to make their own sense of the task by discussing it in the group or asking the tutors or the lecturer. Consequently, when they did not have a same view or understanding, and it caused conflicts. This issue was more apparent in case of MINICASE, since there was more than one solution to satisfy the brief, and the task was more challenging. In addition, the coursework bore the majority of their final mark, and as such students found it even more difficult to persuade group mates that their view is (also) valid. In the case of Knowledge Management, some of the group misunderstood the task, causing delay in their schedule and on one occasion it caused serious conflicts and the group stayed dysfunctional through the work.

However, on some occasions disagreement about the task actually helped students to develop their knowledge by discussing their understanding more or doing more related reading.

Nevertheless, the clarity of the brief is not only limited to the actual task but also how the specific task would be linked to their future career or world help them to get a related job. As such, when the task requirements or aim were unclear to students, they also found it 'waste of time' and did not really relate to the task.

The majority of the students expressed concerns regarding how the course would help them to find a job or how relevant the tasks are in relation to working in an organisation. Students' concerns for their future career and their employability was cited as another reason for individuals being highly mark-driven during their study, as the majority believed achieving higher grades would increase their chance of securing a job. This desire to secure a good job after university is also mentioned by Kember (2000). He explain that Asian students are motivated by thee prospect of a good job. They may also only be satisfied with their degree certificate as it could potentially secure them a well-paid job and they are more interested in the modules, which prepare them for their future career.

The clarity of module aims and objectives and their relation with assessment or activities are widely discussed in educational research (John B. Biggs, 1999; Donnelly & Fitzmaurice, 2005; Ramsden, 2003). Jehn (1995) highlights the role of the task on the group dynamics and inter-group conflicts - she argues that some conflicts are actually beneficial for the group as they can potentially encourage critical thinking. Bacon et al., (1999) states that providing clear objectives for a group task is vital for the success of the group and also this can potentially save time by avoiding conflicts; this finding aligns with these research findings.

Much of the multicultural group literature adopts a quantitative approach, mostly with the aim of investigating students' intercultural interactions, the language barrier or issues experienced during the group work process. In addition, the majority of research is conducted in business schools (N. Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Pfaff & Huddleston, 2003; Bart Rienties & Johan, 2014). There a little actual detail

regarding how different tasks may impact upon group performance. This issue is also acknowledged by Popov et al. (2012) as they conducted their research in a broader field, however these researchers only focused on one task. However K. Kimmel & Volet (2012) investigated multicultural group work in different contexts (a science department and a business school) and they found students perform differently within different contexts and act differently in and out of their groups. The findings of this research are implicitly aligned with these findings as it is shown that different tasks and modules could impact on multicultural group dynamics and student performance.

7.8.2. HELP AND SUPPORT

Another factor impacting upon the experience of students in group work was the amount of help and support received during the group activity. This support includes tutorials, guidance by the academic lead and meetings with the lecturer. Also, the behaviour and beliefs of tutors and lecturers impacted on students view toward the group activity and their performance. In these three cases, tutors and academics played a different role in the group performance - on some occasions they helped the group dynamics and in some they actually caused more conflicts.

Findings show that the views of tutors towards the task and group activity has an impact on students view and consequently on their performance. In the IL case, one of the tutors implied that as the task was unassessed, students did not need to be worried if one member was not contributing or missing meetings. Because of this, some students did not make significant effort, reasoning that if the tutor thought the task unimportant, then it probably was not. This is also example of students paying more attention to face to face communication, rather than information on handouts or slides.

In the case of KIM, tutors played more positive roles. They helped students to understand the nature of the task and answered questions. Students reported the tutorial meetings were helpful and accelerated their work. However, it was also

noted by the majority of students that the length and number of tutorial sessions was not sufficient. However, this did not have significant impact on the group dynamics.

According to the research findings, the most problematic group work was for the MINICASE module. Most groups experienced serious conflicts and some students changed their groups. Several students complained about the group work mostly because of free-riding in their group. Students mentioned they received a tutorial for their group work, however they believed this was not sufficient and in most cases did not help group performance. Some students mentioned that as they were told by the lecturer at the beginning of the module that they should not complain, when they experienced conflicts they decided to avoid raising this since they did not think the lecturer would help them. However, the lecturer did help some students to change their groups, which enabled students to perform better. On only one occasion did the change cause more friction as two students left the group and the third person was not informed.

This finding aligns with Bacon et al. (1999) and Baker & Clark's (2010) claims, as they highlight the role of help and support in successful group work. The authors believe guiding students throughout the group activity and helping them can potentially reduce the conflicts and stress within the group units. As a result, students gain a better chance to perform better in their groups.

As mentioned before there is an extensive body of literature about designing group work tasks and its impact on successful group work, however the majority of research on multicultural groups overlooks the impact of curriculum design on multicultural group performance. This research highlights that task and its complexity, task briefing, the mark that task bears, the support and tutoring student receive have impact on the group performance and dynamics. Also, it is highlighted tutors views towards the task can impact on students view and in some case can de-motivate them or cause conflicts in the groups.

7.9.   GROUP WORK CONTRIBUTION AND PERFORMANCE

Findings show group performance and individual group member contribution has a direct relationship with task design i.e., the clarity and complexity of the task brief, the amount of time until submission, and the grade-based weighting of the task. As mentioned earlier, if the task bore greater weight students tended to spend more time on it and when the task was unassessed, students prioritised other group or individual assignments which were grade-bearing.

At this point, it has been discussed that personality, culture, academic attitude, English language skills and team formation potentially all have impact on group performance. These factors can be understood as the main factors influencing multicultural group performance. However, findings show each of these factors have varying levels of influence in the different group work tasks. For example, person A could have a serious problem in one group activity that was caused by the language barrier, but in another group activity person A would overlook the language barrier.

Identifying the cause and effect of different outcomes in group performance is not as straightforward as has been discussed in the literature. While there are many variables which can impact group performance and students' experience, much related research only focuses on a few factors and does this without considering the context in which the group work happens. For instance for Popov et al. (2012) the main aim was to identify the challenges occurring in multicultural group work focusing on the role of culture. As such, there is no holistic research to identify how these different factors influence group performance in different contexts.

This research identified various elements, which can potentially impact the main factors such as time, student preparation, or students' roles in the group work. Also, main factors can trigger some of the issues in the group work for instance task complexity can be a reason for free-riding.

7.10. TIME

Time is identified as one the elements that has an impact on students' performance in the group. 'Time' in this context is the period in which students were given to complete the task and the time in which the group task occurred i.e. from December to February.

If the group task coincided with students' individual assignments, some participants prioritised their individual work above group work. They justified this by noting they need to 'look after' themselves and that the group work can be done later. However, this attitude caused stress in other group members; in some cases, it also caused free-riding. This issue was not experienced in the groups which were formed by friends. This is implicitly consistent with Benne & Sheats (1948) who suggest the more time members spend together as a group, the less the focus is on the individual rather than the collective. As such, since friends spent more time together in this study and also tended to work together when possible, it can be understood from Benne and Sheats argument that they prioritised group work or they valued both individual assignments and group assignments almost equally.

Nevertheless even if students did not prioritise their individual work, they felt that the volume of the assignments was too much and this caused them stress. Students generally felt did not have enough time for all the coursework and so they could not do their best.

Another issue with time was that the MINICASE coursework assignment started before the Christmas holiday and finished after the break. The majority of students mentioned one or two members from their group travelled back home in China or India and on some occasions they failed to inform their group members in advance. One group decided to not include their names on the assignment while another group did include the name even though the individual in question did not contribute at all. This issue was exacerbated by the time difference and also the fact that Chinese students cannot access Gmail or Facebook from China, making communication very difficult. However, Indian students maintained the communication by staying in touch with group members using Skype. Alternatively,

some groups tried to finish the group work before the member's departure. In general, those students who stayed in the UK found this issue stressful and an insufficient method for doing group work.

7.11. STUDENT PREPARATION

These research findings indicate that individual group members' preparation prior to meetings with the group or the tutor significantly influenced other members' motivations and also group conflicts. As a result, the level of preparation did impact upon the group performance. Students indicated that a lack of preparation especially before meeting the tutor caused conflicts as they only had one opportunity to meet with their tutor as a group, and if one member did not prepare their part it meant they could not ask a question regarding that part. This issue was more keenly felt in assessed group work than in the unassessed group task - students were more relaxed regarding preparation and on some occasions other members stopped making an effort as they mentioned they thought it was not worth the argument if the task is not assessed.

7.12. STUDENTS ROLE IN GROUP WORK

The findings reveal that students assumed different roles in group work. These roles include: leader, peacemaker, elaborator, etc. The finding aligns with Benne & Sheats (1948) who suggested individuals take different roles in teams and in doing this, they act differently and accordingly.

The findings suggest the role/s students took are linked with their personalities as mentioned in section 7.3.2. However, on some occasions - especially regarding the leadership role - students who did not like to lead assumed the role as no one else did. In general, findings show students tended to take different roles depending on the task and their group mates, but on most occasions they stayed in their comfort zone to some extent. This means there was not an extreme transition between roles such as moving from peacemaker to elaborator.

Findings show that students who generally had more negative roles in the group like dominator or withdrawing tended to also have a negative role in most of their group work assignments, which is justifiable as personality has a link with the roles people take. This finding mirrors Benne & Sheats's (1948) claim as the personality has a link with the roles which people adopt while working in teams.

Nevertheless, it is not as simple as this as it is not only the personality, which affected the roles students took. There are more variables, which influenced student performance such as language, task, age, other members' role, etc. This was mostly apparent when international students (especially Chinese students) were accused of being a free rider/loader especially since some of these individuals did not contribute to group discussions, developing ideas, etc. However, Chinese students related mitigating circumstances such as the conversation being unclear (language wise) or happening too quickly for them as they needed more time to process the information and did not actually get the chance to put their ideas forward.

On some occasions, students did not contribute as they thought they did not have the background knowledge and so stayed quieter.

In both scenarios, students were not considered to be contributing or were seen as free-riding to some extent - this was also due to lack of open communication. The majority of individuals did not let the other members know about their problems since they were embarrassed (especially when they felt they language to be insufficient). The relationship between language skills and shyness was discussed in the language section 7.7.

The finding regarding students' change of roles in different groups is consistent with Cragan et al. (2008) as they suggest the roles students take in groups depends on the task and other members.

Students also mentioned they did not have leaders for all of the group work in which they were involved. On some occasions, the group worked purely collaboratively and made all decisions together. However, there was mostly one member who was

ensuring the group unit was coherent. This finding aligns with Cathcart et al. (2006) who have a similar finding regarding the leadership in groups.

In this research, some students adopt *'follower' role* (voluntarily or circumstantially) as in this case on the majority of occasions it was about not giving opinions and contributing to the discussion or in most occasions agreeing with every decision. This behaviour was perceived by other members of the group as 'free-riding'. This is similar to Benne & Sheats's (1948) *'follower'* role which describes those individuals who accept others' opinion and are more like audience members than participants. However, some researchers treat this as an independent issue regarding multicultural or monocultural group work. In this research, free-riding itself was not one of the main issues discovered but the factors (language, knowledge), which caused students to choose or forced to be free riders were more important.

Free-riding or loafing is considered as one the main problems in multicultural and monocultural groups. However, in this research it was international students who regularly did not contribute as much as other members due to the reasons discussed earlier. Interestingly, none of the free-riding incidents caused serious conflicts - participants merely mentioned that occasionally they found it irritating and concerning mostly because it only occurred during discussion or idea development and these students actually contributed to the rest of the tasks. Findings here are consistent with Cathcart et al., 2006 and Popov et al. (2012) who also mention language can be a cause of free-riding but their main focus is on free-riding through the task. However in both research studies, most free-riding is undertaken by international students which reflects the findings of this research, but crucially in the other authors' findings it did cause conflicts and had more negative impact on group dynamics than in this research. However, this finding contrasts with Kerr & Tindale's (2004) claim that free-riding is more common between Western students as they have an individualistic culture.

7.13. AGREEABLE CULTURE

Another issue raised by some students regarding the contribution to group ideas was that some Chinese students did not disagree with anyone, as they mentioned that

sometimes these students wanted to avoid conflicts and during other occasions they genuinely agreed or were not confident to voice their opinion for similar reasons to those mentioned above, or due to a lack of knowledge or insufficient English skills. Some researchers like Geert Hofstede et al. (2010) claim this attitude is mostly to due cultural characteristics, but these research findings potentially dispute this, as the issue only applied to students with low self-confidence and other Chinese students with better language skills or sufficient related knowledge did not experience it. However it is potentially is due to different personalities as (Ahmed et al., 2010) similarly indicated people with different personalities manage conflicts in different ways some compromise to avoid conflicts.

7.14. FRIENDSHIP

As was pointed out earlier, friendship among group members had an impact on group dynamics and performance. Students who worked with their friends reported a more positive and enjoyable experience and the group work was more successful. Also, they had better communication and performance within their groups.

Most friendships correlated with the division between course/lectures, meaning all of the members of a group of friends were from the same course. Within friendship groups was again a very similar pattern - students chose their friends from those with whom they shared common characteristics. These characteristics are: age, nationality, language, academic attitude, foreignness and personality. As such, there were friendships observed between groups of mature students, home students, international students from the same country (e.g. Chinese students), minority international students, and native English speakers. However, mature home students tended to also include other native English speakers from various countries like the USA in their friendship zone.

Occasionally Chinese students joined the minority international student friend zone for mainly two reasons:

 a) Sharing same academic attitude, meaning taking academic studies more seriously and wanting to work with more driven students

b) Improving their language skills and getting to know other cultures

Even though the friendship pattern is very similar to the division pattern, this does not mean all members of one divided group (all mature students or all native speakers) were friends. It seems students tended to choose their friends from one group they associated themselves with, however within this they selected students with whom they had more in common. This finding mirrors Kudo & Simkin (2003) who suggest students tend to choose friends from those that they are more similar to. Also, Yuan & Gay (2006) found that as interaction with similar students increases, interaction with dissimilar students correspondingly decreases and as a result this causes division.

The research findings indicate different ways of forming friendships between students and different circumstances that could potentially encourage the friendship:

Students mentioned working in a group helped them to become friends. However, in all cases members were already familiar with each other beforehand and as they spent more time working on the group task, they became friends. Almost none of the students who were allocated to groups by the tutor become friends after the group work. This finding echoes that of Chapman et al. (2006) and P. Kelly (2008) who claim group work potentially can help students to make friends especially when they select their group mates. As mentioned earlier, this contrasts with P. Kelly's (2008) claim as allocating students to their groups would potentially encourage friendship amongst them.

Sitting adjacent or near to each other in the lecture theatre was also found to encourage students to talk and build acquaintances. Even though some students did talk to those around them and eventually developed friendships, the majority of students noted the layouts of learning environments (laboratories or lecture theatres) do not encourage discussion or interactions as most of the time students sat in a line and only those sitting adjacent are the students they can talk to without difficulty. In addition, participants maintained that as international and home students sat separately most of the time, it was more difficult to communicate to the

other side. Home students particularly mentioned that they did not want to invade the international student side, so even if they arrived early to the lecture and they were alone with some international students, they would still sit separately and mentioned they felt it would be 'weird' to start any conversations.

Meeting early in the course during introduction week was also helpful in terms of encouraging students to form a friendship. This mostly happened between a minority international students, as they explained they felt that they were not fitting in, due to not being either Chinese or home students, and so these students decided they could form their own group.

Meeting the friends of a friend was also another way students formed acquaintances. This also mostly happened during group work as students brought a friend to group meetings and they would all become friends during group work. However, this was not always successful and on many occasions a friendship did not develop.

One of the main elements influencing friendship and identified by this research was socialising. Students who socialised with their group members regularly had a better group experience and developed friendships. Students reported that by socialising they had the opportunity to talk about their personal life. On certain occasions they expressed their fears of speaking in English with native speaking members and the conversation helped boost their self-confidence and they performed better in their groups.

However, most socialising actually happened when at least two of the group members were friends, in groups which there was no friendship there was no socialising. In addition, students did not arrange any social activity as course mates either and as such the majority of the students' interaction was limited to the lecture time. And as mentioned earlier, the lecture/laboratory layout did not help students to interact. Some international students noted that they would have liked to have more opportunity to socialise with home students even though they were concerned about their English skills. Almost none of the native speakers asked any international

students with low language skill to socialise with them, especially if they were not friends even though if they worked in a group together.

This findings are consistent with those of Cathcart et al. (2006) who also demonstrated the role of socialising amongst group members and friendship. Also, Peacock & Harrison (2009) highlighted the role of language in students socialising which features in the findings of this research - the authors showed home students would rather socialise with students who have better English language skills. However, Peacock & Harrison (2009) identified cultural differences to be of the key reasons for a lack of socialising between home and international students. Conversely in this research, students did not mention cultural differences explicitly as a factor.

Almost all of the participants in this research mentioned that they would like the School to arrange the social events and also home students pointed out they would like more activities with international students at the beginning of the course or introduction week in order to get to know them. They believed that with more interaction between students, there would be a greater chance for students to be able to make more friends.

Regarding participants' views toward friendship, it should also be considered that students from different cultural backgrounds or ages had different understandings of the concept of friendship and what 'friend' meant to them. For instance, one Chinese student referred to her previous group mates as friends even though the only contact they had was simple greetings and short conversations. For home students, 'friends' meant those individuals with whom they socialise and spend more time. This does not mean all students with similar cultural backgrounds or ages necessary followed similar patterns but rather shows the definition of 'friend' and 'friendship' is rather subjective. These findings are similar to Gareis (2000) who argues students have different understanding of the word 'friend' according to their culture.

Interaction between students plays a crucial role in friendship between students and also their group work experience as participants tended to work with those whom

they were more familiar (e.g. they socialised, sat next to each other in the lecture room). As a result, it can be concluded that if (as participants mentioned) the level of interaction increases by having more activities, which enable these interactions, it would be more probable that students would work in more diverse groups.

These findings are consistent with Hinds et al. (2000) who suggest people are more likely to work with those they are familiar with and as the interaction increases there is more opportunities that people choose to work with each other.

7.15. CONCLUSION

This section has considered themes drawn from the different cases in the Findings chapter and the wider literature. The processes that occur during the formation of the group is a key finding in terms of how students select their group mates in particular – students have been seen to adopt strategic approaches to group mate selection and similarity attraction theory and homophily have been found to be present in student decision-making. The roles of culture and language have been seen to influence the group dynamics and students expectations' of each other. They have not however, been the cause of major conflicts in groups – these have been more been attributable to the academic attitudes of certain students or factors external to the group such as module design. Groups that met more and formed friendships were seen to perform more efficiently as a group with members likely to provide even contributions to the task and avoid phenomena such as free loading or loafing. In the next chapter the relationship between these factors will be discussed in relation with the group dynamics stages.

8. CHAPTER 8 MODEL

INTRODUCTION

This model illustrates the different factors which may impact upon multicultural student group work. These factors have been extracted from the research findings - see chapters 4, 5, and 6 and the discussion chapter 7.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 focus on providing factors, elements and themes which impact upon multicultural group performance. Here, the model shows the relationship between these elements - it is a structure portraying the relationships and presents a sequence of meaning related to the themes and their inter-relations. This sequence is based on the stages of group dynamics (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) as explained in section 2.1.2.2.

These stages will be addressed one by one to explain the model in four sections (i.e. in the order Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing). The entire model is presented in Figure 8-1 (see fold-out appendix page for full size model in back cover) and it is presented section by section in figures Figure 8.1-1 to Figure 8.5-2.

However as mentioned earlier, not every group subject to this study experienced all the stages. As such, some stages feature fewer factors (e.g. Storming). Nevertheless, if there is a factor, which could potentially have appeared in one of the stages, it has been allocated to that particular stage. For instance, some students experienced certain challenges due to fellow group mates' personalities or academic attitudes - even though these students bypassed the storming stage, 'personality' was identified as a factor which can potentially cause serious conflicts, especially when students are unfamiliar with each other.

Factors affecting more than one of the other factors appear as many times as necessary; in these instances, colour is used to illustrate the same factor. See Model's guide (Appendix VII) for the description of each nodes/factor.
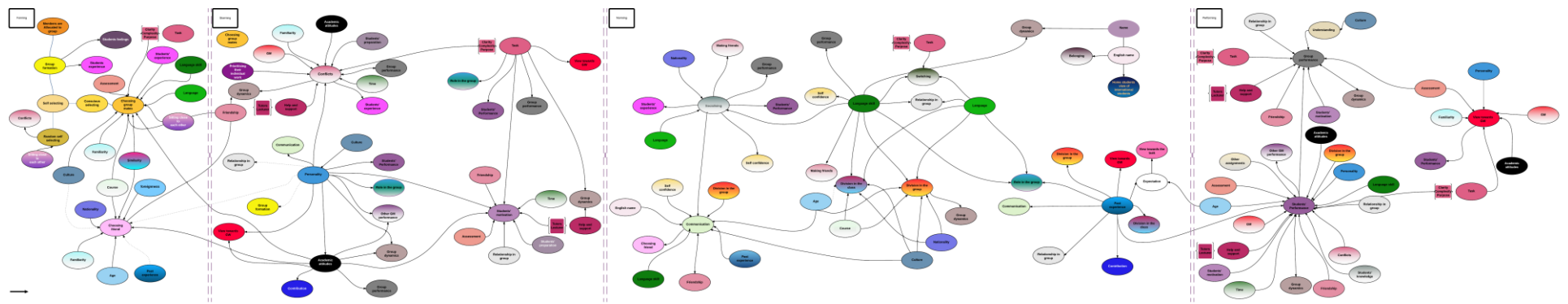
FIGURE 8-1 MODEL

In the following diagrams the use of solid or dotted lines and arrows indicates the

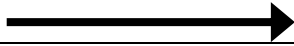nature of the links and their impact (See Table 8-1)
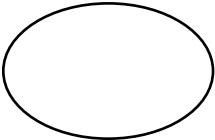
————————	Link
· · · · · · · · · ·	Weak/uncertain link
————————▶	Impact on
· · · · · · · · ▶	Weak/uncertain impact
⬭	Factor

TABLE 8-1 MODEL LEGEND

8.1. FORMING

Forming in this model concerns the way students form their groups (Self selecting) or if they are allocated to their groups by the lecturer. This stage is especially important as findings show the individual characteristics of group members (GM) impact on different aspects of the group work process.

This stage has three main nodes: *Group formation, Choosing group mates* and *Choosing friends.* In this section, these nodes and their relationship with other nodes are discussed.
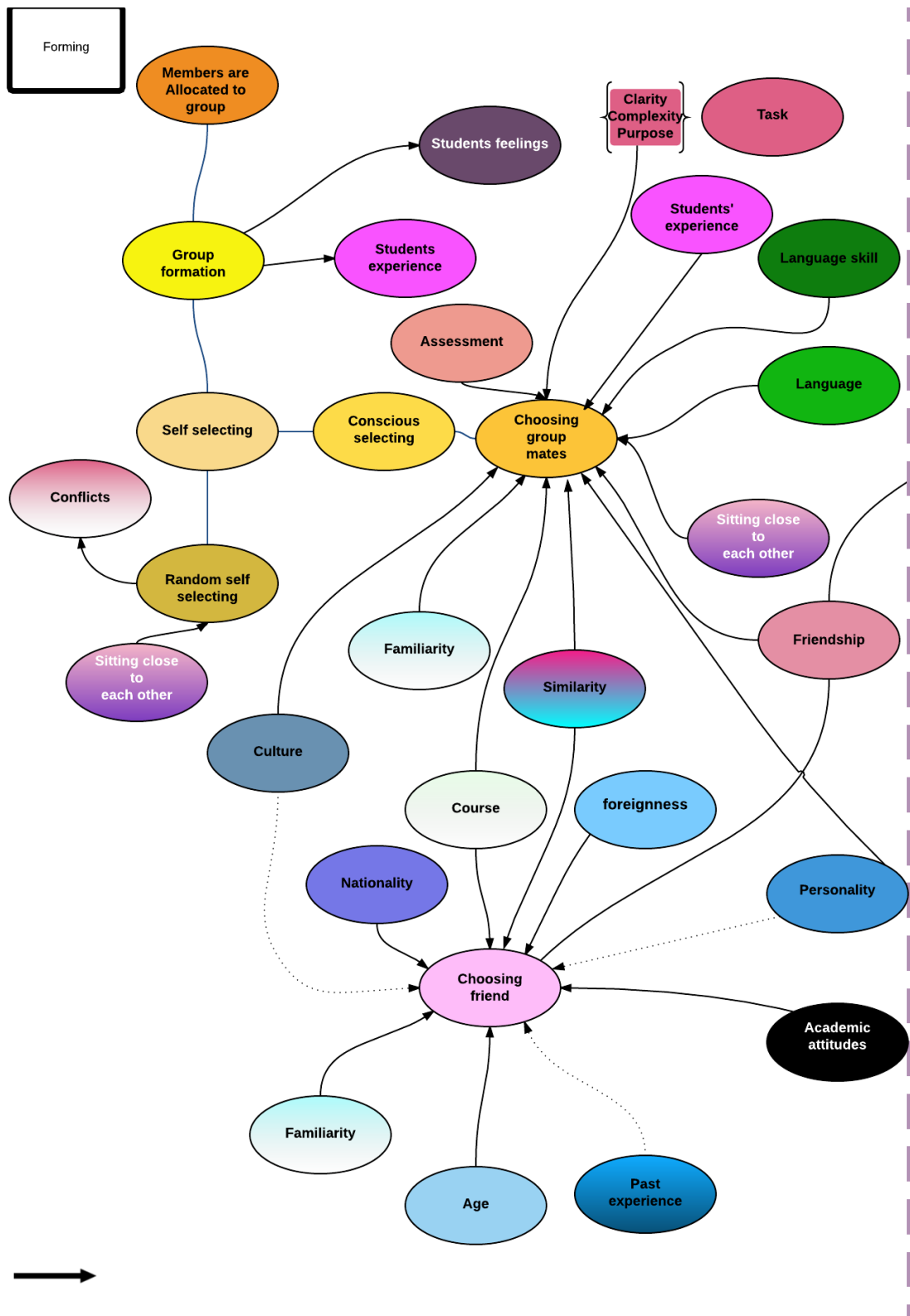
FIGURE 8.1-1 FORMING

As mentioned above, groups are formed in two main ways: *Members are allocated to groups* and *Self selecting.* The nature of the *Group formation* affected *Students' feelings* and *Students' experience* as some students may feel anxious when allocated to their group, or when they are not selected by other students they may feel excluded or unwanted.

Personality is another factor, which impacts on group formation. *Personality* here refers to students' individual personalities. Research findings show students with different personalities may choose different tactics to choose their group mates. However, findings also show the link between *Personality* and *Group formation* is weak, hence the dotted line.

Research findings identify that students adopt two ways of *Self selecting* their group members: *Random self selecting* and *Conscious self selecting.* The former refers to when students choose their group mates randomly, students *Sitting close to each other* is found to be the most popular way of forming groups in this selection. Groups which are formed with this method tend to experience more *Conflicts.*

When *Self selecting* involves a conscious decision *(Conscious selecting)* this leads to *Choosing group mates.* Findings show there are different factors which can impact on student decisions, *Task* is considered as one of the main factors here. *Task* complexity, the clarity of task requirements, and its purpose all influence students' selection criteria when choosing their group mates. For example, if the task is deemed to be very complicated, students may prefer to work with others who they consider to be hard-working.

Assessment also has significant impact on student decisions. *Assessment* here refers to the assessed or unassessed group task. If the task is unassessed, students are more likely to adopt a relaxed approach to choosing their group mates. However, when the task is high stakes, students are very careful regarding who they want to work with to ensure they achieve a high mark.

Students' experience also impacts on *Choosing group mates*: students who had bad experiences from a previous group work task are less likely to choose the same group mates again. It is also possible that they would avoid working with those students from same nationality as their previous group members if these particular group members irritated them.

Culture is another factor impacting upon student decisions. *Culture* here refers to students' own cultural background. Some students prefer to work with other students who share the same *culture* as them, as they may find it easier to work with each other. It can be seen that culture has a weaker impact on the node *Choosing friend*.

Familiarity in the model refers to if students are familiar with each other and if they had any encounters before the group formation. Findings indicate students are more likely to choose other students who are familiar with them.

Language is another factor which can impact on student decisions. *Language* here refers to the language that students speak, e.g. Chinese. Findings show some students prefer to work with students who speak same first language as them as this makes communication easier.

Language skill refers to students' English language skills meaning how well students can speak and write in English. Findings show Language skill is one of the key criteria for some students, as they do not want to work with students who cannot speak English well and the related communication difficulties may impact on their final grade.

Even in *Conscious selecting*, research findings shows that some students still choose other students who happen to be sitting nearby in the classroom. As such, *Sitting close to each other* has an impact in *Choosing group mates*.

Students' *Academic attitudes* has substantial impact on *Choosing group mates*. As findings show, some students prioritise *Academic attitudes* above other factors when *Choosing group mates* to ensure they achieve a high mark.

Course here refers to students' course (e.g. Librarianship). Findings show students prefer to work with students from their own course. As such, *Course* impacts on students' decision making when choosing their group mates. Also, students have similar attitudes when *choosing friend*. This means students prefer to form friendship bonds with students from the same course.

Similarity is another element, which impacts on both *Choosing friend* and *Choosing group mates.* The term refers to commonalities between students such as age, nationality, speaking same language etc.

Foreignness is also a factor, which impacts on *Choosing friend. Foreignness* here means when a student's nationality is in the minority among the student cohort and they tend to make friends with other students in similar position, as they share being 'foreign'. For example, in a population of students which are mostly from the UK or China (as is the case here) the sole students from Italy and Malaysia may make their own group of friends.

Students mainly prefer to work with their friends, so *Friendship* is also one of the factors that students consider when they are choosing group mates. Groups which are formed from friends usually experience stronger *group dynamics*.

The third main node is *Choosing friend.* As mentioned, *Similarity* and *Course* both may influence the way students choose their friends. In addition, Nationality also affects students' decisions. *Nationality* here refers to students' nationality, often the country of their birth. Findings show students tend to choose friends from students with similar nationalities to them. Also, similar to the way student choose their group members, *Familiarity* affects *Choosing friend*, as some students prefer to make friends with those whom they had some kind of previous contact.

Students tend to choose their friends from those who are within a similar age range to them. As such, *Age* is considered as one of the factors - *Age* here refers to students' age.

Past experience also has an effect on *Choosing friend* but its impact is not as strong as some other factors, hence the dotted link*. Past experience* here refers to life

experience, work experience or previous education. Findings show students who had similar levels of work experience prefer to be friends with each other. Additionally, students who have previously worked with a range of other people with different nationalities are more likely to make friends with international students.

Students' *Personality* also has a minor impact on the way students choose their friends.

Academic attitudes also impacts upon *Choosing friend.* Findings show some students tend to prefer to make friends with students who have similar academic attitudes to them, as they believe it would help their studies as well.

8.2. STORMING

The next stage is storming. The main nodes in this section are: *Conflicts*, *Personalities*, *Academic attitudes*, *task*, and *Students' motivation*. As findings show here, these factors can all potentially cause irritation, arguments and this can escalate into serious conflict.

The factor *GM* (group member) is the manifestation of the previous stage, this means group members are the result of group formation.

A few of the factors which were present in previous sections are also present at this stage: *Academic attitudes, Personality, Culture, Familiarity, Task assessment and friendship.*
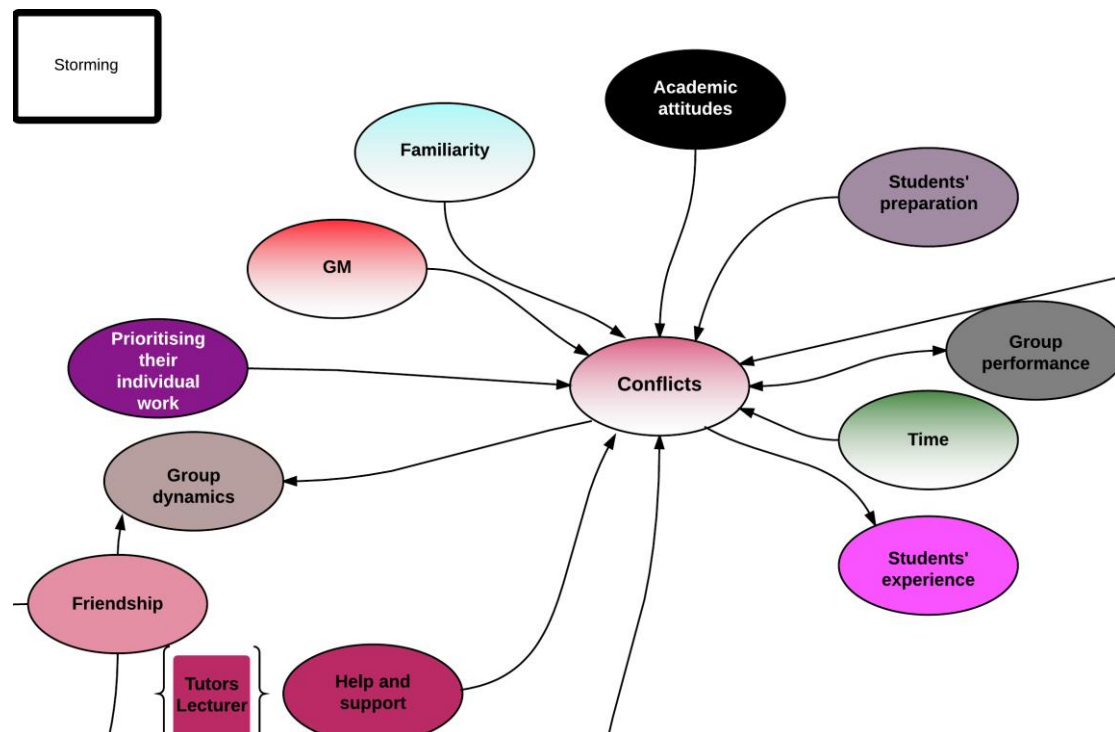
FIGURE 8.2-1 STORMING/CONFLICTS

The first main factor is *conflicts*. Group conflicts are the most common issue in the storming stage. Factors impacting upon conflicts are introduced below.

438

GM here refers to group members' characteristics. Findings show *GM* can cause *conflicts*, on some occasions this is due to their behaviours, the way they treat other group members, etc.

Familiarity also impacts on the *conflicts*. Findings show the more students are familiar with each other, the less frequently conflicts occur.

Academic attitudes of group members can cause conflicts. Findings show when group members have contrasting academic attitudes and approach the group task differently, there is greater chance of conflict.

Students' preparation is considered as another factor which impacts on *conflicts*; the term here refers to students' preparation for the tutorial and group meeting. Findings show a lack of preparation can cause frustration and conflicts.

Conflicts and *Group performance* have a two-way relationship. This means when conflicts occur in a group it can potentially affect group performance. Also, when the group does not perform well, there is a possibility that this can cause frustration and conflicts in the group.

Time is another factor which affects *Conflicts*. *Time* here refers to the point in time that the task is assigned to students, the amount of students have to complete the task and the amount of time spent on the task. Findings show that time students with different attitudes towards *time* can cause friction and irritation. For example, differing student opinion regarding the amount of time needed to spend finalising the task can cause conflicts

Prioritising their individual work in this diagram means when students decide their own individual assignments have greater value and they decide to neglect or invest less effort on the group work; this attitude can cause conflicts between group members.

Help and support that students receive during their group work from the tutors and lectures also has impact on *Conflicts*. For example, findings show that mismanagement of conflicts by a lecturer can exacerbate conflicts.

In addition, when groups experience *Conflicts*, findings show this impacts on *Students' experience* in a negative ways. Also (as mentioned in the Forming stage) this can impact upon the way they choose their group mates.

Conflicts affect *Group dynamics* - when groups experience conflicts they usually have weaker dynamics.
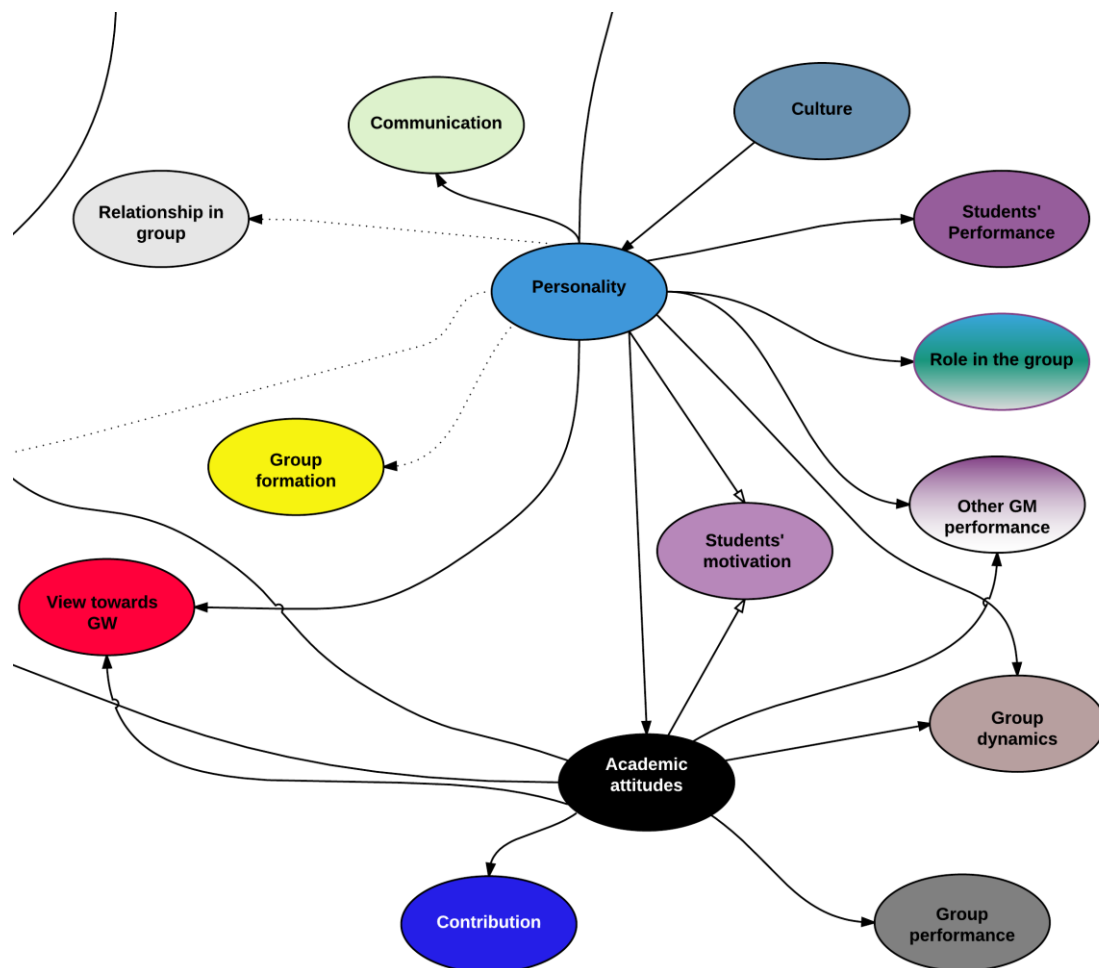

FIGURE 8.2-2 STORMING/ PERSONALITY, ACADEMIC ATTITUDES

Personality is another main node. As mentioned in the Forming stage, *Personality* has a weak impact on *Group formation* and *Relationship in group.* Additionally, group members' personality has an effect on *Conflicts*. Findings show student's *Personality* can cause conflicts, for example when one or more members are dominant there is greater chance that their behaviours cause conflicts. As such, all

factors affected by *Personality* or impacting on this node are present in the Storming stage, as they potentially can cause storming in the groups.

Personality also impacts on *Communication*. Findings show students communicate in various ways according to their personalities, for instance some students are more patient in terms of willingness to repeat themselves and make sure non-native speakers can understand them.

Culture has an impact on *Personality*. This means cultural background can impact on students' personality, for example in this research most Chinese students were more polite and quiet.

Findings show that students with different personalities are likely to perform differently in the groups. As such, there is a link between *Personality* and *Students performance*.

Roles in the group is also affected by student personalities. For example, students who are shy are less likely to take the leadership role.

There is also a link between *Personality* and *Other GM performance*. Group member personalities can have both positive and negative impacts on other group members' performance. For example, when one of the members is not tolerant towards criticism other members may stop contributing in order to avoid conflicts.

Personality also impacts on *View towards group work*, some students prefer to work on their own and do not like to communicate with other students.

Personality and *Academic attitudes* also are linked. Students with different personalities tend to adopt different academic attitudes.

Also, *Personality* impacts on group dynamics. If group members are perceived as acting badly, it can weaken the group dynamics and may even result in a greater Storming stage.

Academic attitudes is another main factor. This has a direct link with students'
Contribution. For example, those who adopt an achieving approach contribute less
to unassessed tasks.

Consequently, *Academic attitude* impacts upon *Group performance and Group
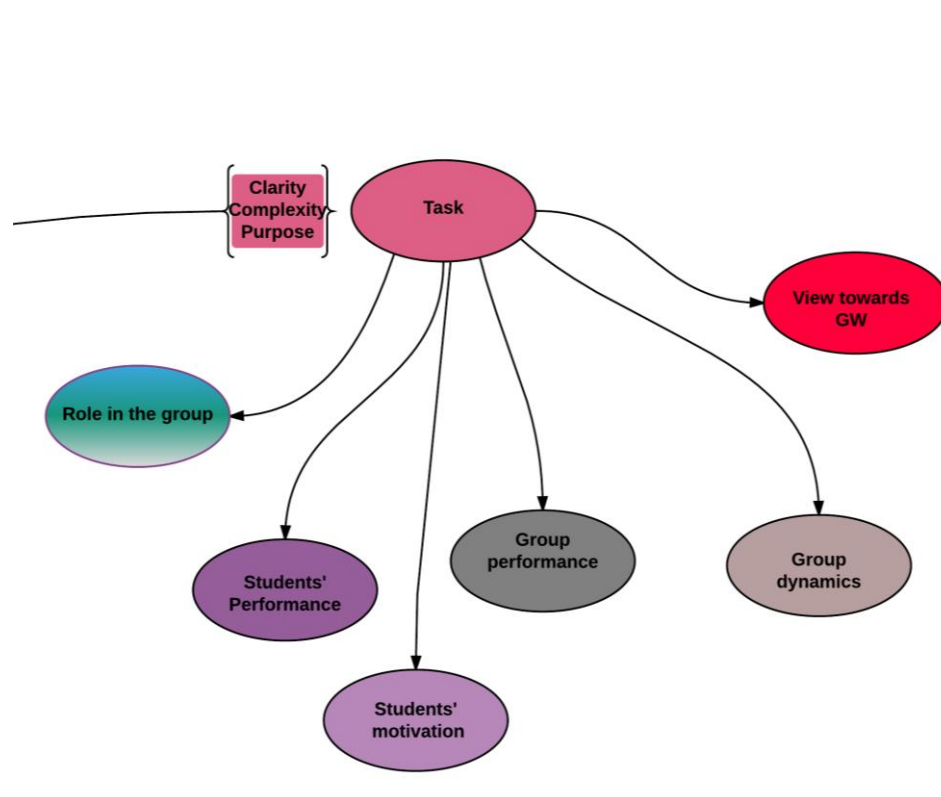dynamics*.

FIGURE 8.2-3 STORMING/ TASK

Task is another main node in the Storming stage. When the task is unclear or its aim
is vague, there is greater chance that students experience conflicts and storming
occurs.

Task impacts on *Students performance and students' motivation.* For example, when
students cannot understand the aim of the task they usually invest less effort.

Task also impacts on *Group performance.* A vague task briefing can confuse students and as they spend more time and energy to make sense of the task, the group performance can be affected and the group can become dysfunctional.

Roles in the group is also affected by the group *task*. For example, students tend to have a leader in the group when the task is more complicated.

Students' *View towards GW* is affected by the *task* - when the *task* is high stakes or complex, students would rather to work on their own to have control over their marks.
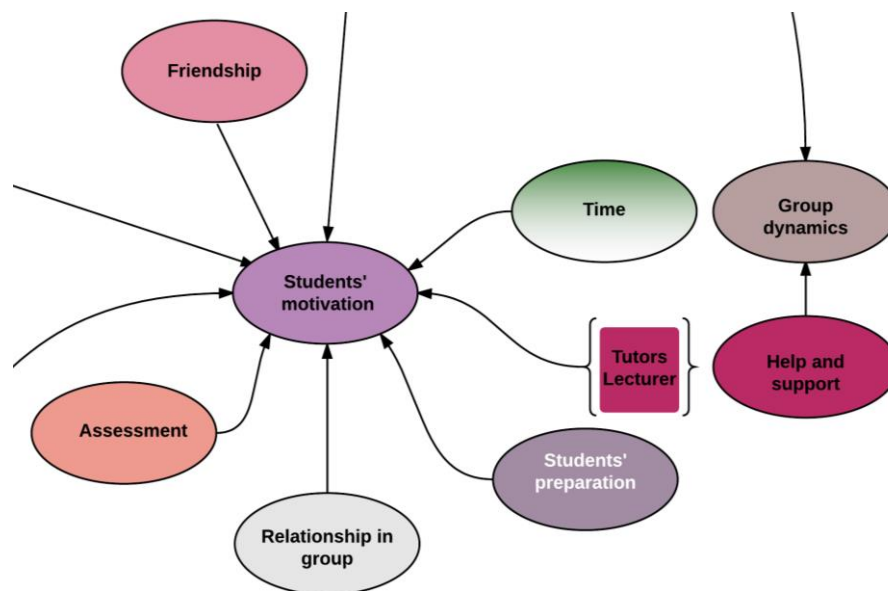
FIGURE 8.2-4 STORMING/STUDENTS' MOTIVATION

The next node is *Students' motivation*. Lack of motivation in students can cause irritation in other group members, as such this factor is located in this stage.

Friendship impacts on *Students' motivation* as students are more likely to be motivated when they work with their friends.

Assessment also impacts on *Students' motivation.* When the task is assessed, students are more motivated to achieve higher marks.

Relationship in group impacts upon student motivation. If students do not have a positive relationship with the other group members, they are less likely to be motivated.

Students preparation also affects *Students' motivation*. When group members are not prepared, this can de-motivate other group members - or in contrast - when some group members are highly prepared this can motivate fellow members to do more.

Help and support affects *Students' motivation*. Tutors are able to de-motivate or motivate students during the group work by giving them advice. *Help and support* also impacts upon the *Group dynamics* as lecturers and tutors are responsible for resolving conflicts, giving advice on the task, etc. They can impact on the *Group dynamics*

Time is another factor which influences *Students' motivation.* As mentioned earlier, when students have several concurrent submissions they can be de-motivated to spend time on their group work assignment.

8.3. NORMING

Norming in this model primarily occurs when students start to become familiar with each other and share common understandings of the task. All factors which impact upon how students went through this stage are considered in the model. These factors are socialising, communication, language, language skill, division in the group and classroom, role in the group, name and past experience. These factors were discussed in previous stages, but were not considered as influencing forces as they are here, where they are each viewed as a main factor.
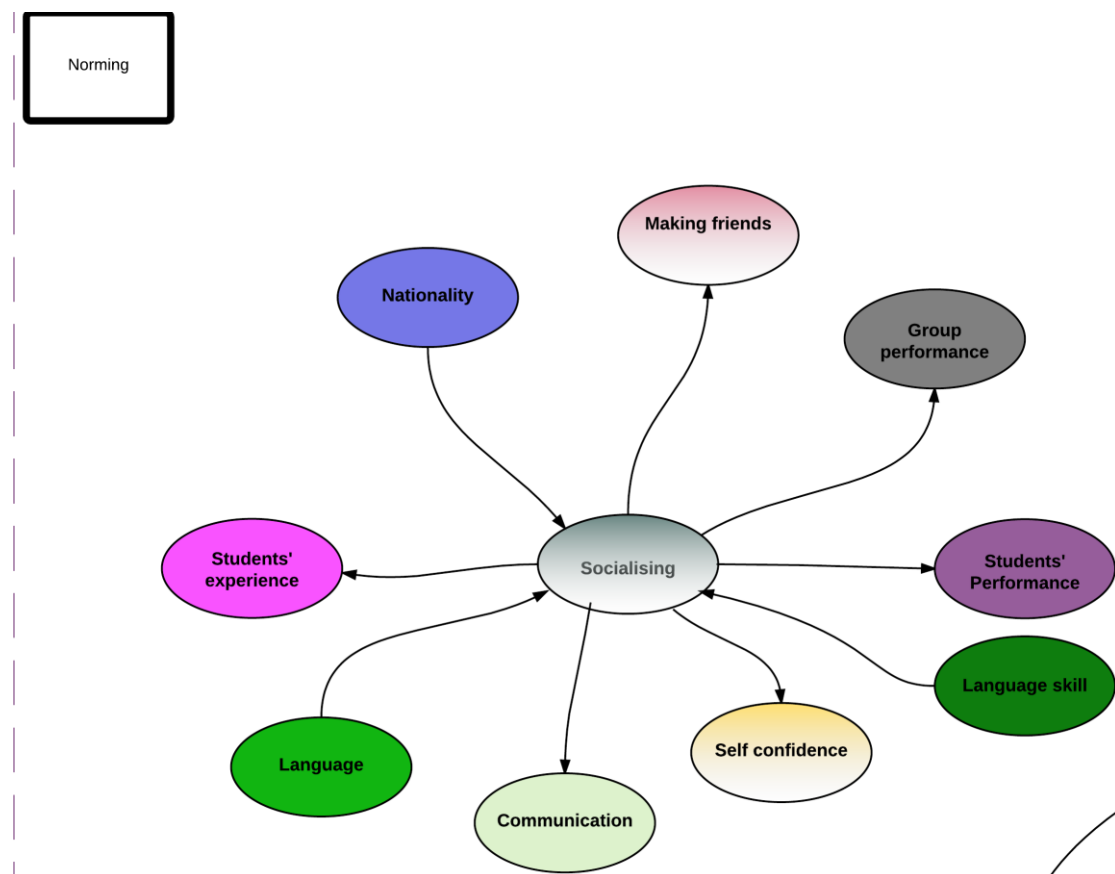
FIGURE 8.3-1 NORMING/ SOCIALIASING

In Figure 8.3-1 *Socialising* and *Communication* are the main nodes. Most of the factors appeared in previous stages except *English name, Self confidence, Division in the group* and *Making friends.*

Socialising affects various factors. Students who *socialise* in their groups are more likely to make friends. As such, socialising impacts upon on *Making friends*.

Findings show groups which *Socialise* enjoy better *Group performance* and *Students' performance and students' experience* as they develop better relationships and stronger bonds.

Socialising can impact on students *Self confidence* by providing opportunities for students to talk to each other outside the educational setting.

Findings also showed when group members do not speak the same *Language or* have a different *Nationality* they are less likely to *Socialise*. Also students would rather socialise with others who have stronger *Language skill* as this makes dialogue easier.
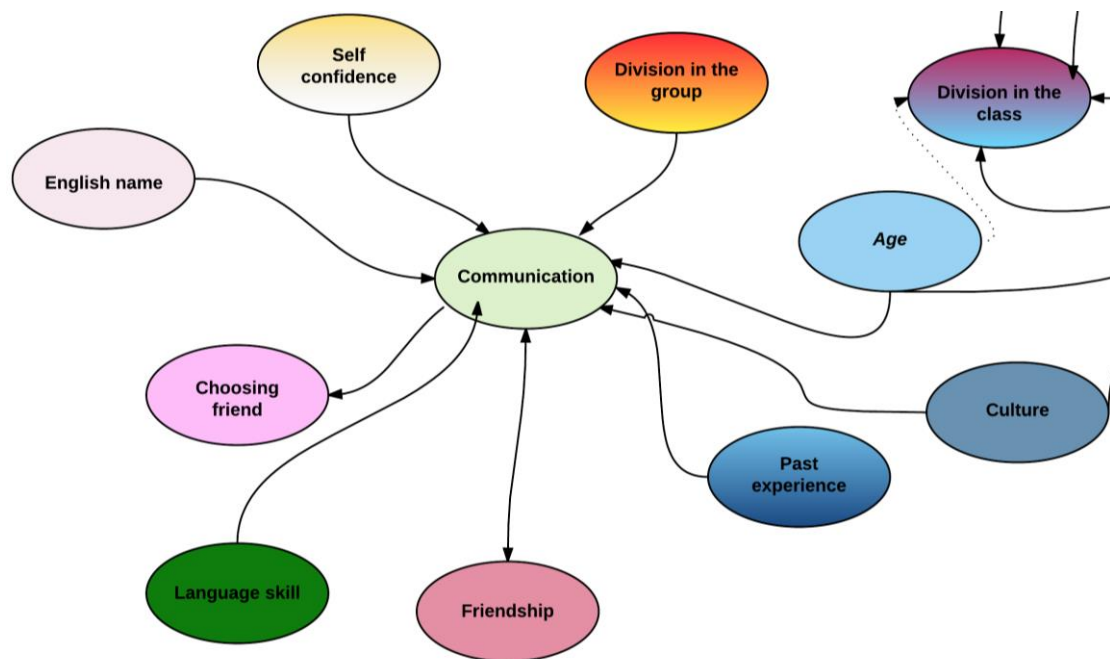
FIGURE 8.3-2 NORMING/ COMMUNICATION

The next main factor in this section is *Communication* (Figure 8.3-2 Norming/ Communication)*.*

When there is a *Division in the group,* the level of *Communication* is low and usually its quality is low also. As such, *Division in the group* impacts upon *Communication.*

Findings show the greater and higher quality the communication; there is a greater chance that students choose their group members as friends. As a result *Communication* impacts on *Choosing friend.*

Past experience impacts on the way students *Communicate* in the group. Findings show students who have work experience or are used to communicating with people with different cultural backgrounds are more patient and understanding and in general have better a quality of communication within the group.

In addition *Age* impacts on *Communication*, findings show mature students are more likely to maintain better communication in the group and younger students are less patient to communicate with those with lower levels of English.

Culture also impacts on *Communication*. Findings show students from different cultures have different communication styles

English name is also considered as a factor which impacts on *Communication*. When international students have names which are difficult to memorise or pronounce for other students, students tend to avoid communicating with them or assume they do not like to mix with them.

Students' *Self confidence* affects the way they *Communicate* and also the quality of communication. Some students minimise communication with group mates as they may have low *Self confidence* due to a lower level of *Language skills.*
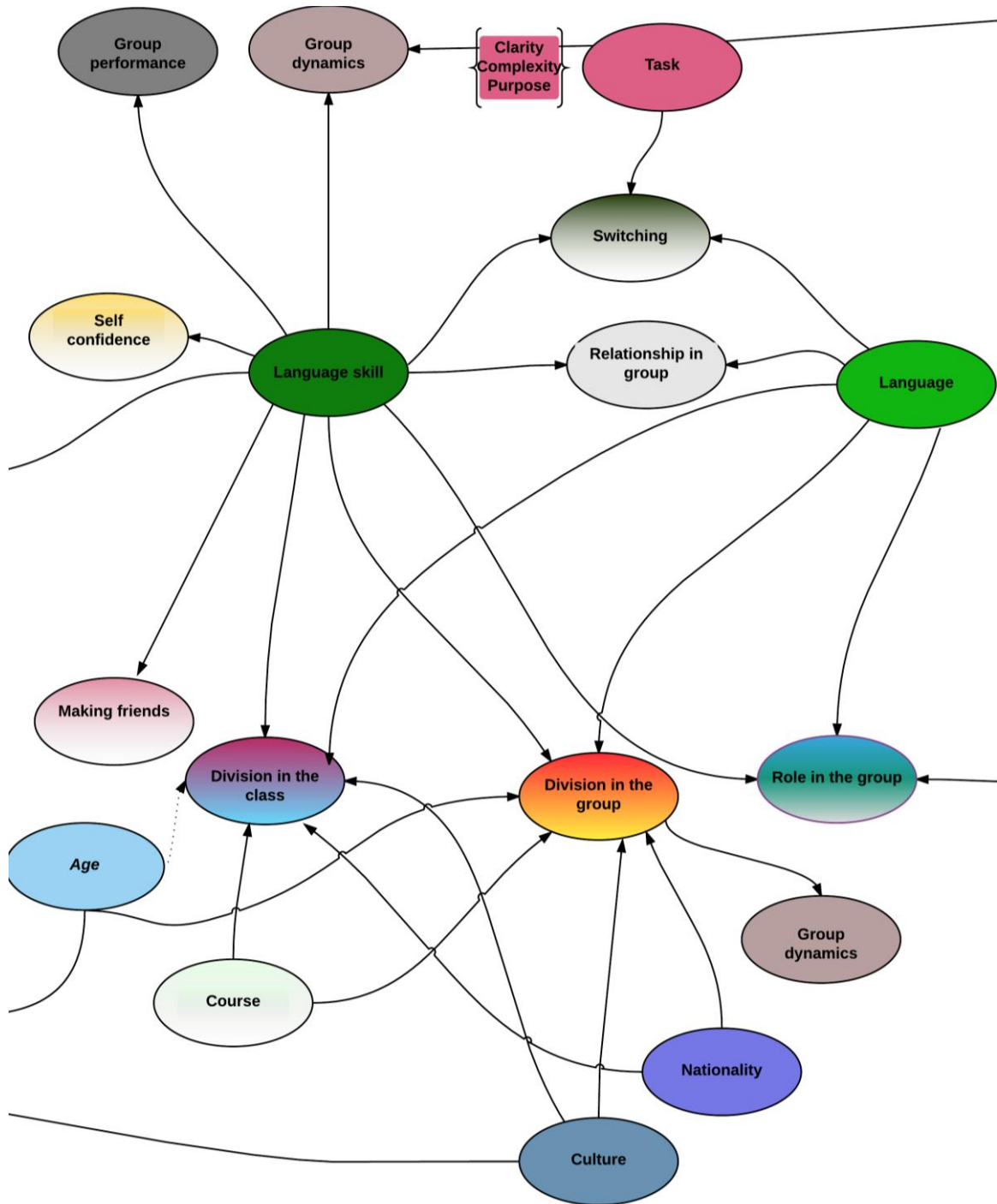
FIGURE 8.3-3 NORMING/ LANGUAGE SKILLS, LANGUAGE, DIVISION IN THE CLASS, DIVISION IN THE GROUP

In Figure 8.3-3 *Language*, *Language skill, Division in the group,* and *division in the class* are the main nodes. *Language skill* is also mentioned in relation with *Communication* and *Socialising*. Also, *Language* was mentioned as one of the factors which impacts on *Socialising*. *Division in the group* furthermore, impacts on *Communication*.

Age appears to have impact on *Communication* and *Division in group* and also on *Division in the class*.

Students *Language skill* has impact on students' *Self confidence*. Findings show students who speak better English are more confident to get involved in group discussion and communication.

In addition *Language skill* has impact on *Making friends and Relationship in group*, international students who have a higher level of English are more likely to develop better relationships with group members or make friends with students who do not speak their native language.

Also, *Language skill* impacts upon *Division in the class*, and *Division in group*. Findings show that division happens when students are unable to establish a level of communication with other students or are afraid to speak in English with other students.

Language skill impact on *Group performance*. When member/s of the group do not speak English at a sufficiently high level it may affect the group performance as they may not be able to communicate their ideas.

Language skill also impacts on the *Group dynamics*. Low levels of English can cause communication breakdown, and as such affect the group dynamics.

Language skill also impact on *the role in groups.* Students with low levels of English are less likely to be a leader in a multicultural group.

Language skill impacts upon *Switching. Switching* here means when international students alternate between English and their native language during the group work. Findings show students are more likely to switch between languages when their

English is not at a high level and the *Task* seems complicated or unclear to students. As such, *Task* also impacts on *Switching*. Speaking English as a second *Language* is one of the causes of switching - as such Language also impacts on Switching.

Language has impact on the *Relationship in groups*; findings show most students prefer to develop their relationship with students who speak their own language.

As such *Language* impact on *Division in the group* and *Division in the class,* as students tend to create their subgroup with students who speak their language.

Roles in the group is affected by their *Language* as well. Findings show most international students prefer native English speaking students take the leadership role.

Division in the Class and *Division in the group* are both affected by similar factors. These factors are: *Age, Course, Culture, Nationality, Language and Language skill.* Findings indicate that this is because students tend to form their groups in the classroom and subgroups in the groups according to their similarities, which can be their age, nationality Language etc.

Division in the group affect the *Group dynamics* as when division is present usually the communication is not strong and this may affect the group dynamics.
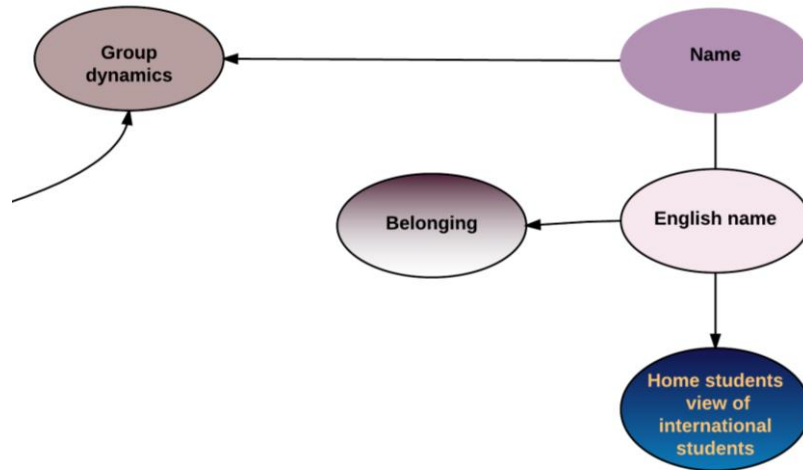
FIGURE 8.3-4 NORMING/ENGLISH NAME

In Figure 8.3-4 and Figure 8.3-5, *Name* and *Past experience* are the main nodes. Some of these nodes have already appeared in the previous sections, like *Age, Division in the group, Division in the class, Relationship in group, Contribution, English name* and *Group dynamics*. Also it is mentioned that *Past experience* impacts upon *Communication* and *Choosing friend*.

Research findings show a student's *Name* has impact on the *Group dynamics*. This node is mostly linked to *English name* as some of the international students felt more *Belonging* to the UK after adopting an *English name*.

In addition, having an *English name* impacted on *Home students' view of international students* as findings show they believe when international students adopt an English name this means they want to blend with other students.
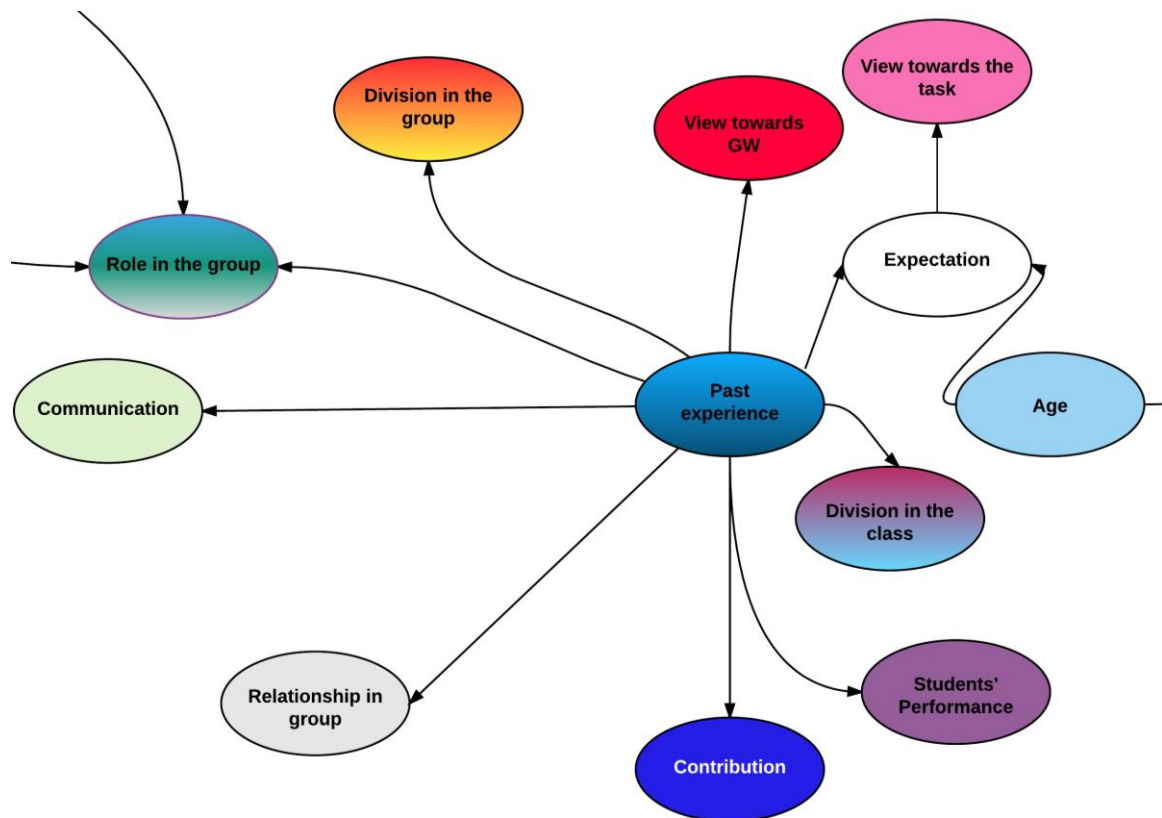
FIGURE 8.3-5 NORMING/ PAST EXPERIENCE

Past experience is another main node in this stage. *Past experience* impacts on both *Division in the class* and *Division in the group*. This is because findings show students who share similar backgrounds such as work experience tend to create their own subgroup.

Past experience also has impact on the *Role in the group.* Students with more work experience are more likely to take a leadership role.

Past experience also impact on *Relationship in the group*. Findings show students may have some prejudice towards specific cultures or nationalities because of their previous experience. This experience may impact on their relationship with the group members.

Students' *Past experience* also impact on their *Contribution*. Some students use their skills or knowledge to contribute to the group work.

It also impact on students *View towards GW.* When students have experience working in groups regularly they are more likely to have a positive view towards group work.

However, *Past experience* also creates *Expectation.* For example students from different educational systems (such as Chinese higher education) are likely to expect to have similar experiences to this in the UK. As such, this *Expectation* impacts on their *View towards the task*.

Also, Age impacts on the *Expectation.* For example, mature students have different expectation form their study and they expect less group work.

8.4. PERFORMING

The last stage is performing. In this study there were three different tasks, each with its own different performing stage. For IL, the performing aspect was making the poster and presenting it, in KIM is making a rich picture and presenting it and the MINICASE is the final diagram and submitting it. However, similar factors are presented in all these performing stages.

In this stage, the main nodes are *Group performing*, *Students performing* and *View towards the GW*.

All factors have been discussed in relationships with other stages except *Students' knowledge* and *Understanding.*

FIGURE 8.5-1 PERFORMING/ GROUP PERFORMANCE, STUDENTS PERFORMANCE

In Figure 8.5-1 the main nodes are *Group Performance* and *Students' performance*.

Task and the *Help and support* that students received during the group work have impact on the group performance. When the task is clear and students receive sufficient support, groups accordingly perform better.

Groups which are formed by friends tend to perform better. Also, groups which have more positive *Relationship in group* perform better. As such, *Friendship* and *Relationship in group* impact on *Group performance.*

Students' Motivation also impact on *Group performance,* when members of the group are not motivated to do the group activity, the group does usually not perform well.

Assessment has major impact on the group performance. When the task is assessed, groups are more likely to perform better as students attempt to achieve higher mark.

Students may have a different *Understanding* regarding phenomena due to their cultural background. This *Understanding* impacts upon *Group performance* as sometimes members may not share same understanding, which can affect *Group performance* in a negative way.

Group performance and *Group dynamics* have a two-way relationship, meaning they impact on each other. For example, good *Group dynamics* can result in good *Group performance*.

The next factor is *Students' performance. Students' performance* impacts on *Group performance*. It means the performance of each individual contributes to the success of the group.

There are several factors affecting *Students' performance* - these are discussed below.

Students' knowledge impacts upon their performance as when students have comprehensive knowledge which is required for the task they usually more likely to engage with the task and perform better.

Other GM performance impact on *Students' performance* in both positive and negative ways. On some occasions, a group member investing insufficient effort may result in a lack of performance in others or contrastingly, one member can encourage other members to perform better. As such, GM also impacts upon *Students' performance* as members behaviour, view towards the task etc. can de-motivate or motivate other group members.

Assessment impacts upon *Students' performance* as findings show students are less encouraged to perform when their group task is unassessed*.*

Other assignments is also another factor. Findings show that when students have several submissions at the same time, they do not perform well in their groups.

Time is also another factor here. The length of time students have to complete the task and if it occurs concurrently with other assignments (as mentioned) both affect *Students' performance.*

Low-level of English *Language skill* also impacts on students' performance, either due to weak inter-group communication or a lack of understanding of the task or insufficient academic English knowledge.

Similar to *Group performance, task* and *Help and support* impact on *Students' performance.*

Conflicts in the group also impact on *Students' performance.* Findings show that if students experience serious conflicts, they are less likely to perform very well.

When students are motivated to do the group task, they usually perform better. This motivation can be seen in higher marks, learning or by graduating. As such *Students' motivation* has impact on *Students' performance.*

Similar to group performance, *students' performance* also have a two-way relationship with *group dynamics.*

Friendship and *relationship in group* also impact on *Students' performance.* Similarly to *Group performance*, students perform better when they work with their friends and they have positive relationship with group mates.

Students *Personality* and *Academic attitudes* also impact on their performance. For example, students who adopted an achieving approach are more likely to perform better when the task is assessed. In addition, findings show students' *Age* also impacts on the way they perform. For example, mature students may have different experience and as such may utilise this to effectively meet the requirements of the group task.

When groups experience division, findings show that this influences *Students' performance* as it affects the group dynamics and communication within the group.
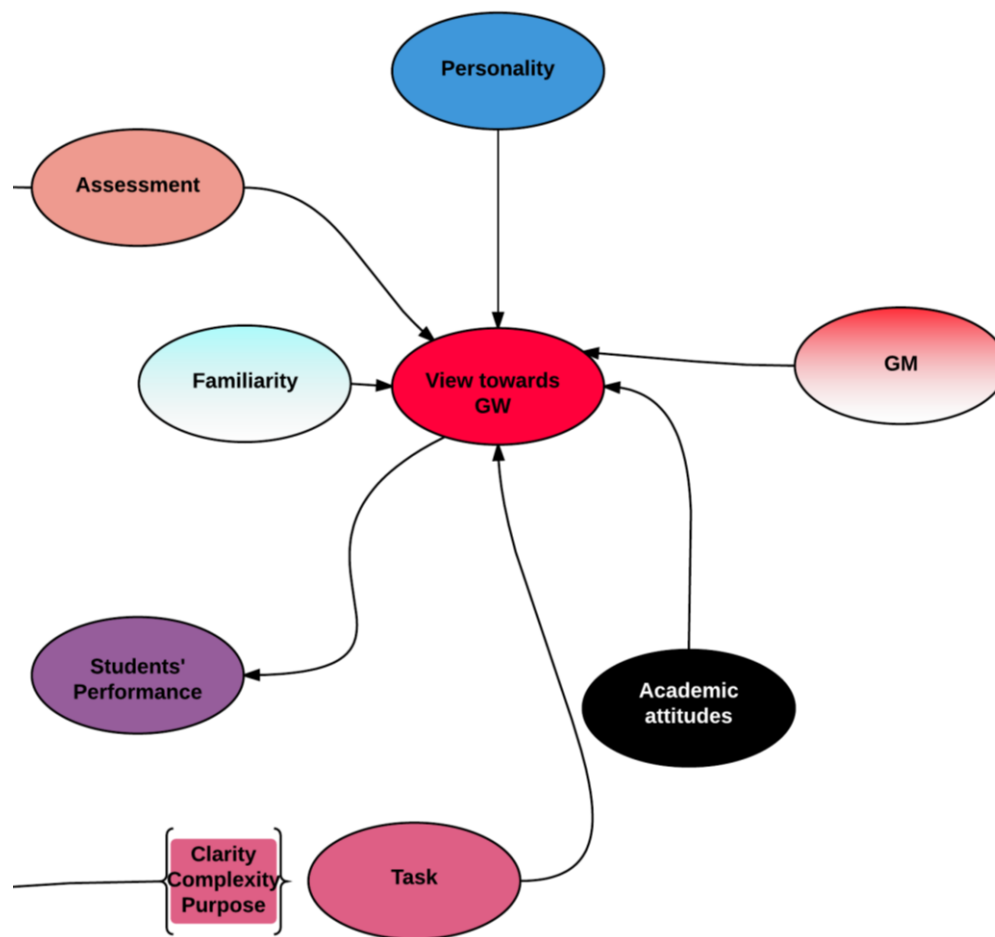
FIGURE 8.5-2 PERFORMING/VIEW TOWARDS GW

The model finishes with the factor *View towards GW*. This factor is located in this stage as it impacts on the *Students' performance* and indirectly on the *Group performance.*

Findings identified factors, which impact upon students' views towards group work. As these have all been described earlier, they are simply listed here:

- Assessment
- Familiarity
- Personality (Storming)
- Academic attitudes (Storming)

- Task (Storming)

- Group members

- Past experience (Norming)

8.5. CONCLUSION

This model provides a holistic view of the factors affecting different aspects of multicultural group work. The relationship between these factors and stages they appear are demonstrated in this model. The model provides an insight into the stages of multicultural group dynamics. It also highlights the factors which may cause poor group dynamics, affect the group performance, the associated reasons and also the potential time that they may appear in the group work process timeline. Also, the model presents aspects of multicultural group work which are not discussed or which are overlooked in previous related research, such as students' different group formation strategies, *language switching* and *English name*.

9. CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

9.1. INTRODUCTION

As related in the previous chapters, there are several factors affecting multicultural group work and student experience within this setting. This chapter concludes the research starting with the main research questions and revisiting the research sub-questions and objectives and providing explanation of how they have been met.

The research contribution and both the theoretical implications and empirical contributions are discussed. Finally, the research limitations are reviewed and recommendations for possible future research are presented.

9.2. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This research aimed to answer the main research question below. In order to do this, the main question and a set of sub-questions were defined.

Main research question: *What are the most important challenges, issues, conflicts, tensions and also benefits encountered during multicultural student group work in a UK information school?*

In order to answer these questions, a case study approach was adopted. Two modules were chosen as the cases and multicultural groups were selected as units of study. Groups were observed during their group work and then members were interviewed in order to gain insight into student experience when working in a multicultural group. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis. After the first set of analysis, another module was added as a third case - this was because students consistently referred to their experience in that module when working in the multicultural groups.

9.2.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research question was answered using the findings from the research:

a.   What are the challenges, issues and benefits in multicultural group work?

The research identified various factors affecting multicultural group work ranging from group formation to group task completion. Research findings indicated the importance of group formation in affecting group dynamics as several issues and challenges in the group work were caused by other group members. These issues and challenges can be expressed in two categories: student attributes and course/module design.

Student attributes refers to students' personalities, academics attitudes, their English language skills, age and past experience (work, family related or group work). These attributes contributed to the way students communicated and performed and as a result, the disparities from member to member caused issues and challenges.

Module design refers to task complexity and clearance, support during the group work, and assessment. Task complexity and assessment had major impacts on students' performance. The support students received during the group work either for task clarification or issues related group members also influenced students' performance; the way students handled their group work and conflicts.

These factors are discussed more and in greater detail in chapters 4, 5,6, and, discussion 7 and the model 8.

Some challenges were specific or more present in the multicultural groups. When students were asked to talk about the challenges they faced when working with course mates from different cultural backgrounds, they regularly cited the language barrier as the most challenging element. As mentioned before, language was considered as the most tangible aspect of culture (Devita, 2000). Research findings show that when students talked about the language barrier they not only referred to low English language levels, but the general understanding of a problem, sharing

common understandings of phenomena, etc. and as is discussed in the discussion chapter, culture impacts upon the way people view the world and understand their surroundings. As such, the way people see and solve the problem is influenced by their culture. This meant when students intended to use a story or a cartoon from their childhood in the poster/rich picture, they found it challenging to find an example which was familiar for all, as students from the same country tended to have similar experience from their childhood. This emphasises the role of culture (considering the definition of culture in the literature review which observes that culture is shaped by individuals' experience) in students' understanding and potentially their performance.

Findings suggest personality is another factor, which caused challenges in multicultural groups. Here, personality includes the way students negotiated the problem, their approach to conflicts, communication style, etc.

Since personality is shaped by culture - as mentioned in the literature review e.g. (Halverson & Tirmizi, 2008)- challenges caused by personality clashes in students are considered cultural challenges. However, it needs to be noted that culture has different layers, meaning an individual posses different types of culture such as family culture or societal culture. So it is understandable that students from the same culture may still have their differences.

Communication is identified as another element which causes difficulties and challenges in both multicultural and homogenous group work. However, it was more prominent when associated with the language barrier. One of the main reasons for considering communication as a cultural factor is that it is influenced by students' personalities and culture in addition to other elements (such as past experience, age,…) which were discussed in the discussion chapter 7.

Academic attitude is another factor causing challenges in multicultural group work for similar reasons as communication - academic attitude is considered a cultural element (being influenced by culture and personality). In addition, students from different education systems have different academic attitudes. Students found it difficult to work with those whose academic attitude was different from them. For

instance, individuals wishing to finish the task as early as possible found it challenging to work with others who preferred to leave the task to the latest point possible.

Research findings highlighted the benefits of multicultural group work for students. These benefits can be categorised in two levels - firstly: benefits for students' academic and professional lives and secondly: for their personal lives.

Benefits for students' academic and professional lives include:

1. Improving English language skills is one of the main benefits of working in a diverse group especially if one or more members are home students. This is because international students must speak in English during group work and fellow group members can potentially help them with their English

2. Being exposed to various methods of problem solving is also identified as one of the benefits of working in multicultural groups. Students with different backgrounds have varying ways of approaching the group task and performing in the group. As such, group members can potentially view the task from different perspectives. This also help students to learn from each other, for example by learning how to take notes when reading an article

3. Sharing task responsibilities is also found to be one of the benefits of group work for students. During the group work participants learned to trust others to share the responsibility and also to be responsible regarding their contribution. Also, it helped students with their time management and according to the findings this helped to reduce students' workload.

4. Findings also show some students believe working in a multicultural group potentially can prepare them for their future career and working in a multicultural organisation.

Benefits for students' personal lives

1. Overcoming homesickness and expanding friendship networks are also found to be benefits of working in multicultural groups. Working in the groups provides the opportunity for students to meet other course mates or speak

to students who they may have not done outside the group work. Also, findings showed that international students who work with other international students either from their own home country or different countries may feel less homesick.

2. Learning about different cultures is also another benefit of multicultural group work. Findings showed students learn about different cultures and this helps them to obtain better understandings of other students' behaviour.

b.   What factors impact upon multicultural group work performance?

Research findings revealed several factors which impact upon group performance. These factors include task (its clarity, clarity of purpose and complexity) help and support from tutors and lecturers, assessment, students' academic attitudes, personalities, conflicts, friendship, and each students' individual performance and motivation. These factors are identified and discussed in the discussion (Chapter 7) and model (chapter 8) chapters.

Some of these factors played a major role in group performance, such as assessment: it can be observed that students made little effort on usassessed group work. Also, when the task was unclear or complex, students needed to spend more time to discuss and negotiate their understanding of the task, and on some occasions the task complexity and lack of clarity in the brief caused conflicts and resulted in a dysfunctional group unit.

Also, findings highlighted that groups which were comprised of students from two different programmes such as librarianship, Information Management or Information Systems were likely to experience different group dynamics compared with the groups in which all members were from the same programme of study. Even though all the programmes are information science courses, the findings of this research indicated that students prefer to work with those from their own cohort, which can cause segregation in the classroom and in the groups.

c.   When do challenges and issues occur in multicultural group work?

The model in chapter 8 demonstrates the challenges and issues and the point at which they occur using a longitudinal approach.

Longitudinal model which demonstrate the factors affecting multicultural group work over the lifecycle of the group using Tuckman & Jensen's (1977) stages of group dynamics.

Research findings revealed most groups experienced challenges when group members were not familiar with each other and groups were randomly formed. This was even more prominent when members were from different programmes (Librarianship and IM). However, group members' personalities (such as dominant member) were also one of the reasons that groups experienced challenges in decision making.

When the task was high stakes or the brief was vague and required more negotiation to achieve shared understanding, language appeared to cause communication challenges. In addition, when group members were not prepared before the group or tutorial meetings, this caused irritation among some group members. Also, certain group members' lack of contribution to the task (especially close to submission) caused serious conflicts in some of the groups.

Also, language switching in groups made some of the members feel isolated and irritated. Language switching occurred mostly when the task or the related concepts was complicated – this meant certain group members would feel excluded from the process.

d.   How do cultural differences affect group performance?

Participants perceived that cultural differences did not play a major role in their own group performance. However as noted earlier, students' personalities, academic attitudes, and the way they communicate are influenced by culture, and findings highlighted the impact of these factors on group performance. They could result in less effort being invested in the group work, a lack of contribution, etc. which are all discussed in the findings (chapters 4, 5, and 6, discussion (chapter 7) and model chapter (chapter 8).

e.   What are the factors causing the conflicts?

Most groups avoided conflict, or if conflicts did happen this was on a minor scale. However, findings reveal that on some occasions students irritated other group members. This was due to a lack of contribution, bad manners, lack of preparation, switching language, etc. All factors are discussed in the model chapter. The potential factors, which may cause conflicts, are demonstrated in the storming stage in model chapters (chapter 8)

f.   What is the role of cultural differences in multicultural group work?

This research aimed to unveil the cultural elements in multicultural group work which can potentially cause conflicts and challenges in the group work. However, findings uncovered that cultural differences do not play main role in the creation of conflicts or serious issues. Rather, as related earlier in the discussion chapter, student characteristics such as academic attitude, personality, communication style etc. are influenced by an individual's culture - but not solely. The role of these characteristics can be seen as the role of culture in multicultural group work. These factors are all discussed and explained in the findings, discussion, and model chapters.

g.   How does multicultural group work influence students' experience and satisfaction?

The majority of participants stated they enjoyed working in multicultural groups when the members contributed equally and the level of English was sufficient. Findings show international students were more positive about the multicultural group work and they enjoyed working in the multicultural groups and learned more from the group. However, home students may have learned from the group but most of them did not enjoy working in the multicultural groups.

Furthermore, findings reveal students enjoyed group work when they liked the module and the task; those worked with their friends also had a better experience. In general, students who enjoyed better communication and positive relationships with their group mates had better experiences.

Even though none of the groups experienced any conflicts during the IL group work, students did not understand the aims of the activity and the requirement to create a poster by hand (as doing so did not meet their expectations regarding Master's level study) meaning they did not have a great experience.

In addition, the actions of the lecturer helping resolve group conflicts impacted upon students' experience - when the conflicts were badly managed, findings showed this caused stress in students and generated even greater conflicts.

h.   How does the information science context impact on group work?

Research findings highlighted that when students from different courses were asked to work in a group they experienced segregation and division in their groups. This was because students felt closer to those individuals from their own course and as such they to spoke and shared their ideas with them.

In addition, findings revealed IM students mostly feel they are less knowledgeable than librarianship students; this was because most of the librarianship students had some work experience or that their education background was directly related to their course, but IM students had more diverse educational backgrounds and the majority of them did not have relevant work experience in the field (See 6.4.2).

This issue was not only limited to IM and librarianship students, findings also highlighted that when students from different disciplines work in a group and one cohort has stronger skills in that field, they look down at other students and this caused conflicts and segregation within the groups.

Also, on some occasions students from different courses did not share common views towards some of the group tasks. This dissimilarity affected their group dynamics and group performance.

In summary, research findings indicated that students from different disciplines did not work well together and mostly experienced weaker group dynamics.

9.2.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1&2) To use the literature to investigate and identify what challenges students experience in multicultural education (objectives 1 and 2 are merged here)

Literature related to multicultural group work in higher education focusing on UK universities was reviewed and presented in the literature review chapter 2. This chapter was updated after the discussion chapter was completed in order to ensure it covers all related background knowledge to the findings. This was especially necessary as the part of the findings were contrasted with what other researchers discovered in multicultural group studies. As such, literature from neurology, psychology and linguistic studies was used in the discussion and subsequently were added to the literature review chapter. In addition, email alerts were set in related databases to ensure recent literature is included.

3) To explore the research questions through multiple case studies of group activities in selected modules in a Russell Group university

A case study method was adopted in order to study students' group work experience. Data was collected using observation and interview methods and analysed using thematic analysis data analysis; a case study report was then created. The methodology chapter provides the detailed explanation of the research process.

4) To explore students' perceptions of multicultural group work in different contexts

- **To provide another sense of multicultural experience**

Semi-structured interviews and observation were used to understand students' perceptions of group work. Interview questions were designed in order to investigate students' opinions, feelings, and interpretations regarding multicultural

group work. Students were asked to discuss and compare their experiences of working in different multicultural groups.

As a case study approach was used in this research, two main cases were selected (IL and KIM) and a mini case also emerged from the data. Case study research enabled the researcher to study multicultural groups in their context and gain a unique insight into multicultural group work. Additionally, cross-case analysis highlighted the similarities and differences between the cases. This approach was different to that of other studies, as the majority of these adopted a more quantitative approach.

The research procedure is discussed in the methodology chapter and the research outcomes are discussed in the discussion chapter.

5) To collect empirical data through observation and individual or group interview

Observation and semi-structured interviews were methods used to collect in-depth data. The procedure is explained in detail in the methodology chapter 3.

6) To identify the factors affecting group work performance using multiple sources of data

Students were observed working in their multicultural groups and then were interviewed in order to investigate their experience of working in the group unit and furthermore identify the factors they believed affected their group work experience.

 After analysing the data, the themes emerged and factors were identified. These factors are presented in the discussion chapter and the model illustrates the relationship between all factors. The data collection and analysis process is explained in chapter 3, and the results of its stages are presented in chapters 4, 5, and 6.

7) To present a case study report

A case study report for each case was created using data collected from the observations, interviews, and module documents and presented in chapters 4, 5,

and 6. The report is a holistic view of the group work from the students' points of view. The report describes their group work by bringing their different views together.

8) To analyse the data, using thematic analysis and data triangulation, to provide insight into the tensions, conflicts, issues and challenges in the selected cases

Data was analysed using triangulation and thematic analysis. The results are presented in chapters 4,5,6, and the procedure is explained in the methodology chapter (section 3.2.5.7).

9) To compare findings with the relevant research literature.

The emerging themes from the findings are discussed in relation to the literature and are presented in chapter 7.

10) To produce a model for multicultural group work

The longitudinal model has been created using the factors, which in turn were discovered after analysing the data. This data has been presented to illustrate relationships between factors and also explain how these factors impact upon each other and on the students' multicultural group work experience.

9.3. CONTRIBUTION

9.3.1. THEORETICAL IMPLICATION

-THE MODEL

The empirical contribution of this research is that the findings provide a holistic view of the lifecycle of the multicultural groups. The findings provide a more detailed explanation of the factors shaping students' decisions and actions from very first stage of group work - formation - right to the end. Some of the factors discussed in previous studies have been confirmed by this research in its findings such the role of language, academic attitude, etc. However, the findings unveiled further factors which impact on multicultural group work; they provide a comprehensive understanding of group formation and students' behaviour in choosing their group mates according to the given group task and the familiarity with other students - as mentioned earlier, this was overlooked/underestimated in the previous study.

-METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTION

One of the main contributions of this research study is that the research is conducted using a case study method, which enabled the researcher to study multicultural groups in their context. As most similar studies adopted a more quantitative approach, the findings of this research provide a different lens with which to view multicultural groups. In addition, Master's students were selected as participants as opposed to the majority of similar research which studies undergraduate students. This difference provides both similarity and differences. Even though some parts of the findings are similar to previous studies, there are still some differences within these similarities. For instance, language is considered as one of the main issues in previous research studies and it is also in this study, but there is a difference in the way students deal with this issue. Also, socialising in the related literature is considered as drinking heavily or partying (e.g Harrison &

Peacock,(2010)) but in this study for most Master's degree students (especially home students) it is considered as 'hanging out in the pub'.

Some of these differences are due to the shorter time students spend together, age, or life experience.

This study highlighted the importance of context in studying multicultural group work. Previous studies like (Ippolito, 2007; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Popov et al., 2012) only concentrated on students' multicultural group work without discussion regarding the context of group work; as such, the role of task and module design was not considered. This research builds upon existing knowledge by identifying the importance of the group work task and module design on students' performance in multicultural group work, where the same students performed differently according to the given task. Also it was highlighted by the findings that the nature of assessment has a direct impact on the group formation, group performance and the group dynamics. Findings showed the task design, its complexity and clarity of purpose has an impact on the group performance. Furthermore, it was emphasised that students tend to behave differently when the group work task is not assessed. The findings show that participants are very mark-driven and less likely to invest significant effort on unassessed assignments/activities. Per se, some of the factors which were identified in previous studies are not applicable for all different group work tasks. However, this study established students' behaviour in different group work tasks by identifying the factors which students value when working in the group and how they respond to different group work tasks according to their values.

-THE WAY STUDENTS CHOOSE THEIR GROUP MATES

The impact of group members on the group performance, fellow group members' performance and students' experience has been discussed in the literature; however, the group formation process is largely overlooked in the literature. Most related work on multicultural group formation is limited to allocated and self-selected groups. Notwithstanding, this research expanded on the way students select their group mates. The findings highlight the role of task complexity and

clarity, students' familiarity with each other, time, and the learning environment on students' strategies in choosing group mates.

The model below is presented as part of the main model (see chapter 8) which illustrates the factors impacting upon students' decision making when choosing their group mates.

FIGURE 9.3-1 CHOOING GROUP MATES

This model illustrates students' criteria in terms of group mate selection and also the possible factors which impact on their decisions.

Group formation includes both self-selected group and allocated group formation. This formation is especially interesting and significant as the findings highlight that group members' characteristics can have an impact on different elements of group work such as students' performance, the group performance, students' experience and also feelings towards the activity, and as a result it can affect the group dynamics.

As mentioned earlier in section 7.2, groups were formed in two ways: students were allocated to their groups by the lecturer (in the case of IL) or students selected their group mates (in the cases of KIM and MINICASE).

Findings showed that upon being allocated to their groups, students felt anxious or stressed if they were not familiar with the other members or initially felt this if they did not see much commonality between themselves and other group members.

When students were given the chance to choose their group mates, they adopted two main approaches: random self-selection and conscious selection.

Random self-selection means the participant did select their group mates, however they made the selection as they were familiar with the other members but in practice randomly selected students who were near at the time, or classmates who did not already have a group. Random self-selected groups experienced more challenges and conflicts related to the group members during their group work. And the majority of students avoided working with these group mates in other subsequent group activities.

In summary, students selected their group members either because they were friends, were acquainted, shared something in common, were sitting close to each other at the time or chose more strategically, considering others' academic attitude and language skills.

The majority of students mentioned that they prefer to work with friends or students they are familiar with. This familiarity was often formed due to collaborating on a previous group work task or sharing mutual friends. If participants had to choose from unfamiliar or less familiar students, they then looked for classmates with whom they share greater similarity. This similarity could be in terms of course of study, age, language, nationality, academic attitude, foreignness, etc.

However, the group work task had a major impact on the way students chose their group members. Some international students mentioned that if the task is felt to be too complicated, they then prefer to work with home students as doing so would help them to understand the task and provide support if they have problems regarding language. Even so, the majority of students noted that when the task bore a large part of their final mark, they were careful to work with students who have similar academic attitude to them to ensure they would not lose marks or have to do the majority of the work. To do so, students observed their classmates and approached those individuals who were more engaged in the session, sitting in the front row and asking questions.

Also, home students highlighted in this situation that they would rather work with native English speakers for similar reasons.

As mentioned earlier, in the literature relating to multicultural student group work (such as Bacon et al. 1999 and Popov et al. 2012) the process of group formation is not discussed in a great deal of depth. However, the impact of group members (their behaviour, attitude, academic attitudes, etc.) on group performance, other group member's performance, group dynamics and other aspects of group work are discussed extensively in the literature. This highlights the importance of understanding the group formation process and how students select group mates.

-DIVISION IN THE GROUP AND CLASS, INTIMIDATION AND FOREIGNNESS

Another contribution of the research is that the findings provide a remarkable understanding of group division or segregation. In previous studies like (Popov et al.,

2012) the division element in the classroom or the groups was not highlighted. However, this research extends knowledge in this area by identifying the factors causing division in the groups and the classroom. These factors include friendship, different courses, age, nationality, language, foreignness, etc.

Understanding the reasons for the division in both classroom and groups is especially important as it affects students' motivation, confidence, performance, experience, group performance, friendship, and the group dynamics In addition to the quality of communication in the group.

Research findings show that the division in the class could make students uncomfortable and occasionally impact on their contribution to the class discussion. Moreover, this impacts on friendship formation. For instance, students mentioned they did not make any friends with students form other courses such as the Librarianship course as they felt they do not like to mix with them.

-Relationship between librarianship and IM students

The findings of this research highlighted the tension and segregation between students from different programmes. The research findings showed that librarianship students were less likely to mix and work with IM students. Also, there was a sense of superiority projected by librarianship students which was sensed by IM students, causing discomfort. Findings also showed there was a general understanding that librarianship students are more knowledgeable than IM students to the extent that some of the IM students were prepared to do extra reading to boost their confidence when taking part in a lecture with librarianship students. Some of IM students did not feel confident enough to contribute to the class discussion as they felt they do not know as much as librarianship students.

Also, findings revealed some of the librarianship students do not engage in group discussion with IM students in the classroom and the discussion was limited to the minimum time. In addition, this issue was extended to beyond the classroom meaning there was no socialisation between students from these two courses and students reported there was no friendship either. This issue was reported by most IM students.

-Socialising

The role of socialising on group performance also has been highlighted by the findings. This phenomenon has been discussed in relevant past studies however, this research has added to the current knowledge by explaining how socialising can boost international students' self-confidence and help them improve their English. As a result, international students were more likely to contribute during their group discussions. In addition, findings also highlighted the reluctance in home students to socialise with the international students. As mentioned earlier, this issue has been discussed in a previous study (e.g. Peacock & Harrison,(2009)) but mostly regarding undergraduate students.

-language

Language and the language barrier have been regularly cited as one of the most important factors in studies. This research also uncovered the importance of English language skills in multicultural group work. As with some other studies (eg. Ippolito (2007)) it has also been discovered that students are more likely to overlook language barriers when the other group members have valuable skills to help the group achieve a higher mark, or group members are friends.

Even though issues surrounding language barrier were similar to those identified in previous studies, the research also uncovered the 'language switching' factor. Language switching occurred when two or more members in the group spoke the same non-English language as their mother tongue; they switched to their first language when they couldn't find a suitable English word, or the task/topic was complicated. This factor has not been discussed in similar studies, but switching occurred almost in all the studied groups.

Switching is an important factor since it influences group dynamics and potentially causes division in the group or even the classroom.

-Culture

The research findings regarding the impact of cultural differences on student approaches towards group work contrasted with those of previous research such as (Hofstede 1980; Turner 2009). Findings also highlighted that cultural differences are not the main source of conflicts. However, it is highlighted that factors such as students' personalities or academic attitudes - which are directly or indirectly influenced by students' cultural background - influence the group work more. These findings build upon the existing knowledge by providing an alternative view regarding the role culture plays in multicultural group work which shows deep-level cultural factors play a more influential role in group work rather than surface-level cultural differences.

-task design

The research has highlighted the role and significance of task design, especially the effect of assessment on students' performance and motivation and consequently on the group performance. This is another aspect of group work, which has not been considered as a main factor in previous studies. The findings of this research indicate that cultural differences did not play a main role in multicultural group performance but rather the elements from 'deep culture' such as academic attitudes and personality did affect student performance in groups. In addition, the findings highlighted the importance of studying multicultural groups in their context as student performance depended on the task and level of students' mutual familiarity (which changes from semester one to two).

These relatively new factors could potentially provide new approaches for study and viewing the multicultural groups, especially as undergraduate degree students formed the population for most previous studies. This research also highlights the importance of the study population on the factors by stressing the significance of students' age, experience and the time students spent together on their task.

9.3.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS/PRACTICE

Understanding multicultural groups is important for institutes and educators as it provides necessary knowledge for policy makers and academic staff. What makes it even more important is that according to the research findings, multicultural group work is not simply limited to the task - the factors influencing group work are closely tied to other aspect of students' academic lives.

9.3.2.1. INSTITUTES AND POLICY MAKERS

-ORIENTATION WEEK

This research highlighted the importance of familiarity between students and its impact on group work performance and students' experience. Different activities could be designed to increase familiarity between students as with more time spent together, a potentially better experience can be gained during study and in activities such as group work. To achieve this, orientation week could be increased in terms of duration or the number of activities. The programme would be enhanced if home students became further involved, as sometimes the orientation week (especially at Masters degree level) is viewed as an activity aimed at international students. Encouraging students to communicate together before the course is especially important as this interaction occurs before they form any opinion towards each other. As such, students are potentially more open-minded and inclined to get to know each other.

Also, more activities could be embedded in Master's degree courses, which encourage students to communicate informally. These activities could be game-based skill sessions, days out, or even afternoon coffee events all aiming to encourage students to speak to those fellow students with whom they may not usually be inclined to. These activities could potentially help to create a feeling of belonging for students. In addition, findings showed socialising could boost international students' self-confidence, meaning it would be of clear benefit to these students. More importantly the interaction would create more cultural awareness in

students and overcome some negative prejudices possibly held by individuals' due to a lack of exposure to different nationalities.

Furthermore, these activities could be expanded to include students from different courses, which share modules (e.g. the Librarianship and information management courses). This would encourage students to overcome shyness or social 'cliques' and speak to others and potentially reduce negative attitudes and uncertainly towards other students from other courses.

Also, home students could be asked to mentor or 'buddy' with international students. Home students could be asked to introduce British culture to international students and spend social time with them. This would help both groups of students to understand their cultural differences and bridge the gap between international and home students. Additionally, it would encourage international students to speak in English and boost their self-confidence. Furthermore, it could potentially help them to make friends and develop wider friendship groups. According to the research findings, students mostly choose their friends as group mates and as this 'buddy' scheme program can potentially expand their friendship network it can be expected that student would willing to work more in multicultural groups.

Another potential benefit of embedded activities or a mentoring scheme would be to potentially bridge the age gap between mature students and other individuals, as the more time students spend together, the less significant their differences would be perceived to be. This is discussed by D. A. Harrison et al. (2002) and also findings show students overlook their group mates differences (personality, academic attitudes) when they are friends or have closer relationship (see section 7.3.2).

-LANGUAGE

English language skill is one of the major issues in multicultural group work for both international students and home students. A lack of high quality communication in the group affects the quality of group work and students' own experience. Also, a low level of English encourages segregation in the group and class as some

international students feel reluctant to speak in English or have low self-confidence due to the need to communicate in their second language.

To avoid this issue, the level of English language requirement (e.g. the IELTS score) could be increased. Although this potentially could lessen the issue, it would not fully overcome the problem as international students with high IELTS scores may still find it difficult to understand different British accents or their vocabulary could be limited to the requirements of the exam. Another way to approach this issue is to introduce mandatory subject-specific English classes. This would help students to expand their vocabulary and actively encourage to them to speak in English.

– TRAINING AND EDUCATION

The role of academic staff in students' group work experience is highlighted by this research. As such, academic staff may benefit from more internationalisation training aimed at understanding different cultures and also how different cultural background and educational systems could affect students' subsequent learning in the UK. This would enable them to support students more effectively and efficiently by potentially providing a support, which is tailored to specific cultures.

Appointing dedicated international student-specialist support staff could also be incredibly helpful. The post member/s could provide support for the students and also advise for other academic staff.

This research also highlighted the importance of training home students as findings show home students need to learn about different culture and how to communicate with international students. Findings reveal the majority of home students expect international students to adjust to UK culture and its educational practices. However the findings also show that in order to have a successful group work experience, members should be able to have rich communication and understand each other.

This training can include a checklist, which enables students to reflect on why it is important to have meaningful communication between home and international students. 'Trigger videos', showing relevant scenarios can be used in modules to

create discussion and enable students to learn about communication with students from different cultures and its value. Also, some general guidance can be available as an electronic resource on the VLE's module site for students as part of the course.

9.3.2.2. EDUCATORS

-CHECKLIST

This research highlighted the importance of establishing ground rules at the beginning of the group work process. These rules include the responsibilities, preferred communication tools, the decision-making processes, language switching and awareness that students may miss meetings due to returning home out of term time.

Educators could introduce a checklist or agenda including these factors of group work to the students and encourage them to complete the list. This would potentially help students to think about the group work process more deeply and discuss the issues with their group further. Doing so could potentially decrease the level of conflict and tension and boost productivity. A resultant positive group work experience could potentially help students to form friendships and as such has a positive impact on students' experience.

-TASK

Research findings showed curriculum design affects the group performance. Design of the task was one the key significant factors on the group performance and students' experience.

The findings highlighted some aspects of students' academics attitudes and motivations. It is emphasised by the findings that students are extremely mark-driven in their study. This element directly affected their approach to the group work. As findings highlighted, students do not engage with unassessed activities. Certainly, this does not mean that all group activities should be assessed, but

emphasises the importance of communicating a very clear purpose for the task and its link to the students' future education or career. However as the research findings show, in case of IL the purpose of the task was communicated clearly both verbally and in module documents, but students did not understand the benefit of the task. This suggests the explanation should go beyond the general aims and objective and potential benefit of the activity and it should be more personalised to students in order to enable them to internalise its benefits. This approach could potentially enhance students approach to unassessed tasks by enabling them to understand the benefits of the activity.

Even for assessed activities, the aims and objectives of the task and their link to the module and course aims and objectives should be clear, otherwise there is a potential risk in student disengagement when these learners cannot recognise the purpose of the activity.

Furthermore, the complexity of the task and the relative time given for students to complete it should be considered carefully, especially if students have several deadlines at the same time. Not doing so would adversely affect students' performance and contribution in groups. In the design of the task it also should be considered that part-time students have different schedule and they may not be able to allocate same amount of time for the group task as full-time students.

It should be considered that this does not mean there should be the same deadline for several assignments, but more consideration of the nature of the group task and the amount of time the task needs to be completed. For example in the case of KIM, students had sufficient time to finish their task early and avoid an intensive last minute work schedule, but in MINICASE the task required students to work to the submission date as due to task design students were not able to start early and the task was time consuming.

Educators could possibly reduce conflicts by providing facilitated group sessions. Facilitators could identify potential problems and misunderstandings for students and provide appropriate guidance and support. This would also reduce free riding in

the group, as the facilitator would have some understanding of students' contribution.

9.4. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research was subject to some limitations even though it was a successful study of multicultural groups in UK higher education.

The period of study is one of the main limitations. As the PhD process is time-limited, thus the data collection period is limited accordingly. A longer period of time would have provided the opportunity to investigate the changes in factors affecting multicultural group in greater depth and over a greater duration. Also, more cases potentially could have been studied and compared to achieve an even-more holistic understanding of the role of task, module, students' familiarity etc. in multicultural groups. Furthermore, the time limitation made it almost impossible to spend more time with the groups. This was also due to students' very busy schedule and as they did not have a fixed schedule for their group meetings and arranged them at the last minute.

Another limitation of this research is that it was conduced in one department across two modules. As such, the findings could differ if a similar research study is conducted in different disciplines or universities. This also extends to universities in other countries. It would be of great value to compare the different research results to identify how different environments could potentially impact on the multicultural group work.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of international students at the Information School are Chinese. Findings could possibly be different when the research population is dissimilar. Certainly, it would of value to study to see if the ratio of different nationalities in the classroom could impact upon the result.

As the course was not highly diverse (the number of home students and non-Chinese international students was very small) there were not many multicultural groups to study. The majority of groups were homogenous and formed by Chinese students.

This research is a purely qualitative study, meaning it is subject to subjectivity, however the researcher used different tools such as a case study database and discussions with supervisors and colleagues to ensure the validity of the findings. Also, the generalisability of the findings could be seen as limitation for this research. It should be considered when using the findings that like most qualitative research, these findings are from specific study in the specific situation and a similar study in a different setting may not produce same result. But it does not reduce the importance of these findings as they still could be used in similar research in a different setting for comparison or even in quantitative research for designing a questionnaire.

Students were reluctant to be observed during their group meetings. As such, it could be interesting to observe students when they discuss their ideas and to study their intergroup relationship in different settings.

Unfortunately, the majority of Librarianship students who were observed did not agree to attend the interview as they were mostly part-time students and were working. It would be preferable if more Librarianship students took part this as would enable the researcher to establish if there is more familiarity between students from same course. And also, this would help gather more data which could explain these students' attitude and behaviour in the classroom. This also could be an interesting research to understand how similar students from same course are and how they perform when they work with students from different course.

9.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As noted above, future research could address these questions with different research approach, at a different research site, with a larger number of cases, or with a differing population, to compare findings with this study.

One of the main outcomes of this research concerns the group formation process and students' tactics in choosing their group members. This finding invites further research to identify all the reasons behind the group selection and how students define their criteria for the 'good group member'. As research participants were all Master's degree students, it would be valuable to learn if undergraduate students share same strategies for choosing their group members or not.

Student personalities and academic attitudes are considered as two main factors affecting student performance in multicultural group work. Due to the time limitation of the project, it was not possible to examine students' approaches to learning (deep or surface), their personality traits and then to establish any link between their approaches to the group activity. Such a study could provide valuable insights in understanding the link between personality and academic attitudes and their link to students' approaches to their group work.

Below is a list of possible foci for future research, which emerged from significant findings in this research:

- Language switching in multicultural groups and its impact on group performance and dynamics
- The role of adopting English name in intercultural communication
- The role of socialising in students' group performance
- The relationship between students' past experience and communication within multicultural groups
- The role of age as factor in multicultural group communication
- The similar behaviour patterns and attitudes shared between Librarianship students
- The segregation in multicultural and monoculture groups
- Segregation between different classifications of students (e.g. mature students, international students, home students, students from different courses) in class sessions
- What would convince students to go beyond surface communication with students from different cultures

9.6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research reached its aims and objectives - several factors which were identified were similar to the previous study but there are several factors which differ.

It is very interesting to observe how students view group work and how they performed. This quote is chosen as a closing remark to highlight the importance of understanding how students see group work as a concept and also their views towards academic staff and the assigned group work task.

"… you fight… fight yourself maybe you feel just as… it's just like a battle, you know? [Laughs]....Yeah, battle when you feel… when you meet the lecturer or the model it's just like an enemy, yeah. You need to yeah, secure him, yeah by yourself or by… with your… with other mates, yeah. It's better with other mates I think. Before you rise. So I say it's just like you need to prepare the gun."

Hopefully this research will help students by changing such perceptions and improving their experience so that they do not view the academic staff or the task as a kind of conflict, but rather a mechanism to achieve a higher degree of learning.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I   PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS

		Student status	Home/ international	Gender	First Language	Ethnic origin	Course	IL	KIM	Mini case	IL obs	IL Int	KIM Obs	KM Int
1.	ILA1	Mature	Home	M	English	British	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	ILA2		International	F	Hindi	Indian	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	ILA3		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	■	■	■
4.	ILB1	Mature	Home	M	English	British	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.	ILB2	Mature	Home	M	English	British	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓

#	ID													
6.	ILB3		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	■	■
7.	ILB4		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	■	■	■
8.	ILC1		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	■	■
9.	ILC2	Mature	International	F	English	American	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.	ILC3	Mature	Home	F	English	British	IM	x	x	x	✓	■	✓	■
11.	ILD1		International	F	English	Nigerian	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	ILD2		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
13.	ILD3		International	F	Korean	Korean	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
14.	ILD4		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	■	■	■
15.	ILE1		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓

16.	ILE2		Home	F	English	British	Lib	x			✓	
17.	ILE3		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	
18.	ILE4		Home	F	English	British	Lib	x			✓	
19.	ILF1	Mature	Home	F	English	British	Lib	x			✓	✓
20.	ILF2		Home	F	English	British	Lib	x			✓	
21.	ILF3		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	
22.	ILF4		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	
23.	ILG1		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	✓
24.	ILG2		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	✓	
25.	ILG3		Home	F	English	British	Lib	x			✓	

No.	ID													
26.	ILG4		Home	F	English	British	Lib	x			✓	■	■	■
27.	KMA1	Mature	International	M	Chinese	Taiwan	IM	x	x	x	■	✓	✓	✓
28.	KMA2		International (EU)	M	English	Nigerian/finish	IM	x	x	x	■	✓	✓	✓
29.	KMA3		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	■	✓	✓	✓
30.	KMB1	Mature	Home	M	English	British	IM	x	x	x	■	✓	✓	✓
31.	KMB2		International (EU)	M	Norwegian	Norwegian	IM	x	x	x	■	✓	✓	✓
32.	KMB3		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	■	■	✓	■
33.	KMB4		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	■	■	✓	■
34.	KMC1	Mature	Home	F	English	British	IM	x	x	x	■	✓	✓	✓
35.	KMC2	Mature	Home	F	Hindi	Indian	IM		x	x	■	■	✓	✓

#	Code		Type	Sex	Lang	Nationality							
					/English								
36.	KMC3		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x	■	✔	✔
37.	KMC4	Mature	Home	F	English	British	IM	x	x	x		✔	■
38.	KMD1		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x		✔	■
39.	KMD2		International	M	Chinese	Chinese	IM	x	x	x		✔	■
40.	KME1		International	F	Zambian	Zambian	IM		x		■	✔	✔
41.	KME2		International	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM		x		■	✔	✔
42.	KME3		International	F	Malaysian	Malaysian	IM		x		■	✔	✔
43.	KME4		International (EU)	F	Greek	Greek	IM		x		■	✔	✔
44.	KME5		international	F	Chinese	Chinese	IM		x		■	✔	✔

45. KMF1			Home	F	English	British	IM	x	x	x	

16 Male, 29 female, 11 mature (6 female), 15 home

IL: observation 26 (9 male) interview 19 (10 male)

KM: observation 28 (11 male) interview 22 (8 male)

Groups' compositions

IL	KIM	MINICASE	
ILA1, ILA2, ILA3	ILA1, ILB1,ILB2,ILC2,ILC3,KMF1	KMA1,KMA2,KMA3	
ILB1, ILB2, ILB3, ILB4	ILA2, KMA1,KMA2,KMA3	ILA1,ILB2,MC1	
ILC1, ILC2, ILC3	ILD1,KMC1,KMC2,KMC3,KMC4	ILD2,KMC1,MC2	
ILD1, ILD2, ILD3,ILD4	ILD2,KMB1,KMB2,,KMB3,KMB4	ILB1,MC3,MC4,KOREAN GIRL	
ILE1, ILE2, ILE3, ILE4	ILD3,ILE1,KMD1,KMD2	KMB1,KMB4,MC5	
ILF1, ILF2 ,ILF3, ILF4	KME1,KME2,KME3,KME4		
ILG1, ILG2, ILG3, ILG4			
IL lecturer	Lecturer IL1		
IL lecturer	Lecturer IL2		
KIM lecturer	Lecturer KIM1		
KIM lecturer	Lecturer KIM2		
KIM lecturer	Lecturer KIM3		
KIM lecturer	LecturerMC1		
KIM lecturer	LecturerMC2		
	Tutor1		
	Tutor2		

Appendix II   INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research questions:

      a. **What are the challenges and issues in multicultural group work?**

      b. **What factors impact upon multicultural group work performance?**

      c. **When do challenges and issues occur in multicultural group work?**

      d. **How do cultural differences affect group performance?**

      e. **What are the factors causing the conflicts?**

      f. **What is the role of cultural differences in multicultural group work?**

      g. **How does multicultural group work influence students' experience and satisfaction?**

Interview questions linked to the research questions:

IQ	RQ
To start our discussion, could you share with me what is your background, please?	
1. How old are you?	b,e
2. What program are you studying?	b,e
3. What is good group work?	b,e
4. Have you worked in a group before?	b,e
5. Work experience?	b,e
Information literacy related questions:	
6. How did you come up with the poster concept?	a, b,c,d,e

7. How did you develop the concept and apply it to the poster? 7.1. How did the group work during the exhibition? 7.2. How did you feel about your work during exhibition? 7.3. How did you feel about the process from the initial idea to the poster exhibition?	a,b,c,d,e,f,g,	
8. What was the whole experience like? (from the concept to the exhibition)	g	
9. What was the best part of the activity?	g,b	
10. What would you change about the activity? Would you design the task differently?	g,b,	
11. What would you have done differently? (If you could) Just imagine with the experience you have now if you were asked to do the same thing again, would you change anything in terms of your approach to the group work and your performance?	d,e,f,g,	
12. What was the most memorable moment (if any)?	f,g	
KM related questions:		
13. How did you choose your group?	a,b,e,f,g	
14. Hoe did your previous group work experience impact on the way you chose the group in any way? How?	all	
15. How did you come up with the concept?	a, b,c,d,e	
16. How did you allocate the tasks?	a,b,c,d,f,	
17. How did you feel about the process from initial idea to rich picture?	g,	
18. What was the best part of the activity?	g,b	
19. What would you change about the activity? It can be change of group task/ group activity design	g,b,	
20. What would you have done differently? Just imagine with the experience you have now if you were asked to do the same thing again, would you change anything in terms of your	d,e,f,g,	

approach to the group work and your performance?	
21. Have you done any other multicultural group work during this semester? If yes: Can you tell about the experience?	all
22. How do you feel about it?	g
23. What advice would you give to someone about to engage in multicultural group work?	a,g
24. Reflecting on your experience of working in a multicultural context so far, how might that influence the way you will handle team work in the future?	a,g,

Appendix III   MODULE DOCUMENTS

The University of Sheffield

Information School

Module Outline 2012-13

Module Title:	**Information Resources and Information Literacy**
Module Code:	**INF6350**
Pre-Requisites:	None
Status:	Core: MA Librarianship, MSc Information Management, MA Information Literacy Approved: Professional Enhancement pathways on Librarianship and Info Mgt programmes, MA Web Journalism
Credits:	15 credits
Semester:	AUTUMN
Timetabling:	Tuesdays 10.00- 12.50 The base room is MAPP-ME03: For other locations, see the timetable
Module Coordinator:	
Other Lecturers:	
Version Date:	23 September 2012

Module Aims:

The module aims to enable students to:

- understand from both theoretical and practical perspectives the notions of information literacy and information behaviour;

- understand the nature and function of different types and forms of information resources;

- develop their own information literacy and understanding of its application to their future lives; and

- develop specialised skills in searching for, evaluating and packaging information by carrying out an indepth search and synthesising and presenting the results.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the module students will:

- understand key aspects of information literacy and information behaviour including: the nature of information needs, information seeking strategies, and the complexity and contextual nature of information literacy;

- be able to demonstrate and evaluate their information literacy, for example expertise in accessing, using, comparing and evaluating information resources including databases such as DIALOG, and information channelled through Web 2.0 applications such as wikis.

Learning Methods:

Students will learn through lectures, practical exercises and activities (search, synthesis etc.) carried out for the assessed coursework and in formative exercises which are an integral part of the class. The class will use the MOLE2 virtual learning environment for course material, and will also use blogs, and other online tools.

Assessment:

Coursework will consist of three parts: an individual annotated bibliography (30%), a literature review (30%) and a reflective report (40%). The total word length is 2100 words **excluding** the annotated bibliography, titles, references and appendices. Coursework is due by 2pm Monday 14th January 2013: returned by Monday 4th February 2013. Your assignment has a word count limit. A deduction of 3 marks will be applied for coursework that is 5% above or below the word count as specified above or that does not state the word count.

Week	Group 1 teams	Group 2 teams	Group 3 teams	Group 4 teams
1 25/9	*What:* Introduction to the module, Information Literacy, blogging and "The Things" (NF, SW, Tutors) *When:* 10.00 -12.50 (break at 11.15-11.30) *Where:* MAPP-ME03			
2 2/10	*What:* Abstracting *When:* 10-11.15 *Where:* BA SR BLG07 (	*What:* Abstracting *When:* 10-11.15 *Where:* BA SR EG03	*What:* Web searching *When:* 10-11.15 *Where:* RC205	*What:* Web searching *When:* 10-11.15 *Where:* RC205
	What: Web searching *When:* 11.35-12.50 *Where:* RC205	*What:* Web searching *When:* 11.35-12.50 *Where:* RC205	*What:* Abstracting *When:* 11.35-12.50 *Where:* RC-204	*What:* Abstracting *When:* 11.35-12.50 *Where:* MB-SR 118
3 9/10	*What:* Information universe *When:* 10-11.15 *Where:* MAPP-ME03			
	What: Database searching *When:* 11.30-12.50 *Where:* RC205		*What:* Information Literacy in context *When:* 11.30-12.50 *Where:* MAPP-ME03	
4 16/10	*What:* Information Literacy in our future careers (*When:* 10-11.15 *Where:* Firth Hall, Firth Court			
	What: Information Literacy in context		*What:* Database searching (	

	When: 11.30-12.50 *Where:* MAPP-ME03	*When:* 11.30-12.50 *Where:* RC205
5 23/10	*What:* Developing the topic for your assignment *When:* 10.00 -12.50 (break at 11.15-11.30) *Where:* MAPP-ME03	
6 30/10	*What:* Information Literacy in our future careers *When:* 10-11.15 (9.30-10.00 set-up) *Where:* Firth Hall, Firth Court	
	What: : Information Behaviour and Information Literacy Research *When:* 11.30-12.50 *Where:* MAPP-ME0311.30 -12.50	
7 6/11	*What: :* Web 2.0: Using wikis and social media for communication and information *When:* 10.00-11.15 *Where:* MAPP-ME03	
	What: Seminar: discussion of an article on use of Wikipedia *When:* 11.30-12.50 *Where:* Jessop SR 116; Jessop SR 215; BA SR BB 11; BA SR BB 16; RC204; RC205.**Note that you are in smaller groups for this session, you will be told which room you are in nearer the time!**	
8 13/11	*What:* Information work & the information interview; Team inquiry exercise and work on assignment topics *When:* 10.00 -12.50 (break at 11.15-11.30) *Where:* MAPP-ME03	
9 20/11	*What:* Evidence based approaches *When:* 10.00-11.15	

	Where MAPP-ME03
	*What: :*Advanced searching: Dialog *When:* 11.30-12.50 *Where* MAPP-ME03
10 27/11	*What: :*Advanced searching: Dialog *When:* 10.00 -12.50 (break at 11.15-11.30) *Where* MAPP-ME03
11 4/12	*What:* Advanced searching *When:* 10.00-10.50 *Where:* RC205
	What: : Teaching information literacy(Maria Mawson, Vic Grant, Lyn Parker: Sheffield University Library) (optional) *When:* 11.15-12.50 *Where* To be confirmed
12 11/12	*What:* Drop in, consultation with tutors about assignments *When:* 10.00-10.50 *Where:* MAPP-ME03

Assessment guidelines

• It is the student's responsibility to ensure no aspect of their work is plagiarised or the result of other unfair means. The University's and Information School's Advice on unfair means can be found in your Student Handbook, available via http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/is/current

• It is your responsibility to ensure your coursework is correctly submitted before the deadline. It highly recommended that you submit well before the deadline. Coursework submitted after 2pm on the stated submission date will result in a deduction of 5% of the mark awarded for each working day

after the submission date/time up to a maximum of 5 working days, where 'working day' includes Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) and runs from 2pm to 2pm. Coursework submitted after the maximum period will receive zero marks.

• Work submitted electronically, including through Turnitin, should be reviewed to ensure it appears as you intended.

• Before the submission deadline, you can submit coursework to Turnitin numerous times. Each submission will overwrite the previous submission. Only your most recent submission will be assessed. However, after the submission deadline, the coursework can only be submitted once.

• During your first Semester at the School, when submitting a piece of work through Turnitin, you can view just ONE Turnitin plagiarism report per assignment. You can then edit and resubmit the work, but you will not be able to view any further Turnitin plagiarism reports. Details about the submission of work via Turnitin can be found at http://youtu.be/C_wO9vHHheo

• If you encounter any problems during the electronic submission of your coursework, you should immediately contact the module coordinator or Information School Exams Secretary (Postgraduates - Julie Priestley, J.Priestley@sheffield.ac.uk, 0114 2222839). This does not negate your responsibilities to submit the correct coursework

Some initial readings

Also look at the "must read" items in the week-by-week sheet: more will be given out for specific sessions

Information Literacy

This a small selection of material from different sectors, plus some general items.

Cheuk, B. (2008). Delivering business value through information literacy in the workplace. *Libri*, *58(3),* 137-143. Retrieved 19 September 2012 from http://www.librijournal.org/pdf/2008-3pp137-143.pdf

Herring, J.E. (2011). From school to work and from work to school: information environments and transferring information literacy practices. *Information Research, 16(2)*. Retrieved 20 September 2012 from http://InformationR.net/ir/16-2/paper473.html

Information literacy weblog. Retrieved 20 September from http://information-literacy.blogspot.co.uk/

Information literacy website. Retrieved 20 September from http://www.informationliteracy.org.uk/

Johnston, B. and Webber, S. (2006). As we may think: Information Literacy as a discipline for the information age. *Research strategies*, *20(3),* 108-121.

Journal of information literacy. (open access journal) Retrieved 20 September from http://ojs.lboro.ac.uk/ojs/index.php/JIL

Lau, J. (Ed). (2008). *Information literacy: international perspectives*. Munich, Germany: K.G. Saur.

Lloyd, A. (2005) Information literacy: different contexts, different concepts, different truths? *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science, 37 (2)*, 82-88.

Royal College of Nursing. (2012) *Information literacy competencies.* Retrieved 20 September 2012 from http://www.rcn.org.uk/development/library/elibrary/training_sessions/informationliteracy (This includes a link to the information literact frmework developed for nursing)

Society of College, National and University Libraries. (2011) *The SCONUL Seven Pillars of Information Literacy: core model for Higher Education*. Retrieved 17 September 2012 from http://www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/information_literacy/publications/coremodel.pdf

Information Behaviour

Case, D. (2012). *Looking for information : a survey of research on information seeking, needs, and behavior.* Bingley : Emerald. (This is an e-book in the library)

Erdelez, S. (1999) "Information encountering: it's more than just bumping into information." *Bulletin of the American Association for Information Science*, 25(3), 25-29. Retrived 20 September 2012 from http://www.asis.org/Bulletin/Feb-99/erdelez.html

Fisher, K., Erdelez, S. and McKechnie, L. (Eds) (2005) *Theories of information behaviour*. Medford, N.J.: Published for the American Society for Information Science and Technology by Information Today

Heinström, J. and Spink, A. (2011) *New directions in information behavior.* Bingley, England : Emerald. (This is an e-book in the library)

Kuhlthau, C. (2003). *Seeking meaning : a process approach to library and information services.* (2nd Ed.) London, England : Eurospan.

Mansourian, Y., Ford, N., Webber, S. and Madden, A. (2008). An integrative model of 'information visibility' and 'information seeking' on the web. *Program*, *42 (4)*, 402-417

Wilson, T.D. (2000). Human information behaviour. *Informing science, 3(2).* Retrieved 20 September 2012 http://inform.nu/Articles/Vol3/v3n2p49-56.pdf

Wilson, T. (1999). Models in information behaviour research. *Journal of Documentation*, *55(3)*, 249–270.

Information resources

The first two books are reference items, not for reading cover to cover!

Lester, R. (Ed.) (2005). *The new Walford guide to reference resources: volume 1, science, technology and medicine.* London, England: Facet.

Lester, R. (Ed.) (2008). *The new Walford guide to reference resources: volume 2, the social sciences.* London, England: Facet.

Information searching

Rumsey, S. (2008). *How to find information: a guide for researchers*. (2nd Ed.) Maidenhead, England: McGraw/ Open UP.

Blogging

Crosby, C. (2010) *Effective blogging for libraries.* London, England: Facet.

Li, C. and Stromberg, C. (2007) *The ROI of blogging.* Retrieved 20 September 2012 from http://www.ieecho.com/pdfs/ROI-of-Blogging.pdf (A Forrester report on the Return on Investment of corporate blogging)

Potter, N. (2010) *Everything you've ever wanted to know about library blogs and blogging!* Retrieved 20 September 2012 from http://thewikiman.org/blog/?p=783 (Includes "thewikiman's" seminar materials)

Page, M. (2010, April 19). Why blog? [Web log post]. Retrieved 20 September 2012 from http://www.smartinsights.com/digital-marketing-platforms/business-blogging/why-blog/ (Short article from acorporate trainer)

Yardi, S. Golder, S. and Brzozowski, M. (2009). Blogging at work and the corporate attention economy. *CHI '09 Proceedings of the 27th international conference on Human factors in computing systems ACM.* Retrieved 20 September from http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1519016

Information interviewing and reference work

Cassell, K.A. and Hiremath, U. (2006). *Reference and information services in the 21st century.* London, England: Facet.

Duckett, B. et al. (2004). *Know it all, find it fast: an A-Z source guide for the enquiry desk.* 2nd ed. London, England: Facet.

Janes, J. (2003). *Introduction to Reference Work in the Digital Age*. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman.

Kovacs, D. (2007). *The virtual reference handbook: interview and information delivery techniques for the chat and e-mail environments.* London, England: Facet.

Lankes, R. (2006) *The virtual reference desk: creating a reference future.* London, England: Facet.

Owen, T. (2006) *Success at the Enquiry Desk*. (5th ed.) London, England: Facet.

Saunders, L. (2012). Identifying core reference competencies from an employers' perspective: implications for instruction. *College and research libraries, 73,* 390-404

Evidence based practice

Evidence based library and information practice (open access journal)
http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP

Virginia Wilson (2008) *Evidence based toolkit for public libraries.* Retrieved 20 September 2012 from http://ebltoolkit.pbworks.com/w/page/9671460/FrontPage

11. Group work brief

Information Literacy in my future career: Exhibition and preparation

Weeks 4 and 6: Information Resources and Information Literacy Inf6350

Time and Place:

In week 4, 16 October

You will start your Inf6350 class in Firth Hall (in the Firth Court building) at 10.00, for the part of the class relating to this task (starting to create posters).

In week 6, 30 October

9.30-10.00 **Note earlier time. Everyone:** bring your team posters to Firth Hall to be mounted

10-11.15 Everyone: in Firth Hall "How information literacy is relevant to my future career" exhibition (after that we are moving back to the lab)

Aims of the "How information literacy is relevant to my future career" activity:

To develop your understanding of Information Literacy

To identify the aspects of Information Literacy relevant to your future careers

Output

You will create depictions, in words and graphics, of the way in which information literacy will be relevant to your career. You will work in your team to produce these depictions on flip chart paper,

starting in week 4. Each team will produce one poster. In week 6 you will put your poster into the exhibition.

Activity

To do this activity, you have to think about your future career will be ideally, when you graduate from the course.

Examples might be: "An academic librarian, working with academics and students to develop information literacy and manage the virtual and physical history collection"; "Knowledge manager in a major law firm"; "Public librarian engaged in reader development with teenagers"; "Working as a manager in my family's company", "Information Manager in a multinational company". These are just examples. There is no "right" answer: this is just to give a focus to the exercise.

In week 4

There will be a short briefing about the exercise. There will be some examples of posters to help give you the idea of what is meant and you can also look on the set on Flickr, and the videos (all linked from the week 4 page on MOLE). If you want to, you can use one of the models of IL you have learnt about e.g. SCONUL 7 Pillars, but you do not have to do this.

In your teams you will share your ideas about your future careers and produce a poster on flip chart paper (you can work on this during the following week as well). **By the end of this session** you should have a draft poster, and a clear plan of how you will turn that into a finished poster before 9.30am in week 6.

October 2012

The University of Sheffield

12. Department of Information Studies

Module Outline 2012-2013

Module Title:	Information and Knowledge Management
Module Code:	INF6002
Online Teaching Resources:	MOLE
Pre-Requisites	None
Status:	Core module: MSc IM Approved module: MA Lib (CPD); MA MIM, MA EDLM
Credits:	15 credits
Semester:	SPRING
Timetabling: Lectures Seminars Practicals	*Weeks 1-10:* **13.** **Wednesday 14.00-17.00 MAPP-LT01** *Week 11:* Wednesday 14.00-17.00 MAPP-LT01; RRB-B81, RC-204
Module Coordinator:	
Other Lecturers:	
Version Date:	04.02.2013

Module Aims:

This module addresses both theoretical and practical aspects of managing information in organisations. It aims to enable students to understand key aspects of information and knowledge management in organisations, and to engage critically with a number of current issues and debates in this field. It also aims to equip students with a foundation of expertise in identifying, diagnosing and evaluating key organisational issues of practical relevance to information and knowledge management in business and other organisational settings.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the module students will have learnt:

- Fundamental principles, concepts and techniques of relevance to effective information and knowledge management in organisations, in particular as regards: organisational information processes, needs and use; information filtering and organisational learning; information and knowledge management policy and strategy;.

- To recognise, and to analyse critically, current issues and debates in the field of organisational information and knowledge management, for example as regards: the role of information professionals; intermediation; organisational interaction and communities of practice; organisational learning and knowledge management.

- To develop a foundation of expertise in identifying, accessing, evaluating, using and presenting academic and practitioner information resources of relevance to information and knowledge management in business and other organisational settings.

Learning Methods:

Students learn through a combination of lectures, practical exercises, seminars and tutorials. Most sessions involve both practical and theoretical elements. Lectures cover key principles and theoretical frameworks, and highlight current issues and debates in the field. Case examples are incorporated into lectures where appropriate and there are practical tutorials and seminars devoted to case study analysis. Invited speakers provide real-life illustrations of the application of information and knowledge management strategies and techniques, and contribute to the exploration of current issues and debates.

Assessment:

Assessment is 30% through a group presentation and 70% through an individual essay. The group presentation consists of presenting a diagrammatic representation of an integrative perspective on information and knowledge management strategies in organisations. The individual assignment (2200 words) builds upon this and is an essay discussing the key issues identified in your diagrammatic representation against the contexts of the cases studies of NASA, Xerox and Danone, using the literature and the academic background to the subject to support your arguments.

Note: In accordance with University policy and procedures, students must also produce a short (approx. 250 words) individual reflective self-assessment of their group work experience and their individual contribution to the group task. This item will not count towards the overall word-length and is not assessed; however, it is a necessary part of the assignment.

A pass mark in all components is required in order to pass the module as a whole.

Further guidelines on the assignment are provided in the hand-out "**INF6002 assessment guidelines and advice**" and in the sessions that will be held throughout the module.

Submissions differing from the specified word length by more than 5% will be penalised as detailed at http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/current/length.html There are also penalties for late submission, as outlined at
http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/current/latesub.html

Group presentations:	Wednesday 8th May 2pm
Feedback date:	Verbal feedback on the day; Marks on 29h May
Individual essay submission date:	Friday 31st May 2pm
Feedback date:	Friday 21stJune

Syllabus:

	Sessions Wednesdays, 13-16h
Week 1 06/02	Introduction to the module. Information and knowledge management: the Dien Bien Phu Example
Week 2 13/02	Organisational learning: prescriptive and exploratory approaches. The Challenger space shuttle example: what, why and how? "*Space shuttle, a human bomb*" (video)
Week 3 20/02	Organisational learning: "puzzled" organisations. Lessons from NASA as a learning organisation; Visual representations and group work preparation
Week 4 27/02	Xerox and communities of practice I
Week 5	Knowledge management as a strategic capability at Danone: Leveraging knowledge absorption and achieving product/business process innovation

06/03	
Week 6 13/03	Xerox and communities of practice II
	EASTER BREAK
Week 7 10/04	Intranet governance and strategy
Week 8 17/04	Information and knowledge management strategies: schools of thought and visual representations of IM and KM as professional fields
Week 9 24/04	Drop in sessions for group work
Week 10 01/05	No session – work on feedback
Week 11 08/05	Group presentations
Week 12 15/05	No session

14.

Core Readings:

Choo, C.W. (2002). *Information Management for the Intelligent Organization.* 3rd ed. Medford, NJ: Information Today.

Choo, C.W and Bontis, N (2002). *The strategic management of intellectual capital and organisational learning*. Oxford: OUP.

Davenport, T.H. (1997). *Information Ecology*. Oxford Press.

Davenport, T.; Prusack, L. (1998). *Working knowledge*. Harvard Business School.

Debowski, Shelda (2006). *Knowledge Management*. Milton Qold: John Wiley and Sons Australia.

Hislop, D. (2005) *Knowledge management in organizations: a critical introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

Koenig, M.E.D. & Srikantaiah, T.K., eds. (2003) *Knowledge management lessons learned: what works and what doesn't*. Medford, NJ: Information Today for theAmerican Society for Information Science.

Little, S, Quintas, P and Ray, T (2002). *Managing knowledge: an essential reader*. London: Open University and Sage

Orna, E. (2004). *Information strategy in practice.* Aldershot: Gower.

Other readings and links are provided on the module MOLE site

Information School Coursework Submission Requirements

- It is the student's responsibility to ensure no aspect of their work is plagiarised or the result of other unfair means. The University's and Information School's Advice on unfair means can be found in your Student Handbook, available viahttp://www.sheffield.ac.uk/is/current
- Your assignment has a word count limit. A deduction of 3 marks will be applied for coursework that is 5% above or below the specified limit. A deduction of 3 marks will be made for coursework that

does not state the word count.

It is your responsibility to ensure your coursework is correctly submitted before the deadline. It highly recommended that you submit well before the deadline. Coursework submitted after 2pm on the stated submission date will result in a deduction of 5% of the mark awarded for each working day after the submission date/time up to a maximum of 5 working days, where 'working day' includes Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays) and runs from 2pm to 2pm. Coursework submitted after the maximum period will receive zero marks.

- Work submitted electronically, including through Turnitin, should be reviewed to ensure it appears as you intended.

- Before the submission deadline, you can submit coursework to Turnitin numerous times. Each submission will overwrite the previous submission. Only your most recent submission will be assessed. However, after the submission deadline, the coursework can only be submitted once.

- During your first Semester at the School, when submitting a piece of work through Turnitin, you can view just ONE Turnitin plagiarism report per assignment. You can then edit and resubmit the work, but you will not be able to view any further Turnitin plagiarism reports. Details about the submission of work via Turnitin can be found at http://youtu.be/C_wO9vHHheo

- If you encounter any problems during the electronic submission of your coursework, you should immediately contact the module coordinator or Information School Exams Secretary (Postgraduates - Julie Priestley, J.Priestley@sheffield.ac.uk, 0114 2222839). This does not negate your responsibilities to submit the correct coursework

DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION STUDIES

MSc. Information Management

MSc. Multilingual Information Management

MSc. Electronic and Digital Library Management

MA Librarianship (CPD)

Academic Year 2012-2013

INF6002 Information Management in Organisations

Assessment guidelines and advice

Information Management in Organisations Assignment

Information about the Assignments

Aims
- To develop an integrative perspective of different approaches and views on the topics explored throughout the unit;

Objectives
- To develop an understanding of fundamental IM and KM principles, concepts and techniques
- To critically analyse current issues and debates in fields of IM and KM

Outcomes
- You will be able to demonstrate a critical appreciation of the various themes covered throughout the module and of the debates generated around them

Sequence of Learning and Assessment

Assessment is 30% through a group presentation and 70% through an individual essay.

The group presentation consists of presenting a diagrammatic representation of an integrative perspective of information and knowledge management issues in organisations explored throughout the module.

The individual assignment (c. 2200 words) builds upon the group assignment and builds upon this and is an essay discussing the key issues identified in your diagrammatic representation against both the

literature and the context of the case studies. This involves comparing and contrasting different approaches to information and knowledge management strategies, drawing on material from both the literature and the case studies.

Group presentation: an integrative perspective on information and knowledge management in organisations

This assignment aims at presenting an integrative perspective on Information and Knowledge Management in organisations. It includes two elements:

1. Producing ONE diagrammatic representation of your integrative perspective on IM and KM; this should consist of a synthesis of the linkages between different themes explored throughout the module, as well as, if appropriate, of other relevant issues you may identify through the literature searches you will carry out; you should also draw on the literature to develop your representation.

2. A 15 minute presentation (10 mins presentation + 5 mins discussion) explaining the issues represented in your diagram in week 11.

3. *Note: In accordance with University policy and procedures, students must also produce a short (approx. 250 words) individual reflective self-assessment of their group work experience and their individual contribution to the group task. This item will not count towards the overall word-length and is not assessed; however, it is a necessary part of the assignment. You should bring this to the presentation, together with an electronic/hard copy of your diagram. You must hand in hardcopies of the individual reflections on the day of the presentation.*

Individual essay: a discussion of the key issues identified in your group diagram against <u>ALL</u> the case studies

This assignment is an individual essay of 2200 words. It builds upon the group assignment and involves:

1. Outlining what, in your personal opinion, are the key issues and messages included in your group; you can, of course, present an alternative perspective if your view has changed as a result of furthering your readings and reflecting upon them;

2. Discuss these key issues against the contexts of the Xerox, NASA and Danone case studies, using the using the literature and the academic background to the subject to support your arguments..

For this, you are required to:

a) search, gather and review a pool of key resources; the skills developed in INF6350 will be key in helping you to undertake this activity;

b) compare and contrast different viewpoints and discuss the assumptions they make about the nature of organisations, the issues they face and the nature and role of information and knowledge in how those issues are tackled by different organisations;

c) discuss the usefulness of considering potential alternative approaches, considering the contexts of the case studies; as mentioned above, reference to the case studies that are analysed in the module should be made, in order to provide an explanation and exemplification of your views.

Starter references:

Alvesson, M.; Karreman, (2001).Odd couple: making sense of the curious concept of Knowledge Management. *Journal of Management Studies*, 38 (7), p. 995-1018.

Begona Lloria, M. (2008). A review of the main approaches to Knowledge Managemnt. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 6, p.77-89.

Binney, D. (2001).The knowledge management spectrum : understanding the KM landscape.*Journal of Knowledge Management*, 5 (1), p. 33-42.

Choo, C.W. (2002). *Information Management for the Intelligent Organization*. 3rd ed. Medford, NJ: Information Today.

Choo, C.W and Bontis, N (2002). *The strategic management of intellectual capital and organisational learning*. Oxford: OUP.

Cox, A. (2007). Reproducing knowledge: Xerox and the story of Knowledge Management. *Knowledge Management Research and Practice,* 5 (1), p. 3-12.

Davenport, TH (1997).*Information ecology: mastering the information and knowledge environment*. xford University Press, New York

Davenport, TH & Marchand, DA (1999).*Is knowledge management just good information management?.Mastering Information Management*, Financial Times

Earl, M (2001). Knowledge management strategies: toward a taxonomy. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 18 (1), p. 215-233.

Hansen, M.T., Nohria,N. and Tierney, T, (!999). What's your strategy for managing knowledge?, *Harvard Business Review*, 77, Mar.-Apr. 1999, p.106-116.

Hislop, D. (2005) *Knowledge management in organizations: a critical introduction*. Oxford: OUP.

Klein, J.H. (2008). Some directions for research in knowledge sharing. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 6, 41-46.

Koenig, M.E.D. & Srikantaiah, T.K., eds. (2003) *Knowledge management lessons learned: what works and what doesn't*. Medford, NJ: Information Today for the American Society for Information Science.

Little, S, Quintas, P and Ray, T (2002). M*anaging knowledge: an essential reader*. London: Open University and Sage

Orna, E. (1999). *Practical Information Policies*. 2nd ed. Aldershot: Gower.

Rowley, J. (1998). Towards a framework for Information Management. *International Journal of Information Management*, 18 (5), p. 359-369.

Scarbrough, H. and Swan, J. (2001). Explaining the diffusion of Knowledge Management: the role of fashion. *British Journal of Management*, 13 p.3-12.

Schultze, U. and Stabell, C. (2004). "Knowing what you don't know? Discourses and contradictions in Knowledge Management research". Journal of Management Studies, 41(4), p. 549-573.

Vasconcelos, A.C. (2008). Dilemmas in knowledge management. Library Management, 29(4/5), p.422-443.

Wiggins, R. (1988). A conceptual framework for information resources management. *International Journal of Information Management*, 8, p. 5-11.

Wilson, T (1997). Information Management Featured in FEATHER, J.: STURGES, P. (Eds.). *International Encyclopaedia of Information and Library Science*. London: Routledge, 187-198.

Wilson, T.D. (2002).The non-sense of Knowledge Management. *Information Research*, 8 (1). Accessible at http://InformationR.net/ir/8-1/infres81.html.

You may find other papers in this special issue of interest. The references above are starting points that give a background to the themes and are discussed in the taught weeks. They are indicative references and you should, in your searches, explore beyond this material. You will find additional material of significant interest in the following refereed journals as well:

- Harvard Business Review

- Information Research

- International Journal of Information Management

- Journal of Knowledge Management

- Journal of Management Information Systems

- Knowledge Management Research and Practice

- Long Range Planning

- MIS Quarterly

- Organization

There are some useful websites on information and knowledge management:

- David Skyrme Associates http://www.skyrme.com/resource/kmres.htm

- Gurteen Knowledge http://www.gurteen.com/

- KnowledgeBoard http://www.knowledgeboard.com/

- WWW virtual library on knowledge management http://km.brint.com/

Assessment related dates and milestones

The group presentations are to be held on Wednesday **8ᵗʰ May you should hand in an electronic and a hard copy of your diagram at this session, as well as hard copies of your individual reflections.**

The individual assignment coursework must be submitted electronically by **2pm Friday 31st May via Turnitin.**

The normal regulations for the submission of late work apply and are outlined in the Post-Graduate Student Handbook.

We suggest that you try to keep in mind some of the suggested general milestones below in order to finish the assignment on time.

Week	Key activities and milestones	Details
Week 1	Assignment set up	Guidelines on the assignment Start reading key references (and continue doing so throughout the module)
Weeks 2-6	Case study analysis	Prepare case study analysis and discussion
Weeks 7-8	Integrative perspectives sessions	Preparing diagram and presentation structure; refine reading and analysis on the basis of feedback
Week 9	**Drop-in sessions/ group work tutorials**	You should bring a draft of your diagram for discussion
Week 10	Work on feedback	Revise diagram and presentation on

		the basis of feedback
Week 11 **11/05**	**Group assignment presentations** **N.B.: Please bring an electronic copy and hardcopy of your diagram, as well as hard copies of the individual reflections, and hand them in at the session**	Formative and informal feedback will be provided on the day Formal feedback on 29th May
Weeks 11-15	Essay preparation and literature review	Preparing essay structure; refine reading and analysis on the basis of feedback; complete essay
By 03/06 2pm	**Individual assignment hand-in** **Electronic submission via Turnitin**	Formal feedback on the 21st June

Assessment criteria and grading advice

The assessment will be based upon the assessment criteria outlined in the Coursework Report Forms that will be made available beforehand.

Credit will be given to demonstration of independent research effort and to justification and discussion of options and viewpoints adopted.

Appendix IV   Nodes/codes and example of Nodal relationships

Code	Code	Code
Ability of doing group work	Feeling, fear of not knowing	Not being able to meet
Academic attitude	Feeling, fear of not mixing	Minority
Accepting just because it's group work	Feeling, frustrated	Misunderstanding the task
Adoption	Feeling, Furious	Misunderstanding, miscommunication
Age	Feeling, Happy	Mixing the students (putting them in groups)
Agreeing	Feeling, Hate	Module design
All group member standing together	Feeling, Helpless	Assignment
Alone	Feeling, Irritated	Confusion in the course
Approach to the GW	Feeling, Lucky	Course design
Approach to the task	Feeling, nervous	Course is designed for specific group of students
Argument	Feeling, not being equal to home students	Coursework
Avoiding answering questions	Feeling, Out of control	Coursework aim
Avoiding presentation	Feeling, Pissed	Department and module, course design
Battle	Feeling, Pressure	Monocultural GW
Become like friends	Feeling, pride	Motivation
Behaviour	Feeling, relax	Multicultural class
Attitude , behaviour	Feeling, relieved	Multicultural group
Attitude problem	Feeling, safe	Multicultural group work
Bad behaviour	Feeling, stressed	Group work Expand heir thoughts
Barrier in MGW	Feeling, Stupid	Name
Being able to work with anyone	Feeling, the work belongs to all	Referring to people by they nationalities
being open	Feeling, treating like a high school	Using Eng. name
Being reserve	Feeling, Uncomfortable	Nationality
Benefit of working in a group	Feeling, upset	Needing each other
Better after some times	Feeling, worries	Negative feeling toward the task because of group members
Blog	Feeling. surprise	Not being open to other ideas
Body language	Fight	Not being sure if everyone is following
Bonding over assignment	Finding suitable time for all	Not doing it as others don't do it
British students	First time in a country rather than birth place	Not having opportunity to put their idea forward
British students stay together	Free load	Not interested
Care	Friendly	Not liking the group activity
Career impacts on GW	Friendship	Not liking to work in a group
Challenges	Joking	Not liking to work with their own nationality
Change in behaviour	Making friend	Not sharing the idea with all members
Change in the attitude during	Friendship post group work	Not showing up to the meeting

time		
Changing priority	Future career	Not talking to international students
Changing the course or direction	Gender	Not trying to communicate with international students
Changing their perception	Getting involve with students with same nationality	Not wanting to hangout only with students from same culture
Characters	getting new ideas when working in a group	Not working properly
Childish	Getting to know each other	One group member doesn't do anything
Impatient	Getting to know other students	Open to correction
Irresponsible	Getting used to	Open to ideas
Laid back	Going back home	Opinions regarding GW
Lazy	Grade	bad
Passion	Assessment, grade	Good
Patient	Grade and effort	Organisation culture
Pushy	Grade and relationship	Organised
Racist	Grade n GW	Organised group
Rude	Group member	Organising GW
shy	Choosing group mates	Past experience
Chinese group	Good group member	Past experience impact on GW
Chinese students	Group composition	Past experience of group work
Collaboration	Group member importance	Perception toward a group of students
Comfort zone	Group mates personality	Personal thing
Coming to the meeting late	Group member and motivation	Personality
Committed	Group member don't bring new idea in	Personality, responsibility
communication before gw	Group member impact on experience	Persuading group members to perform
Communication in the group	Group member preference	Planning
Communication tools	Group members	Politics
Complain	Group members academic interest	Positive experience
Complementing the member's work	Group members and effort	Positive feeling regarding toward GW
Concern	Group members are focus	Prejudgment
Confidence	Group members' course	Preparation before meeting
Confident with the group	Group members impact on performance or motivation	Pressure
Conflicts	Group members knowledge	Prior experience of group mates
Consideration	seeing how other people see the world	Problem solving
Contributing to the class	Group performance	Producing
Contributing to the GW	Group size	Program is designed for Chinese students
Control over the work	Group work	Progress
Cooperation	Engage	Pulling their weight
Copy and past	excluded	Putting their ideas forward
Course	Feeling, pissed off	Reacting to the problem
Course culture	Good GW	Reaction to conflicts
Creative	Bond in a group	Reaction to the group mates absence
Cry	GW Experience	Referring to the group work as their own work
Culture	GW helps to make friend	Reluctant to accept the criticism or idea
Decision making	Help you to see things you	Relationship with group mates

	wont see when working on your own	
Vote	Home sick	Relying on other's performance
Defensive	View toward GW	Respect
Department approach to GW	GW, workplace	Responsible
Department planning	Having children	Roles in a group
Department support for international students	Having conversation	Bossy
Departmental politics and grade	Having different opinion	Elaborator
Developing idea in the group	Help, support	Idea generator
Different	Helping each other	Leadership
Different educational system	Hobby	Man role model
Difficult	Home students	Motivator
Discussion in the class	Horrible	Peacekeeper
Dividing responsibility	Identity	Voice of the group
Division in the class	Included	Rushing the work
Division in the group	In-depth poster	Satisfied with the outcome
Sub-groups	Interaction with people	Seeing her/himself as home students
Doing all the work	Interest in the module	Self conscious
Doing other things	International students	Semester
Doing something out of the GW with group mates	Intimidated	Seminars
Socialising	Interest	serious
Dominating	Interesting	Sharing ideas with others
Easy going	Isolated, outsider	Sharing knowledge
Education system	Joining a group of librarian	Sharing personal background
Effort	Joining the group late	Sharing personal interest
Encouraging each other	knowing what they're learning	Sitting separately
English students	Lack of organization	Sitting together in the lecture
Enjoying the GW , activity	Language English	Smile
Enjoying the module	Accent	Solving disagreement
Expectation	Easy to talk	Speaking, sharing
Expectation from group members	First language	Stereotype
Experience	Improving English	Student ratio in the class
Experience of GW	Language	Students don't speak
Experience of working in multicultural group	language- the way people talk	Students from same country being put together
Express your idea	Language, speaking other languages during GW	Students spend time with students from same nationality
Expressing happiness of working with same nationality	Slowing the work	Successful GW
Face color	Laugh	Suggestion
Fair	Learning by being in a group	Taking control
Fair for both non English speakers and English speaker	Learning from a group	Talking to the people in the course
Feeling	Learning from arguments	Tension
Doubting yourself	Learning from multicultural GW	Thinking in Different ways
Fear of being alone	Learning from other	Time related
Feel welcome	Learning from studying abroad	Time
Feeling, Joy	Learning from the course	Time spent on the task
Feeling attached	Learning Space	Time wasting
Feeling different	Learning with others	Time, flexibility
Feeling for group members	Leaving the meeting	Time spent living in the UK
Feeling mad	Leaving the meeting early	Background
Feeling not prepared	Lecturer behaviour	Too much group work
Feeling out of control	Lecturer bring uncomfortable situation	Treating each other

Feeling part of a group	Librarian	Trust
Feeling part of the group	Listening	Tuition fee
Feeling prior to GW	Lonely	Tutor
Feeling relief	Loosing interest	Tutor impact on experience
Feeling surprised	Loosing interest because of group mates	Tutor impact on group work
Feeling toward the outcome	Loyalties	Tutor's role in motivation
Feeling towards the course	Making effort	Understanding
Feeling, Abused	Making effort to be friend	University culture
Feeling, Angry	Making FB for the master	University help international students
Feeling, anxious	Making sense of the assignment	View toward a culture
Feeling, Apprehension	MC group better than Chinese group	View toward multicultural course
Feeling, awkward	MC group makes ppl work	Voicing the opinion, criticism, Speaking up
Feeling, bored	MCG encourage students to talk to each other	Working in a group makes it easier
Feeling, comfortable	Meeting new people	Working on other assignments
Feeling, Confused	Meetings	Working together
Feeling, disappointed	Being late for the meetings	Working with different people
Feeling, embarrassed	Meeting location	Working with friends making it easy
Feeling, excited		Working with home students
Feeling, fear		Benefit because of working with home students
		Working with home students help them to understand the task
		Working with same nationality make GW easier
		Working with the boy-girl friend

The image below shows some of the relationships between nodes, which were defined using NVivo:

From Name	From Folder	Type	To Name	To Folder
Academic attitude	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Group work\View toward GW	Nodes
Age	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Academic attitude	Nodes
Personality	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Agreeing	Nodes
Identity	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Behaviour\Attitude , behaviour	Nodes
Agreeing	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Behaviour\Attitude , behaviour	Nodes
All group member standing together	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Collaboration	Nodes
Argument	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Group work\GW Experience	Nodes
British students stay together	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Group member\Choosing group mates	Nodes
Module design\Confusion in the course	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Group work\GW Experience	Nodes
Contributing to the GW	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Effort	Nodes
Module design\Course design	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Approach to the GW	Nodes
Module design\Course design	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Effort	Nodes
Identity	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Group work\View toward GW	Nodes
Approach to the GW	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Past experience of group work	Nodes
Meetings\Meeting location	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Group work\GW Experience	Nodes
Grade\Assesment, grade	Nodes	Cause and Effect	Time related\Time spent on the task	Nodes

Appendix V   ETHICS

In this section, the approval letters of ethics applications are presented. Only the second ethics application is included, as it contains information regarding the first ethics application as well.

Angela Y Lin <a.lin@sheffield.ac.uk>   10/16/12
to Shaghayegh, Ana, Sheila

Dear Shaghayegh

Thank you for the revised application form and information sheet. I am pleased to tell you that you can begin to collect the data.

Please can you print a hard copy of the latest application form and ask either of your supervisor to sign on the form. Once the form is signed please place them in my tray. I'll need the signed copy for the record keeping (in your student file).

Regards
Angela

Information School Research Ethics Panel

Letter of Approval

Date: 5th August 2014

TO: Shaghayegh Asgari

The Information School Research Ethics Panel has examined the following application:

Title: Conceptualizing cultural issues and challenges within a UK higher education blended learning context.

Submitted by: Shaghayegh Asgari

And found the proposed research involving human participants to be in accordance with the University of Sheffield's policies and procedures, which include the University's '*Financial Regulations*', '*Good Research Practice Standards'* and the '*Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue'* (Ethics Policy).

This letter is the official record of ethics approval by the School, and should accompany any formal requests for evidence of research ethics approval.

Effective Date: 5th August 2014

Dr Angela Lin
Research Ethics Coordinator

The University of Sheffield.

Information School

Proposal for

Research Ethics Review

Students		Staff	
This proposal submitted by:		**This proposal is for:**	
	Undergraduate		Specific research project
	Postgraduate (Taught) – PGT		Generic research project
x	Postgraduate (Research) – PGR	This project is funded by:	

Project Title:	Conceptualising cultural issues and challenges within a UK higher education blended learning context.		
Start Date:	October 2012	**End Date:**	March 2016

Principal Investigator (PI): *(student for supervised UG/PGT/PGR research)*	Shaghayegh Asgari
Email:	s.asgari@sheffield.ac.uk

Supervisor: *(if PI is a student)*	Ms Sheila Webber
Email:	s.webber@sheffield.ac.uk

Indicate if the research:	**(*put an X in front of all that apply*)**
	Involves adults with mental incapacity or mental illness, or those unable to make a personal decision
	Involves prisoners or others in custodial care (e.g. young offenders)

	Involves children or young people aged under 18 years of age
	Involves highly sensitive topics such as 'race' or ethnicity; political opinion; religious, spiritual or other beliefs; physical or mental health conditions; sexuality; abuse (child, adult); nudity and the body; criminal activities; political asylum; conflict situations; and personal violence.

Please indicate by inserting an "X" in the left hand box that you are conversant with the University's policy on the handling of human participants and their data.	
x	**We confirm that we have read the current version of the University of Sheffield *Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue*, as shown on the University's research ethics website at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy**

B1.   Briefly summarise the project's aims and objectives:
(This must be in language comprehensible to a layperson and should take no more than one-half page. Provide enough information so that the reviewer can understand the intent of the research)

Summary:

UK higher education is one of the most cosmopolitan education systems. Each year, many students with diverse cultural backgrounds are enrolled in UK universities. These students bring new influences, issues and dynamics to the way group work is undertaken. Additionally, student satisfaction in multicultural classes is potentially different from that in homogeneous classes. To improve the satisfaction of those students undertaking group work in a blended learning context, it is essential to identify potential challenges, conflicts and tensions.

Specifically the project will seek to:

Research objectives

Use the literature to investigate and identify what benefits, challenges, conflicts, and tension students experience in multicultural education.

Explore potential group work issues in multicultural UK higher education blended learning.

Describe, clarify and express these issues by exploring students' experiences and opinions.

Conceptualize the benefits, challenges, conflicts, and tensions for students when collaborating in multicultural groups in BL environments

---

B2.   Methodology:

Provide a broad overview of the methodology in no more than one-half page.

Overview of Methods:

In order to understand potential challenges, conflicts, and tensions for international students when collaborating in BL environments, it is necessary to study multicultural group work in a natural setting. With this in mind, students who work in a multicultural group in the 'Information Resources and Information Literacy', 'Information and Knowledge Management' and 'Management for Library and Information Services'

modules will be the main participants of the project. However, other modules will be considered if necessary. To conduct group work, these students must work in a blended learning context, featuring both face-to-face and online interaction with group members. The research approach is a case study and data will be collected using observation, focus groups, questionnaire and interviews. The group activity will be video recorded in order to fully appreciate the group dynamics and gather rich data.

As the questionnaire has been added after data collection had begun, previous participants will be invited to complete the questionnaire and the future participants will be asked to complete it before the observation. As such, the data collection process will be as below:

For past participants: observation----$\rightarrow$ interview/focus group---$\rightarrow$questionnaire

---

C1.   Briefly describe how each method will be applied

For future participants: questionnaire---$\rightarrow$ observation--$\rightarrow$ interview/focus group

---

If more than one method, e.g., survey, interview, etc. is used, please respond to the questions in Section C for each method. That is, if you are using both a survey and interviews, duplicate the page and answer the questions for each method; you need not duplicate the information, and may simply indicate, "see previous section."

C (No.1)

Method:

Observation

Description – how will you apply the method?

Participants will be sent an email to explain the objectives and approach followed in this project. If they agree to take part in the research, and signed the consent form, they

will be observed during their group work during class activity or outside the class when they have group meeting.

About your Participants

C2.   Who will be potential participants?

The potential participants are MA Librarianship and MSc Information Management students who are enrolled on the modules identified in B2.

C3.   How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

The researcher will be acting as a tutor for the modules 'Information Resources and Information Literacy' and 'Information and Knowledge Management', but will not be involved in assessing the work of the participants in the research. As such, the researcher will be able to identify multicultural groups. In the event that the researcher does not act as a tutor for the module, the module coordinator will provide her with the list of multicultural groups.

Approach

Potential participants will be approached by the researcher who has obtained the module coordinator's permission.

An email will be sent to students to inform them about the research. This email includes the research purpose, aims, objectives, and potential benefits. In addition, they will be informed that the researcher will be present at the forthcoming lecture and they have the opportunity to ask questions or raise their concerns.

After this, the researcher will explain the research in the lecture and students will be invited to ask questions. Then, researcher will ask for students' permission to observe them during group work activities.

Those students who work in multicultural group work settings for their coursework for specific modules (as above) will be selected. It should be highlighted that researcher will not be involved in the marking and assessment of any participants work in order to encourage them speak freely.

C4.   What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The subjects of the investigation are University of Sheffield students (potential participants are MA Librarianship and MSc Information Management students) and their tutors are highly unlikely to cause any harm or distress to participants.

C5.   Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

x	**Yes**
	No

If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

The potential participants will be provided with written information regarding what the research is about, what it will involve and they will be given sufficient time to consider whether or not they wish to participate it the study. Those who may decide to participate in the study will be asked to read the material provided and if they are happy to proceed, sign the consent form before participating in the observation.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

C6.   Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

About the Data

C7.   What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

The researcher will be the only person who will have access to the data generated by the project before it is anonymised. All contextual information or clues such as names, modules information and etc. will be removed from transcripts and anonymised for data presentation. Once it is anonymised, the researcher will be the only person who will analyse the data. Data analysis will take place at the University of Sheffield and the data will be stored securely in an anonymised or pseudonymised form.

As part of the process of seeking informed consent, all the information regarding confidentiality will be disclosed to all participants. All participants of the study will be informed at the start of the study that the collected data will be kept anonymous and treated with confidentiality (both in the cover letter and before data collection in an open discussion with interviewees).

C8.   Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio/video recordings, computer logs, eye tracking?

Yes

If yes, how will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used, and (if appropriate) destroyed?

The researcher will obtain the participants' permission to take notes during the data collection. The observation will be audio and video recorded ensuring that there is a clear understanding with the participants that the recorded media of their activities made during this research will be used only for the purposes of this study, such as for data analysis and will only be accessed by the researcher prior to its anonymisation.

The participants will also be notified that no other use will be made of the recording without their written permission, and no one but the researcher will be allowed access to the original recordings.

The recording will also be kept securely in a password protected environment..

C9. If the data is being retained for future re-used, please explain the scope of re-use (and indicate how the participant(s) will be informed of that use).

N/A

About the Procedure

C10. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

No

C (No.2)

C1   Briefly describe how each method will be applied

Method:

Interview

Description – how will you apply the method?

Participants who took part in the observation stage will be invited to take part in individual interview, If they agree to take part they will be interviewed so that the researcher can gather deeper and more detailed data related to the research. Interview

questions will be based on the available literature in the field and also students' responses in the focus group and the observation.

About your Participants

C2.   Who will be potential participants?

See previous C2.

C3.   How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

See previous C3.

Approach

See previous C3.

As mentioned above, the questionnaire would be sent to students who are enrolled in the modules and they will be asked to respond to it if they are willing to do so.

C4.   What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The subjects of the investigation are University of Sheffield students (potential participants are MA Librarianship and MSc Information Management students) and their tutors are highly unlikely to cause any harm or distress to participants.

C5.   Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

x	Yes
	No

If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

See previous C5.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

C6.   Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

About the Data

C7.   What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

See previous C7.

C8. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio/video recordings, computer logs, eye tracking?

If yes, how will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used, and (if appropriate) destroyed?

See previous C8.

C9. If the data is being retained for future re-used, please explain the scope of re-use (and indicate how the participant(s) will be informed of that use).

N/A

About the Procedure

C10. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

C (No.3)

C1   Briefly describe how each method will be applied

Method:

Focus group

Description – how will you apply the method?

Participants who took part in the observation stage will be invited to take part in individual interview, If they agree to take part they will be asked to take part in a focus group in order to discuss the issues and difficulties they experience while working with students with varied cultural backgrounds. Focus groups will be conducted by the researcher and will also be video recorded in order to capture the group dynamics.

About your Participants

C2.   Who will be potential participants?

See previous C2.

C3.   How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

See previous C3.

Approach

See previous C3

C4.   What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

The subjects of the investigation are University of Sheffield students (potential participants are MA Librarianship and MSc Information Management students) and their tutors are highly unlikely to cause any harm or distress to participants.

C5.   Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

x	Yes
	No

If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

See previous C5.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

C6.   Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

About the Data

C7.   What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

See previous C7.

C8. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio/video recordings, computer logs, eye tracking?

If yes, how will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used, and (if appropriate) destroyed?

See previous C8.

C9. If the data is being retained for future re-used, please explain the scope of re-use (and indicate how the participant(s) will be informed of that use).

N/A

About the Procedure

C10. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

C (No.4)

C1.   Briefly describe how each method will be applied

Method

Interview Staff

Description – how will you apply the method?

Key staff involved in the modules and student service staff will be invited to take part in the interview via email to explain the objectives and approach followed in this project. If they agree to take part in the research and sign the consent form, they will be interviewed by the researcher. The interview will be audio recorded. Interview

questions are based on the literature review and the students' observations and interviews.

About your Participants

C2.   Who will be potential participants?

The potential participants are tutors and lecturers who are involved on the modules identified in B2 and also key staff in student services.

C3.   How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?

Tutors and lecturers who work in the modules with the researcher will be asked to participate. Student services staff who work with international students or in advising staff in leaning and teaching design will be identified by using the university website and contacting them via email.

Approach

The researcher will send individuals the email as described in C1.

C4.   What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?

There is none.

C5.   Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?

x	Yes
	No

If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

The participants will be asked to sign the consent form. This consent form must be signed if agreed to by participants at which point they can proceed to the interview.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

C6.   Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants? (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

About the Data

C7.   What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

As mentioned previously in C7

C8. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio/video recordings, computer logs, eye tracking?

Yes

If yes, how will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used, and (if appropriate) destroyed?

See previous C8.

C9. If the data is being retained for future re-used, please explain the scope of re-use (and indicate how the participant(s) will be informed of that use).

N/A

About the Procedure

C10. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

As it mentioned previously in C10.

C (No.5)

C1   Briefly describe how each method will be applied

Method

Questionnaire

Description – how will you apply the method?

Students enrolled in the modules will be asked to take part in the survey in order to understand their approaches toward learning and group work. The email will content the objectives and approach followed in this project. The survey will start with the consent form and if they agree and sign they will be able to continue to the questionnaire.

About your Participants

C2.   Who will be potential participants?

The potential participants are MA Librarianship and MSc Information Management students (or other modules if necessary) who are enrolled on the modules identified in B2.

C3. **How will the potential participants be identified and recruited?**

An email will be sent to all students who are enrolled on the specific modules within the Information School. These are mentioned in C2.

Approach

The researcher will ask the module coordinator to send students the email as described in C1.

C4. **What is the potential for physical and/or psychological harm / distress to participants?**

There is none.

C5. **Will informed consent be obtained from the participants?**

x	Yes
	No

If Yes, please explain how informed consent will be obtained?

The questionnaire will start with the consent form. This consent form must be signed if agreed to by participants at which point they can proceed to the questions. And at any point if they do not to continue they can leave the questionnaire.

If No, please explain why you need to do this, and how the participants will be de-briefed?

C6. **Will financial / in kind payments (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?** (Indicate how much and on what basis this has been decided)

No

C7.   What measures will be put in place to ensure confidentiality of personal data, where appropriate?

As mentioned previously in C7

C8. Will the research involve the production of recorded media such as audio/video recordings, computer logs, eye tracking?

No

If yes, how will you ensure that there is a clear agreement with participants as to how these recorded media may be stored, used, and (if appropriate) destroyed?

C9. If the data is being retained for future re-used, please explain the scope of re-use (and indicate how the participant(s) will be informed of that use).

N/A

About the Procedure

C10. Does your research raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project (especially if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)? If so, please explain how it will be managed.

As previous C10.

The University of Sheffield.

Information School

Research Ethics Review

Declaration

Title of Research Project: *[insert project title here*]

We confirm our responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Sheffield's policies and procedures, which include the University's '*Financial Regulations*', '*Good Research Practice Standards'* and the '*Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue'* (Ethics Policy) and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In submitting this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

The form is accurate to the best of our knowledge and belief.

The project will abide by the University's Ethics Policy.

There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.

Subject to the research being approved, we undertake to adhere to the project protocol without unagreed deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.

We undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting our academic department's Ethics Coordinator in the first instance).

we are aware of our responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and relevant guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of personal data, including the need to register when necessary with the appropriate Data Protection Officer (within the University the Data Protection Officer is based in CiCS).

We understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future.

We understand that personal data about us as researchers in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (e.g. the Ethics Administrator and/or ethics reviewers) and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.

If this is an application for a 'generic' project all the individual projects that fit under the generic project are compatible with this application.

We understand that this project cannot be submitted for ethics approval in more than one department, and that if I wish to appeal against the decision made, this must be done through the original department.

Name of the Student (if applicable):

Shaghayegh Asgari

Name of Principal Investigator (or the Supervisor):

[insert name]

Date: [insert date]

Appendix VI   Checklist

Before starting the group work assignment, discuss the following areas together as a group. This exercise will enable you to plan your roles for the project and may help avoid potential misunderstandings which could negatively affect the group work process and even your group's mark.

Decision making

- *E.g. how will you make decisions regarding areas such as the tasks assigned to each person? Voting, reaching agreement through discussion, etc?*

> Insert any comments here:

Roles in the group

- *E.g. will the group have a leader?*

> Insert any comments here:

Deadline, Planning, timeline etc. *you are strongly recommended to do this*

- *E.g. how early do you want to finish the first draft, or when is it expected that group members will finish their own part of the group task?*

> Insert any comments here:

Dividing responsibility

- *E.g. Will anyone else take certain responsibilities such as arranging meetings or booking group rooms?*

> Insert any comments here:

Switching language consent

- *E.g. if some group members speak a language other than English as their first language, will they be able to switch to this during meetings? Do they need to ask for permission each time they want to switch?*

> Insert any comments here:

Absences

- *E.g. do any group members anticipate being unavailable or leaving the country for several days during the group work period? How will you plan to minimise any*

inconvenience this may cause (eg Facebook/Google services being unavailable in certain countries)

> Insert any comments here:

Preferred time/location

- *E.g. are there any days on which group members cannot work on the project? Eg part-time work commitments. Which times/days are best for everyone?*

> Insert any comments here:

Communication tools

- *E.g. which tools to group members wish to communicate or collaborate with? Eg WeChat, Facebook, Google Docs…*

> Insert any comments here:

Conflict management

- *E.g. in the event of a conflict between group members, do all individuals agree to report this to the tutor?*

> Insert any comments here:
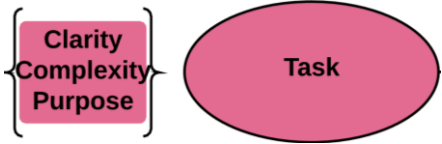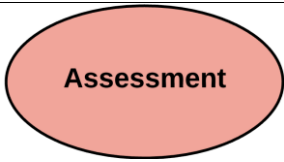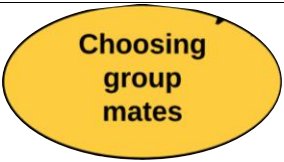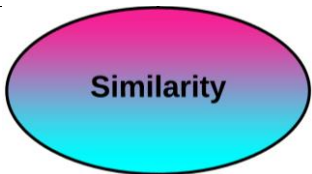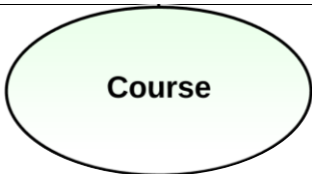
If one member doesn't follow the above, doesn't contribute, etc.
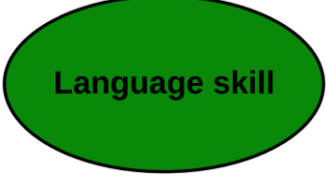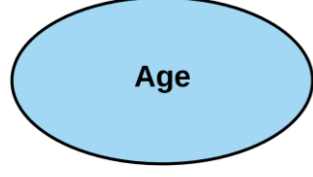
- *Consider what course of action the group will take if this happens. Write in group work log, report to tutor, etc.*
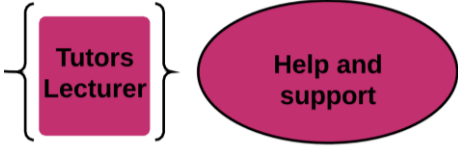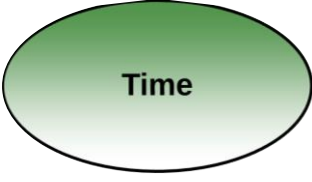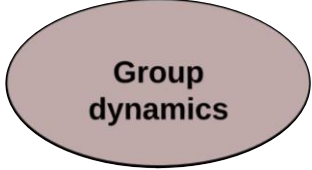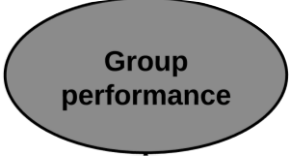
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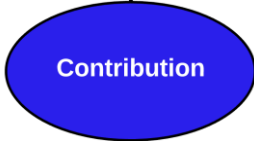
Finally, remember to try to treat each other with respect and good luck with your group work!

Appendix VII   MODEL'S GUIDE
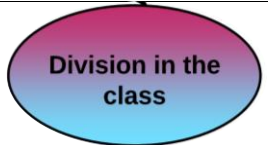
	Members are Allocated to group	When students are allocated to their groups by the lecturer
	Group formation	The process of forming the groups, including choosing group members
	Students feelings	How students feel in various stages of the group work
	Students experience	Students' personal experiences of working in the group
	Self selecting	When students choose their own group mates
	Conscious selecting	When students consider different factors when choosing their group mates
	Random self selecting	Students randomly choose their group mates
	Sitting close to each other	Students choose group mates from those sitting close to them in the classroom
	Conflicts	Conflicts occurring in the group which cause anger, disappointment, or anxiety.

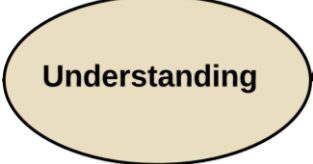|	Description
Task (Clarity, Complexity, Purpose)	Nature of the group task. Includes its complexity, clarity of purpose and briefing.
Assessment	Nature of the group task assessment, whether assessed or unassessed (see section 7.8.1)
Choosing group mates	Students choose their group mates in different ways and different factors affect who they choose to work with
Culture	Students' cultural background. Culture includes their ethnic cultural background, family culture, etc.
Past experience	Students' past experience has influence. Including work experience, past education, or life experience (see section 7.3.1)
Familiarity	Familiarity between students. Includes friendships, acquaintances, etc. This factor includes how well students know each other before the group work
Similarity	Similarity between students. Includes gender, mature student status, etc.
Course	Course/program of study (either Information Management or Librarianship)

	How well students communicate in English and use English in their academic work
Language skill	
Language	The different languages students speak
Friendship	Friendships between students
Choosing friend	How students choose their friends.
Nationality	Students' nationalities refer to their country of origin.
foreignness	Refers to when international students who are from different countries find common similarity between themselves, which is being 'foreign' Section 7.4
Age	Age of students (see section 7.3.1)
GM	Identity of group members their characteristics.

Academic attitudes	Students' academic attitudes: either surface, deep or achieving.
Students' preparation	Students' preparation before meetings or tutorials. This includes reading the materials, finishing their parts, etc.
Prioritising their individual work	When students prefer to work on their own individual assignments rather than the group work
Tutors Lecturer Help and support	Face-to-face help and support students receive during the group work
Time	The period in which students were given to complete the task and the time in which the group task occurred (see section 7.10)
Group dynamics	The internal dynamics of the group during the group work.
Group performance	How the group performs in relation to the task requirements. This factor includes how well the group performed and their final grade.
Personality	Students' individual personalities.

Communication	Communication in the groups and the way students generally communicate
Students' Performance	How students perform in the group. This factor includes their contributions, effort, and the way they do their part/s in addition to the final outcome.
Role in the group	The roles students take during the group work, such as leadership
Other GM performance	Other group members' performance in the group. How other members behave and perform in the group.
Relationship in group	The dynamic between group members and their relationships, i.e. if there is a tense or friendly feeling between members, is it respectful or abusive, etc.
Contribution	Students' contribution to the group
View towards GW	Students' view toward the group work
Students' motivation	Students' personal motivation. The reasons behind students decision making and perhaps their performance in the groups.

Socialising	Doing social activities outside the group with group mates such as shopping or drinking
Making friends	Students making friends with others.
Self confidence	Students' level of self-confidence
Division in the group	Segregation in the groups. When members of group create their own sub-groups (see 7.6)
English name	International students adopting English names
Switching	Switching language during group work from English to first language (see section 7.7)
Division in the class	When students form their groups in the classroom and do not communicate with others or make friends with (see section 7.6)
Belonging	Students feel they belong to the UK
Home students view of international students	The way home students perceive international students (see section 7.5)

Name	How students refer to their group members and also when they decide to choose a different name (see section 7.5)
Expectation	Students' expectation from the course, task, etc. section 6.4.1 and 7.4
View towards the task	How students feel and view the group task
Understanding	Students' understanding of a phenomenon (including the group work task or conversations) influenced by their cultural background (see section 7.4)
Students' knowledge	Students prior knowledge of the group work task
Other assignments	When students have more than one assignment at the same time