

Epistemological Obstacles to Academic Integrity:
Mainland Chinese students' perceptions of studying in
the UK through the Habermasian Lens

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Abstract

This thesis explores mainland Chinese Master's students' perceptions of the challenges they face in adapting to a UK Master's programme and how they overcome these challenges. The study uses qualitative analysis of focus group data collected during students' time in the UK and reflections once they have returned to China. The students describe having to change the way they study in order to adapt to the different educational context, specifically the use of essay writing as the major form of assessment. Thematic analysis of the participants' perceptions reveals that this is not simply a case of changing the method of study and adapting to the norms of academic writing and referencing, but requires an epistemological shift. In line with various models of epistemological development, the participants describe the dominant monological and absolute exam focused approach in China in comparison with the dialogic and contextual approach to knowledge in the UK.

Having identified and explored the development of epistemological reflection as a key factor in the initial thematic analysis, the study then moves further in-depth utilising the conceptual framework of Jürgen Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* in order to understand the transition between educational contexts. Using the concepts of *lifeworld* and *system*, the findings indicate the significant difference between an instrumental approach to education in China and a dialogic educational approach in UKHE, which ostensibly aims at mutual understanding and reaching an intersubjective consensus on truth. This framework provides new perspectives on the challenges Chinese students' face studying in Anglophone countries, such as English language competency and understanding the concepts of plagiarism and critical thinking. Through this Habermasian lens, the concept of academic integrity is explored in the context of the mass migration of Chinese students and the internationalisation of higher education in the 21st century.

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*If you must write prose and poems
The words you use should be your own
Don't plagiarise or take "on loan"
'Cause there's always someone, somewhere
With a big nose, who knows
And who trips you up and laughs
When you fall...
You say : "'Ere long done do does did"
Words which could only be your own
And then produce the text
From whence was ripped
(Some dizzy whore, 1804)*

(Morrissey, 1985)¹

*One does not set out in search of new lands without
being willing to be alone on an empty sea.*

(André Gide in Dunleavy, 2003, p.34)²

¹ The song which triggered my interest in plagiarism and the concept of authorial originality.

² The quote that got me through this thesis...LAND HO!

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The internationalisation of higher education, idealistically, is an opportunity to benefit from the synthesis of global perspectives on knowledge, helping to advance human understanding. Every year millions of students leave their home countries for a new experience studying abroad, and the majority have truly life changing experiences. A significant proportion of the student migration has seen students from the global south seek education in more advanced, particularly Anglophone countries. The experiences of international students, and of the institutions at which they study, have been the focus of numerous studies. These studies have exposed the reality of international education process that is fraught with numerous challenges, such as: intercultural understanding and communication, post-colonial discourses, stereotyping, contrastive rhetorical styles and differing academics norms. One of the manifestations of these challenges is the discourse on academic integrity, and one of the emerging key players in international higher education is China. In this thesis I use the case study of mainland Chinese Masters students in the UK, to explore the issue of academic integrity in internationalised higher education and identify a theoretical framework in an attempt to understand the educational transition of Chinese learners.

Since privately funded students have been allowed to seek education outside China in 1999, there has been a steady year on year increase in students seeking study abroad with the majority of mainland Chinese students going to Anglophone countries, particularly the United States, Canada and Australia. The UK is one popular destination, which despite the somewhat jaded past relationship, represents a luxury brand of prestigious education which is enticing to Chinese students and the parents holding the purse strings. In 2015-16, 91,215 Chinese students studied in the UK alone, and this

*majority minority*³ represent close to a quarter of all taught postgraduates in the UK (HEFCE, 2016; UKCISA, 2017). The effect on UKHE of this vast influx of Chinese students has been reflected in the literature and the approach of institutions to help accommodate international students (Carroll & Ryan, 2005a; Ryan & Louie, 2007). This process of internationalisation and the transitional issues of the students have been magnified as this process has coincided with cultural flux caused by marketisation and the impact of the internet.

1.1 About the author and origin of research interest

Since 2014, I have been the Academic Integrity Coordinator at the University of York. In this role I am responsible for a number of resources, including online tutorials, referencing guidance, software guidance (including Turnitin), academic misconduct and assessment policy development aimed at supporting students with their adaptation to studying at university (www.york.ac.uk/integrty). I work with students and staff to help them get to grips with academic integrity in the current academic climate. I gained this role due to my experience and research interest in one group which proves to be highly problematic in relation to academic integrity: Chinese learners.

At the time of starting this thesis, I had over 5 years' experience living in China and teaching Chinese students and researchers on pre-abroad preparatory and degree programmes at the Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce (SILC) at Shanghai University and Tsinghua University. In 2005-6 I underwent Chinese language training at Fudan University, Shanghai and my research interest emerged in my first year living in China. Studying Chinese and teaching English simultaneously highlighted the significant

³ *Majority minority* was a term coined by Prof. Paul Wakeling of the University of York in discussion of my work.

cross-cultural differences in pedagogical approach and educational expectations. Moving in to full-time English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teaching I noted the particular tension between the 'Western' teaching staff and Chinese learners' notions of plagiarism. This was made particularly stark in my first week as a full time teacher when a more senior member of staff informed me that I needed to be careful as "they [Chinese students] all cheat!" Troubled by this sentiment, I began research with my Chinese and international colleagues to better understand the students' backgrounds. In doing so I hoped to gain a better and more respectful understanding of the process of adaptation to higher education and academic integrity. This eventually led to my MRes in Educational and Social Research from the Institute of Education (IOE), UCL and then the PhD in the Department of Education at the University of York, starting in 2012.

This research builds on my Masters dissertation (subsequently published as Gow, 2014) in which I explored the cultural and developmental perspectives (Flowerdew & Li, 2007) of plagiarism. Through interviews with Chinese graduates of UK master's degrees after they have returned to work in transnational higher education in China, I developed the theory of these returnee students as a *cultural bridge* for academic integrity (Gow, 2014). It was my expertise in this area which was key in my successful application for the role of Academic Integrity Coordinator at the University of York, which, like so many in the UK and other Anglophone countries, has a significant number of mainland Chinese learners. One of the key issues I have had to face in the role is that Chinese students present a disproportionate number of plagiarism cases in the university, in spite of additional language and academic study support. I also have become hyper aware of the problematic nature of academic integrity in an increasingly marketised and internationalised higher education sector. Therefore, having started this PhD from the perspective of a teacher in the transnational context of EAP in China, this thesis has developed through the merging of my original research interests and my experiences as Academic Integrity Coordinator in an internationalised UK university.

1.2 Research gap, aims and focus

There has been much written on the topic of Chinese learners and academic integrity (as outlined in Chapter 2), yet there is a lack of satisfactory explanations on the issues Chinese students face in transition, resulting in unhelpful stereotypes. This thesis therefore aims to achieve this through a build on my previous research findings (Gow, 2014) and use a case study of mainland Chinese Masters students' (MCMS) perceptions of their adaptation to studying in UK higher education. It explores how these perceptions correspond to the discourse of Chinese learners and academic integrity using qualitative analysis. Through the use of a qualitative approach, the thesis allows Chinese learners to explore the issues of this problem in their own words.

The overarching research aim of this thesis is therefore to:

Identify an existing theoretical framework to help understand the problems faced by mainland Chinese students in transitioning to study in English universities.

The development of a theoretical framework to understand this process is built upon the empirical base of a qualitative study which uses thematic analysis of focus groups and interviews with mainland Chinese participants in the UK and after they have returned to China. A holistic approach to Chinese learners, as advocated by many of the experts in the field, has been taken in order understand the entire context of educational transition before attempting to draw conclusions about academic integrity (Bretag et al., 2014; Carroll & Ryan, 2005b; Drinan & Gallant, 2008; Entwistle & Entwistle, 1992; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015; Kaposi & Dell, 2012; Macdonald & Carroll, 2006; Sawir, 2005; Sutherland-Smith, 2008).

The research investigates the challenges faced by both Chinese students and their host institutions through an exploration of the barriers encountered by postgraduate

students from the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the obstacles they present to effective integration into UK universities. Through in-depth qualitative focus groups, the research identifies a range of practical and epistemological factors which function as obstacles to Chinese students' integration into their new study environment.

These obstacles relate to Chinese students' academic experience prior to arrival in the UK; their ability to acclimatize to the academic atmosphere in their UK institution; the significant epistemological differences in approaches to knowledge and assessment between Chinese and UK education systems; the obstacles presented by cultural adaptation in a foreign country both within and beyond the classroom; the negative and counter-productive impact of systemic strategies devised by UK universities to combat academic misconduct and plagiarism.

The acts of plagiarism or cheating are often seen as simple moral transgressions by students. Through a holistic view of the Chinese learners in the transition between educational contexts, the thesis provides an insight into issues of academic integrity which drill to down to the epistemological foundations of the learning and motivation. The application of the Habermasian lens (as explained in Chapter 3) to this issue provides a unique view of not only the students' academic experience itself but the macro-economic and political context in which international student migration occurs. This offers insight into the various purposes of education, for competitive talent selection and research. In terms of academic integrity the findings are highly significant as the theoretical framework highlights responsibility and fairness as two master values of integrity as they apply to these different purposes. Within this, plagiarism is posed not only as mere manipulation but also as systematically distorted communication, or denial of self and responsibility for the knowledge process.

1.3 Chapter Guide

This thesis is organized into eight chapters, including this introductory chapter, progressing through the extant literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, analysis and conclusions. Below is a summary of each chapters:

Chapter 2 conducts an expansive literature review divided broadly into four key sections. Firstly, the literature review moves to examine literature on Chinese students and Chinese educational culture, both historically and in the contemporary era of globalisation and internationalisation of higher education. The literature review then explores definitions of academic integrity and related concepts including honesty, responsibility, fairness and influence. The third section returns to issues related to academic integrity, with a specific focus on the concept of plagiarism with reference to the preceding sections on academic integrity. A section on various discourses in relation to plagiarism, examining the moral, procedural, developmental and intertextual aspects of plagiarism and academic misconduct. This literature review then moves to explore the nature of epistemological models of student development and approaches to knowledge in higher education.

Chapter 3 introduces the *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA) developed by Jürgen Habermas which is utilised to frame exploration of the Chinese learner and academic integrity. Two key concepts are initially introduced: lifeworld and system. These are explored initially in their broadest sense, before being discussed with direct relevance to research in higher education contexts, particularly the UK and China. This chapter concludes with the statement of the research questions.

Chapter 4 focuses on methodology, providing justifications for the selection of focus groups from practical, methodological and theoretical perspectives. Focus group data

was collated through pilot stage research; focus groups and follow-up focus groups in the UK, and focus groups in China. In addition to focus group data, memos were also compiled and analysed through thematic analysis.

Chapter 5 to 7 documents the findings from the research activities designed and developed in the Methodology section. Qualitative data from the focus groups is presented and simultaneously discussed, with focus on three broad sections:

5. Motivations, expectations and reality of studying abroad
6. Studying in China: A testing experience
7. Studying in the UK: Becoming critical

Each chapter conducts a deeper thematic analysis of the dataset which moves beyond the coding and categories identified, revealing epistemological obstacles encountered by students. Each chapter is then concluded with analysis of the findings *through the Habermasian lens*, utilizing Habermas's TCA framework and references to the literature on the subject to analyse the data and present findings.

Chapter 8 provides the concluding arguments, specifically addressing the research aims articulated in this chapter and the specific research questions laid out at the end of the chapter 3. The project's contribution to knowledge is clearly stated and key recommendations are made with a reflection on this quest to understand the challenges faced by Chinese students studying in UK institutions, and the problems faced by educators and institutions in effectively integrating them into UK higher education.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In order to address the central aims of thesis, it is necessary to draw upon a number of discourses related to Chinese learners, academic integrity and higher education. The following literature review defines and describes the context, case study and key concepts around which the research is based in order to provide the reader with an understanding of the fundamental discussion on these topics. What will become apparent is that despite the breadth of the literature in this area, the perceived problem of plagiarism and Chinese students persists due to a complex combination of variables. By exploring these complexities and paradoxes, the theoretical space for this study will, hopefully, be made apparent, providing grounds for the theoretical framework and empirical analysis in the second half of the thesis.

This review begins by exploring the Chinese learner within the current context of marketised, massified and internationalised higher education (section 2.1). This context is highly significant to the emergence of literature on Chinese learners. It is argued that mass migration of Chinese students is occurring while universities are in state of flux due to the push for massification of higher education in the post-war era. Marketization has resulted in universities looking alternative funding sources for the massified model as states have been increasingly unable or unwilling to do so. Thus the societal functions and financing of universities has shifted the focus to credentialism and employability, alongside growing competition between institutions, nationally and internationally. In addition to the knowledge benefits of global cooperation, internationalisation has emerged as the increasingly lucrative international student market has grown. One of the most significant markets for universities has been China. Resultantly, at a time of great flux, Anglophone universities have been overwhelmed by the numbers of Chinese

students on their campuses, and one of the symptoms of the adjustment has been the discourse on academic integrity and the Chinese learner.

The paradox of Chinese learner (Biggs, 1996) is explained in detail looking at the historic roots of the discourse, its emergence in Hong Kong during the 1980's and the entrenchment of the stereotype of the Chinese learner after mass numbers of students on global campuses (section 2.2). The key elements of the stereotype of the Chinese learner as being passive, lacking in critical thinking and being susceptible to plagiarism are explored. The key questions in this discourse are discussed; covering the historical, cultural, linguistic and pedagogical (particularly high stakes testing) background of debate. Thus follows the definition and discussion of the development of the concept of academic integrity (briefly defined as “a commitment [of students and scholars], even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage” (ICAI, 2013). It explains how this topic has resulted in response to the changing context of higher education and the more traditional problems of cheating, motivation to study and the ethics of teaching and learning (section 2.3). As academic writing forms a key form of assessment in higher education, discussions of academic integrity in turn lead to the concept of plagiarism, which is one of the central accusations aimed at Chinese students and scholars.

Plagiarism (briefly “the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own” (OED, 2019)) in both the historical and contemporary cultural context, is then explored (section 2.4). Firstly, the historic development of the concept of plagiarism is explored in both “Eastern” and “Western” contexts, inferring its universal nature and dispelling notions of the lack of the concept in the China. Discussions of plagiarism are then supported by analysis of contexts of authorship and the impact of attribution, the concept of intertextuality and their implications. This section will present

the intricate nuances of authorship and authority, and particularly how these are affected in the post-Gutenberg era of the internet. The section ends with an exploration of Kaposi and Dell's four discourses on plagiarism, which highlight the number of different approaches to this concept within higher education, further highlighting the complexity of this issue.

The final section of this review explores theories of epistemological development in higher education (section 2.5: Baxter Magolda, 1992; Perry, 1970; Marton and Säljö, 1976). Epistemology, or approach to knowledge, is premised as key to understanding the Chinese learner paradox and student plagiarism with significant implications for academic integrity. These theories evidence the process of cognitive development students experience through university (Perry, 1970; Baxter Magolda, 1992) and also approach to knowledge within individual academic tasks (Marton and Säljö, 1976). It is argued that it is the unique approach to knowledge in research led higher education reflected in academic discourse, which provides key development of the identity and ethical approach of students (Ivanič, 1998; Perry, 1970). This epistemological development, or "epistemological rupture" (Bachelard, 1975 as cited in De Saeger, 2008) of searching for empirical truth is central to the development of scientific ideas (De Saegar, 1975; Marton and Entwistle, 1994) and also significant to the university in a democratic society.

It is therefore argued that mass numbers of Chinese learners are transitioning from a supremely competitive education system, which focuses on high stakes testing, to the discursive context of academic communication with the associated epistemological implications. This alone is a challenge. This mass student migration, however, comes at a time when higher education is wrestling with the permutations of massification, marketisation and internationalisation. In addition, the student migration must be seen

as an element of the growth of Chinese scientific research and prestige of their academic institutions, which are seen as having a major role in the emergence of China as a global superpower. Finally, the significant impact of the social and cultural impact of the internet and, particularly, notions of authorship and plagiarism, adds further complexity to the transition of these learners, resulting in accusations of plagiarism and a seeming lack of academic integrity.

2.1 The Chinese learner in the international context

Since the turn of the 21st century the massification, marketisation and internationalisation of higher education has led to debates about the purpose of the university in this new context (Altbach, Reisberg and de Wit, 2017; Collini, 2017; Trow, 2007). A vast influx of students and staff from diverse cultural, educational and socio-economic backgrounds has led to implications for learning, teaching, assessment and quality assurance (Carroll & Appleton, 2001; J. Ryan, 2012). Massification and internationalisation are by no means unrelated, with significant opportunities and challenges for higher education arising from increasing global interconnectedness (Rovai, 2009). The emergence of interest in academic integrity (defined and discussed in detail in section 2.3) is therefore a reaction of higher education adjusting to dealing with not just more students from diverse backgrounds but a change of societal role and increasing competition. None more so is this discourse on academic integrity more prevalent than around the topic of Chinese learners. In this section a discussion of the English and Chinese context for these changes will preface a more in-depth consideration of the Chinese learner and academic integrity in the international context.

2.1.1 Internationalisation and marketisation of English higher education

The English higher educational context provides a useful case study for academic integrity due to the close proximity of key events in the late nineties. While the impact of the internet and computers was growing following the introduction of the World Wide

Web in 1991, UK higher education was facing a crisis of funding. After the successful massification⁴ of higher education resulting from the *Robbins Report* (1963) the government faced the cartelisation of more elite institutions due to competition for public funds in the form of the Russell Group (1994). In response the *Dearing Report* (1997) introduced the prospect of student fee contribution in England following the example set in Australia and the US (Brennan, 2008; Russell Group, 2018; Watson, 2014). The introduction of student fees contributions was followed in quick succession by the first of Tony Blair's *Prime Minister's initiatives* (1999), which aimed to increase HE participation and to internationalise by increasing non-EU students numbers to 75,000 by 2005 (Lomer, 2018; OBHE, 2006). Blair's initiative was on the back of the handover of Hong Kong in 1997 and the reciprocal visits of British and Chinese heads of state in 1998, including specific educational and cultural exchange deals. The impact was immediate with university admissions recording a twelve-fold increase in applications from China by 2003 (Gu & Maley, 2008).

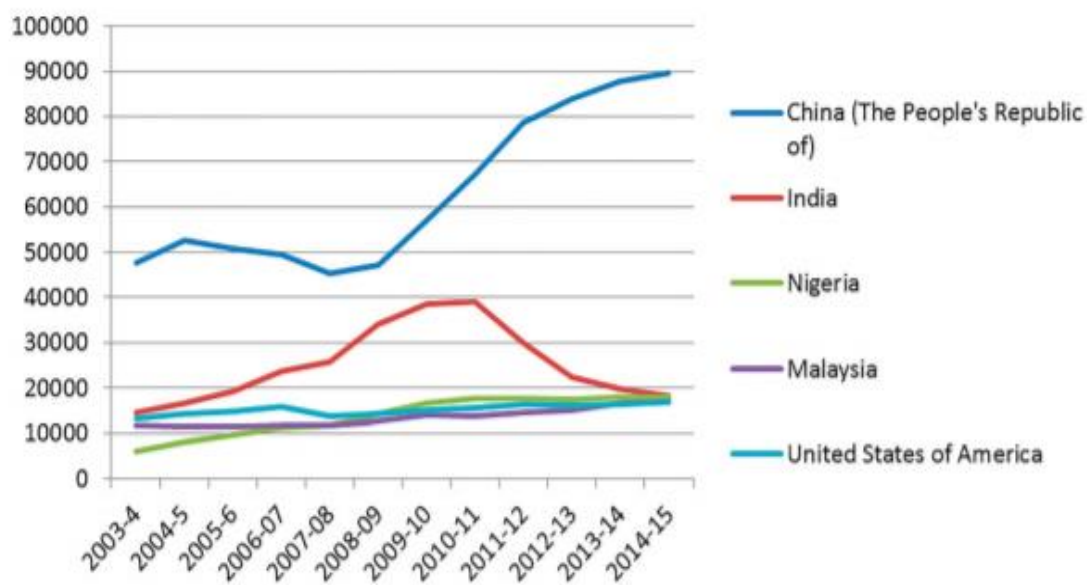
Due to the success of the first *Prime Minister's initiative* (1999), further action has been successful in attracting an increasing number of international students resulting in England being the second largest destination for non-EU students (UNESCO, 2018).⁵ Unlike British and European students, non-EU students pay full fees, making them a significant income source contributing more than £25 billion to the UK economy in 2017 alone (London Economics, 2018). As Tannock (2018) points out, universities have become 'addicted' to international student fees, which even gave universities a taste of the type of income they could gain from English students. This in turn would influence

⁴ Trow (2007) defines elite as <15% of population in higher education, massified as 16 to 49% and universal model as >50%.

⁵ For an overview of internationalisation of UKHE and the policy debates, see Lomer 2018.

the decision to introduce full fees for local students in 2012. In addition, the impact of international students on institutional rankings, led to their status as a prized commodity in the competition between institutions (Lomer, 2018). The result, since the rapid decline of Indian students studying in the UK after 2011, is that institutions have become overly dependent on Chinese students, as indicated in this graph by Lomer:

Figure 1 International students from top five sources in UK (Lorne, 2018, p319)



There is a sense, however, that the egalitarian and democratic ideals behind the concepts of massification and internationalisation have been colonised by the instrumental logic of marketisation (Collini, 2017; Marginson, 2011; Naidoo & Williams, 2015). The cheerleaders of marketisation believe that the private benefits will result in improved quality due to competition in higher education and, resultantly, benefits for the public. As Marginson (2011) points out, this is in line with the neoliberal agenda, the end result being the endless attempt to quantify performance and such abstract notions as excellence, as also highlighted in later work by Collini (2017). The argument, which is increasingly widespread for those in the academy, is: rather than improving quality,

competition leads to instrumentality by institutions, staff and students, stripping higher education of its value to society, and its integrity (Collini, 2017; Marginson, 2011; Naidoo & Williams, 2015). As Tannock (2018) argues, this has led to the marginalisation of international students and increasing the use of them as cash cows. As Jiang (2008) highlights, the latter approach is prevailing as “the internationalisation of HE has led to a ‘bums on seat’ approach to attract considerable private income from international students to compensate for the reduction in public funding under neoliberal state policies” (p.464).

The resulting high volume of high volume of Chinese learners on British campuses has resulted in a problematic view of the students as cash cows (Jiang, 2008; Philo, 2007). McGowan and Potter (2008) highlight the dilemma which Australian institutions face in dealing with such high numbers of learners from a different educational and linguistic background, while maintaining standards and academic integrity. They highlight that rather than internationalising the curriculum, staff are faced with dumbing down curriculum for the students and staff to cope. They also argue that while some Chinese learners may cope with a regular programme, the students who enrol on programmes abroad are not the educated elite but economic migrants looking to live in Australia. Resultantly they consider whether there should be a separate or extended pathway for Chinese learners. The authors also highlight the worrying finding that while these students may gain a Masters from Australian institutions, thus enabling them to be eligible for permanent status, it has been found that many of these graduates then go on to fail the language examination required for immigration. This raises serious concerns about the standards at Masters level, and these concerns have similarly been found by a survey of 382 staff at 60 different institutions in the UK (Macleod, Barnes, & Huttly, 2018). Macleod, Barnes and Huttly (2018) found that there was a significant deficit between the academic level of international students and the QAA expectations of

Masters study. Furthermore, while immigration may not be an issue in the UK context, the level of students who apply to UK programmes is influenced by the market advantage of having a one-year Masters, compared to two or three years in America, Australia and China (and Europe) (McGowan & Potter, 2008; Timms, 2008). Thus McGowan and Potter (2008) conclude:

“[...] that the continued stereotyping of CLs [Chinese Learners] as rote learners is likely to intensify pressures to further commodify education in these circumstances[...]. The challenges of educating the CL merely add a cross-cultural context to the dilemma of reconciling the University’s independence, priorities and direction with its changing sources of finance, resource limitations, academic reward systems, and undue emphasis on student evaluations of academic performance.” (p.182 -183)

International and national students alike are therefore now open to global competition, as Brennan (2008) makes clear “[national) systems of higher education can no longer be regarded as closed systems” (p.382). This is not just the picture in England, Australia and the US, as Wang (2009) emphasises; even higher education in the People’s Republic of China has become increasingly tied to the neoliberal agenda. The instrumental nature of this environment means that higher education becomes less about learning and more focused on credentialism and employability, leading to such problems as grade inflation and students viewing themselves as consumers of an educational product (Bunce, Baird, & Jones, 2017). While there is no question that higher education must be funded, the shift of responsibility from public to private funding has significant implications for student motivation.

Research into the impact of fee paying has found results which both challenge the notion that students view themselves as customers and reveals the tension between learning for learning's sake and grade orientation to gain employment in the future (Tomlinson, 2014). Bunce, Baird and Jones (2017), looking to explore this tension between consumer orientation and academic performance, found that there is a negative relationship between the two, with higher consumer orientation leading to lower academic performance and learner identity. The student-consumer may be less motivated by learning with the tendency to externalise responsibility for learning and consequently increase expectations of what staff and the institution should provide for them (Bunce et al., 2017; Finney & Finney, 2010; Tomlinson, 2014). When students do not achieve the grades they desire it has implications for their future earning potential and may feed back into 'student satisfaction' evaluations which may then lead to the dumbing down of courses and grade inflation (Bachan, 2017; Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2001). As students' motivation to study shifts, they move to a more surface or strategic approach.

Few teachers would be opposed to quality teaching, however the problem lies in how this is judged. Critics have argued that well intentioned transition in quality assurance discourses between the 1990s and 2000s have become invasive and have encroached on institutional autonomy and academic freedom leading to managerialism (Hoecht, 2006; Marginson, 2011; Naidoo & Williams, 2015). Within this culture shift, academic integrity becomes instrumentalised as an issue of quality assurance (Carroll & Appleton, 2001), rather than an issue of deep learning and communication. In this view academic integrity is associated with academic misconduct where a student is viewed as failing the quality standards of their programme. In this manner, academic integrity becomes viewed as credential integrity. As universities were increasingly selling a product and increasing international intake, they must ensure that all students reach the appropriate

standard, which is problematic with such diverse cohorts, marketisation and the influence of the internet.

This approach has implications for the notions of trust, fairness and responsibility. In dissecting the neoliberal landscape of English higher education, Naidoo and Williams (2015) underline that the focus on transparency actually represents an untrusting environment of surveillance. This poses the problem of autonomy not just for the institutions but also for the students. In terms of teaching, as the responsibility shifts increasingly to the teacher, they must attempt to make the educational process and particularly the assessment explicit for the student. Chandrasoma *et al.* (2004) detail the problems with this approach in terms of academic writing:

Unfortunately, the more pedagogically oriented strategies to be found in writing manuals and academic skills and language courses also do little more than scratch the surface of the issues by focusing largely on paraphrasing and referencing skills. (Chandrasoma *et al.*, 2004, p. 188)

In terms of the deep or contextual approach to knowledge embedded in the academic process, the question is whether this tacit process of development can be made explicit? This is particularly problematic for attempting to teach international students who come from educational systems which are heavily based in high stakes assessment that theoretically encourage a surface or absolute approach to knowledge (discussed in section 2.5). As the main source of international students in the UK is China, this provides a good case study for exploring these questions.

2.1.2 Chinese academic success: equality, integrity and freedom

*Building world-class universities has been the dream of generations of Chinese.*⁶ (Liu, 2015, p. 2)

The transformation of Chinese higher education has already been highly successful, with two of China's top institutions (Peking University and Tsinghua University) breaking into the top 100 of the Jiaotong World rankings, and other world rankings (ARWU, 2017). In 2016, China published 426,000 articles, surpassing the US as having the highest academic output in the world (Tollefson, 2018). The successive planning and efforts of Chinese government policies in addition to the hard work of students and scholars have achieved phenomenal results. However they have yet to reach the goal of equalling their Western, predominantly Anglophone counterparts (Ryan, 2011; Wang, 2017). In order to measure academic progress, China developed the Academic World Rankings of Universities (ARWU, better known as the Shanghai Jiaotong Rankings) in 2003, which has led to the development of other rankings and played a significant role in creating the 'publish or perish' culture in world academia (Erkkilä, 2013). Janette Ryan (2011), one of the leading experts on Chinese internationalisation, highlights that this success is of global benefit and has been the result of collaboration between East and West, rather than simply competition. Yet the success has not been without its drawbacks and critics, especially in relation to the balance of improvement of higher education, social mobility, and also integrity of academic output (Lewis, Di, & Ecklund, 2017; Q. Wang, 2017; R. Yang, 2016).

The instrumental nature of the goals put in place by the government has created competition and, as a result, tensions within the system. Due to the government's concentration on funding for top institutions, there is significant inequality, which leads to

⁶ Professor Liu Niancai, developer of the Academic World Rankings of Universities.

regional differences in the number of university places (Jiang, 2018). While examinations have always been challenging, the massification of HE has led to increased competition for university places. The work of Ka Ho Mok and colleagues provides a valuable insight into the impact of massification on the labour market, showing that rather than increase social mobility, in China it has had the effect of intensifying inequality (Mok & Wu, 2016). Those students who fail to attend a top university face lower quality education that consequently impacts job prospects. In this climate, as Brooks and Waters (2009) identify, students may see studying abroad as a second chance for success. However, despite this rising inequality, the government's new project to improve higher education, the World 2.0 Project (双一流), launched in 2015, the government is still firmly focused on the top end of higher education (Peters & Besley, 2018).

The top-down nature of higher education reform, while the envy of increasingly right-leaning politicians and commentators in the West (Zhao, 2014), has significant implications for academic freedom and integrity. Academic freedom has been a central tenet of university life dating back to medieval times, and is particularly enshrined in the Humboldtian ideal of the university (Karran, 2009; Marginson, 2014). As Karran (2009) highlights in his call for a *magna carta* on academic freedom, the term is ambiguous. He however refers to Wolff's (2000) definition that:

Academic freedom is the privilege individual academics may claim as the freedom to question and test received wisdom, to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing the jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions. (p.198)

Karran (2009) also ties this concept to the academic duty of scholars to act in the best interests of society. As Marginson (2014) has noted, public duty is the key goal of China's

academics. However, this notion of academic freedom faces particular problems in the Chinese context. He is keen to emphasise that Chinese universities have benefitted “from the focused drive, performance orientation and capacity-building agenda of a state highly committed to the development of research and higher education” (p.34). However this has mainly been in the sciences, with the more ethical and moral discussions of the social sciences, arts and humanities being tightly restricted. An example of this can be seen in the application process for the *Thousand Talents Plan*, which states that social science research must benefit “China and the socialist system, maintaining compliance with the Constitution, laws, regulations and policies of the People’s Republic of China.”

In his book *Who’s afraid of the Big Bad Dragon: Why China Has the Best (and Worst) Education System in the World*, Zhao Yong (2014) hypothesises why this tension with academic freedom holds China back from achieving true world class research. Zhao (2014) argues that the creativity necessary for Chinese universities to become the best in the world requires more autonomy. As long as academics are aiming to please their political leaders and not search for truth, the freedom and integrity of the system is flawed. Despite his praise for the system, Marginson (2014) also agrees with Zhao’s sentiment and accepts that “China’s system of dual university leadership, where the party secretary sits alongside the president, has ambiguous potentials for institutional autonomy and academic freedom” (p.33). Zha and Shen (2018), in their reflections on the Neo-Confucian relationship to academic freedom, are hopeful that “Chinese flavored academic freedom could emerge to allow Chinese institutions of higher education to become the world-class institutions to which they aspire” (p.452). However the recent turn of events is not so positive. In the face of an increasing crackdown on Western ideas and academic freedom by Premier Xi Jinping, even usually level-headed China commentators Altbach and de Wit (2018) note this as a cause for alarm, “[a]fter decades of attempting to create a more open academic environment, it is clear that China is

rapidly changing direction” (p.24). Rui Yang (2016) based in Hong Kong, and another high profile critic of Chinese higher education, notes that this political interference leads to a lack of creativity with top academics jockeying for political position rather than doing research. The consequence is a toxic, publish or perish bordering on corrupt academic culture, raising serious concerns about the quality and integrity of research (Yang, 2016).

2.1.3 Academic and research integrity in the Chinese context

This government driven success of higher education and research has not been without scandal, the same machinations which have motivated academics to carry out research and publish have also driven academic fraud and plagiarism. While Western universities are hardly innocent in this respect, in China large scale ghostwriting, plagiarism and fake journals are rife (Zhao, 2014). In 2017, for example, 107 articles by Chinese scientists were retracted by a single journal, *Tumor Biology*. Three Chinese authors, while also questioning the peer review process which allowed the articles to be published in the first place, pleaded that:

In order to realize its ambition of “world-class universities, world-class disciplines”, curtailing misconduct is the daunting challenge that China simply cannot ignore. Systematic and orchestrated efforts are needed to foster integrity among all stakeholders....(Hu, Yang, & Tang, 2018, p. 1)

Despite the success of Chinese universities and academics, the question of the quality and integrity of academia in China casts a long shadow. There are even rumours that the Doctorate in Law Premier Xi Jinping obtained from Tsinghua University, one of China’s leading institutions, was plagiarised or even ghostwritten (Asia Sentinel, 2013). The recent cases of academic misconduct play into an already established discourse on the integrity and the stereotype of the Chinese learner.

2.1.4 The Chinese learner paradox

Much ink has been spilled on the paradox of the Chinese learner, yet Western misconceptions of Chinese learners still remain (Kember, 2016). The Chinese learner paradox was first articulated by Biggs in 1992 and later published under the title *Approaches to learning of Asian students: A multiple paradox* (Biggs, 1996). A Chinese learner in this context is defined as a person of Chinese descent from mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan or Singapore (David A. Watkins & Biggs, 1996). The Chinese learner may also be encapsulated under the heading of Confucian heritage culture (CHC), grouping Chinese learners with those from Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Taiwan and, in some cases, Malaysia (O'Dwyer, 2017).

The paradox itself relates to the seeming contradiction between Western perceptions of good teaching and the teaching practices used in East Asia, especially China. The perceived negative aspects of the paradox are⁷:

- × Rote learning
- × Passivity
- × Lack of critical thinking
- × Lacking curiosity and creativity
- × Unaware of referencing/quotation conventions
- × Susceptible to plagiarism
- × Rudely persistent
- × Instrumental
- × Do not mix with other nationalities

⁷ Chinese learners as identified in Ryan and Louie 2007; Smith and Zhou 2009; Volent and Renshaw, 1996; Watkins and Biggs 2001, 1996.

- × Expecting pastoral and study
- × Dependent
- × Less successful with qualitative subjects

These are contrasted with the positive aspects:

- ✓ High achieving
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Obedient
- ✓ Persistent
- ✓ Hard working
- ✓ Able to memorise information easily
- ✓ Diligent note-takers

The essence of the paradox is that Chinese students are high achievers, particularly in mathematics and science, when the classroom standards are seemingly below those expected by Western teachers (Watkins & Biggs, 2001). Ryan and Louie (2007), who are highly critical of this false dichotomy of East and West, emphasise that these negative attributes represent “the antithesis of Western exemplars of academic virtue” (p.406).

As Kember (2016) describes in his reflections on the paradox, the interest in this topic was due to a number of Western academics arriving to teach in Hong Kong during the late 1980s. Faced with such entrenched negative perceptions of the (Hong Kong) Chinese students, the teaching staff wished to investigate the merit of this perception (Kember, 2016). Using Marton and Säljö’s (1976) model of surface and deep approaches

to learning (as discussed in section 2.5.3), Kember and Gow⁸ (1989, 1990), and Watkins and Biggs (1996; 1996), explored the paradox. Such was the interest in the topic that Marton himself, with colleagues from Hong Kong also investigated the paradox (Marton et al., 1996). The collective findings of these mixed methods studies by multiple research partnerships identified a connection between deep memorisation and high achievement, going against the usual Western perception of memorisation as a surface, rote learning technique. Marton and his colleagues went as far as to claim to have found the key to the paradox in the concept of deep memorisation (Marton et al., 1996), in which students memorise content with understanding rather than by rote.⁹

The claim of solving the paradox proved premature, however; in actuality the concept of the Chinese learner was introduced to a global audience as increasing numbers of Chinese students went to study abroad. Rather than have the intentional impact of improving understanding of Chinese learners, the paradox has developed into a generalisation of students from a diverse region, perpetuating what many agree is an unhelpful stereotype (Chan & Rao, 2010; Pennycook, 1996; Ryan & Louie, 2007; Saravanamuthu & Tinker, 2008; David A. Watkins & Biggs, 1996). The paradox is problematic in that it contains a crude or false dichotomy between Eastern (Confucian) and Western (usually Anglophone) cultures, placing them as static monocultures (Pennycook, 1996; Ryan & Louie, 2007; Watkins & Biggs, 2001). The paradox combined with staff who have little understanding of Chinese culture but faced with increasingly large numbers of Chinese students has led to misunderstandings. Ryan and Louie (2007), in their exploration of the false dichotomy, recommended that staff “should be

⁸ No relation to the author.

⁹ This is discussed in section 6.1.4 Memorisation and instrumental action.

aware of the differences and complexities within cultures before they examine and compare between cultures” (p. 404).

2.1.4.1 The paradox and academic integrity

One of the significant repercussions of the paradox is the stereotype of the Chinese plagiarist who lacks academic integrity. This element of the paradox is particularly puzzling as the Chinese learner is viewed as respectful, a key value of academic integrity. Furthermore they are also viewed as obedient and hardworking, which would appear to be directly opposed to plagiarism and cheating. In order to understand why this is the case, we must explore the historical context of the discourse before and the three constituent parts of the paradox identified by Watkins and Biggs (1996): culture, testing and language.

2.1.4.2 A question of context?

The paradox of the Chinese learner can be seen as part of a longer running discourse of the competition and conflict between Western and Eastern civilisations. Alastair Pennycook, in his 1996 article *Borrowing Others' Words: Text, Ownership, Memory, and Plagiarism*, sets the issue in the post-colonial context. Drawing on the accounts of educators of the 19th century, Pennycook paints a familiar image of the Chinese stereotype. Here he cites Frederick Stewart, a headmaster of Central School in Hong Kong, writing in the less politically correct parlance of the time:

The Chinese have no education in the real sense of the word. No attempt is made at a simultaneous development of the mental powers. These are all sacrificed to the cultivation of memory. (Pennycook, 1996, p. 219)

Pennycook's key point is that Chinese learners are seen through the colonial and post-colonial context. In this context, Chinese learners are unfortunately placed within a broader discourse of East versus West, a question of cultural superiority of different civilisations. From the Western perspective, the Chinese were first exoticised and praised for their advanced civilisation, then plundered and colonised by the Western empires after having rejected Christianity (Johns, 2016; L. H. Liu, 2004) This historical discourse would have been particularly heightened in Hong Kong in the 1990s, running up to the handover of the territory from the UK to China. The treatment by colonial powers is not something the People's Republic of China has forgotten in its rise as a global power and is covered in the compulsory political courses studied in Chinese universities (Tao Zhang, 2017). China's efforts to modernise, both in the revolutionary era (1912-49) and the post-reform and opening-up era (1978-present), have been entwined with Westernisation. The Chinese government has been particularly focused on advances in science and technology because these were seen as the tools with which the Western nations were able to surpass Chinese civilisation. The paradox of the Chinese learner is therefore interwoven with the *Needham Question* of why China, despite being technologically advanced up until the 16th century, did not beat the Europeans to a scientific revolution (Needham, 1969; Sivin, 1982, 2013). Rather than focusing on the individual learner, the question and the paradox seem to relate to the same issue: is there something within Chinese or Confucian culture which held East Asian nations back from modernity, thus implying that Western culture is superior?

2.1.4.3 A question of culture?

The cultural element of the paradox is problematic as there is the stereotype that plagiarism is allowed in Chinese or, more broadly, Confucian culture. It is important to note that the interest in Confucian culture has been heavily influenced by Hofstede's *cultural dimensions*. Especially relevant was the introduction of the fifth dimension of

Confucian dynamism, or long-term planning orientation, to explain the economic success of East Asian economies in the late 1980s. (Franke, Hofstede, & Bond, 1991; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). The simple form of the argument is that due to the hierarchical power structures, Confucianism instils collectivism and conformity in people, leading to the suppression of individualism in such societies (Scollon 1991 as cited in Connor, 1996). The question of integrity in Confucian culture is complicated by the significant focus on values. Accordingly a person should adhere to the Five Constants (*wu chang* 五常): benevolence, justice, proper rite, knowledge and integrity. These are combined with the Four Virtues (*sizi* 四字): loyalty, filial piety (obedience to superiors), contingency and righteousness. Of these virtues, filial piety is key to the suppression of individualism as subordinates should pay respect to superiors within the hierarchy resulting in more indirect forms of communication (Wong, 2017). As notions of authorship, and correspondingly plagiarism, are related to the notion of the individual, they therefore do not exist in the collective society. This implies that by copying the words of authorities, students are displaying integrity on the collective rather than the individual level, in the form of duty to superiors (Lund, 2004; Pecorari, 2015; Sowden, 2005).

Written like this, it is easy to see why this explanation is so seductive to teachers faced with large numbers of East Asian students. The explanation of why plagiarism is acceptable in Confucian society is, however, widely derided (O'Dwyer, 2017; J. Ryan & Louie, 2007; Saravanamuthu, 2008). In attempting to deflate the myth of the Confucian heritage learner, O'Dwyer (2017) highlights that rather than being labelled Confucian, learners from East Asia should be regarded as diverse. O'Dwyer emphasises that East Asian cultures, including China, have a heritage of different schools of thought, including Buddhism and Daoism which are seemingly discounted in this stereotype. He also notes that thinking of an East Asian student as Confucian is like thinking of a Anglo-European student as a Christian or Socratic (Tweed & Lehman, 2002). While one cannot deny the roots of these traditions, it is too complex to try to untwine the threads of culture. In the

case of Tweed and Lehman's research on CHC students, for example, they seem to have ignored the Buddhist and Confucian dialectic traditions which are similar to the Socratic method (2007). This indeed highlights a further issue with the Confucian heritage label, as Ryan and Louie (2007) observe: not only are the people under this designation diverse but "in the last century interpretations of Confucianism, particularly of Confucian education, have undergone transformations that have at times rendered any commonly accepted interpretation meaningless" (p.410). As a result, while seemingly simple explanations, such as Hofstede's (1988) *Confucian Dynamism*, may be attractive, they can be contradictory and flawed (Fang, 2003). For similar reasons Saravanamuthu denounces the Chinese learner label as "inherently problematic" on scientific and anthropological levels, not just for East Asian learners but for learners from different parts of China.

In terms of modern mainland China, the government has attempted to reintroduce Confucian values to post-Cultural Revolution China, in which Chairman Mao attempted to eradicate Confucian influence from society (Tong Zhang & Schwartz, 1997). As Gow (2017) has observed, at the 2012 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the introduction of Hu's *Core Socialist Values* (*shehui zhuyi hexin jiazhi guan* 社会主义核心价值观) bear a striking resemblance to Confucian values. The attempt to reintroduce values to society is a reaction to the rapidly changing society in the drive for modernisation. In exploring the neo-Confucian interest in contemporary China, Zhang (2014) highlights that people are searching for connection in an increasingly alienating neoliberal, individualised and globalised world resulting from the economic and ideological transition "from the collective-oriented socialism to the post-reform market-driven post-socialism...which makes the quest for personal happiness and self-realisation a marked story of post-socialist China" (p.37-38). As Ci Jiwei (2014) argues, rapid economic development without democracy is the cause of a moral crisis and

undercurrent of social instability in China today, with the Tiananmen incident providing an example of the reaction to this change, particularly in universities.

2.1.4.4 A question of language?

The debates around the democratisation of China are too deep to cover in this thesis, however, they illustrate the uneasy relationship which the Chinese government has had with Western ideas in the modernisation of Chinese society (Ci, 2014). None have these been more apparent than in the case of language and education in China. In the already chronicled development and internationalisation of Chinese higher education, the flow of scholars and ideas has been key to modernisation and the success of educational reform but have also created tension. In this development the study of English by Chinese students both in and outside China has been said to be a “barometer of modernization” (Ross, 1992, p. 239). With English as the *lingua franca* of trade and academic publishing, modernisation has led to a significant focus on English language training in China to the extent that most students in China will have some level of language instruction during their schooling (Jin & Cortazzi, 2002; Xu, He, & Deterding, 2017). While post-colonial aspects of such vast English language learning, as noted by Pennycook (1996, 2002) can be appreciated, Xiaoye You’s (2010) chronicle of English language teaching in China, *Writing in the Devil’s tongue*, argues that English has been decolonised, echoing the arguments of World or Global Englishes (Crystal, 2003). This poses English not as a language of native speakers imposed on non-native speakers but as a global *lingua franca*, which belongs to all as a common international language (Jenkins, 2014).

The global spread of English and its extensive study in China provide yet a further element of the paradox, as laid out here by Maxwell, Curtis and Vedagna (2008):

The unique educational and cultural experiences of Asian students studying abroad, coupled with linguistic difficulties, has been the basis for the belief that Asian international students tend to be more prone to plagiarism. (p. 32)

While it is certainly difficult, if not impossible, to separate language from culture, studying in a second language has been seen to play a role in plagiarism, not only by Chinese learners but also other East Asian learners (Rear, 2017a) and European students (Pecorari, 2008).

The debates on plagiarism by students using English as a second language (ESL) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP) bridge the line between academic integrity, academic literacy and also the intertextual debates (Pecorari, 2015). In terms of language, Diane Pecorari (2008, 2015), has carried out linguistic analysis of plagiarism to understand the phenomenon. Building on Howard's (1999, discussed in section 2.4) concepts of cheating, non-attribution and patchwriting, Pecorari adds the distinctions of "textual plagiarism" (language re-use) and "proto-typical plagiarism" (cheating). Pecorari places the distinction between the two as the difference being whether their intention is to deceive. In the case of patchwriting, where students have reused language from various texts to create their own essay, this could be intentional or unintentional. These are highly similar to Chandrasoma, Thompson and Pennycook's (2004) distinctions between non-transgressive and transgressive intertextuality (also discussed in 2.4). Pecorari (2008) argues that in the case of second language learners it is more likely to be unintentional, especially at first, when language ability and confidence are low, and also, like native new speaking students, where they are not aware of the expectations of the writing context. With this line of thinking, it is argued that second language learners are at a linguistic disadvantage as they enter a new learning context, such as university, and therefore more prone to plagiarism.

2.1.4.5 A question of writing and rhetoric?

Despite the linguistic focus on plagiarism, which is constructive in relieving the stereotypical views of Chinese learners, the issue of language cannot be fully separated from questions of culture in relation to writing. In terms of writing, there is the need to avoid monolithic and static views of writing culture. Analyses of writing and rhetoric have developed greatly since the first researchers were working in China after reform and opening up (Connor, 2004; Flowerdew & Li, 2007). In the field of contrastive and, latterly, intercultural rhetoric, the work of Kaplan (1966) has been instrumental in forming misconceptions of Chinese writing styles and relating these to “cultural thought patterns” (p. 21). In the figure below we see Kaplan’s representation, in the parlance of the time, with Chinese writing viewed as “oriental”. In terms of a post-colonial view of this figure, there is clear exoticisation of the *Other* and the (implied) superiority of English writing.

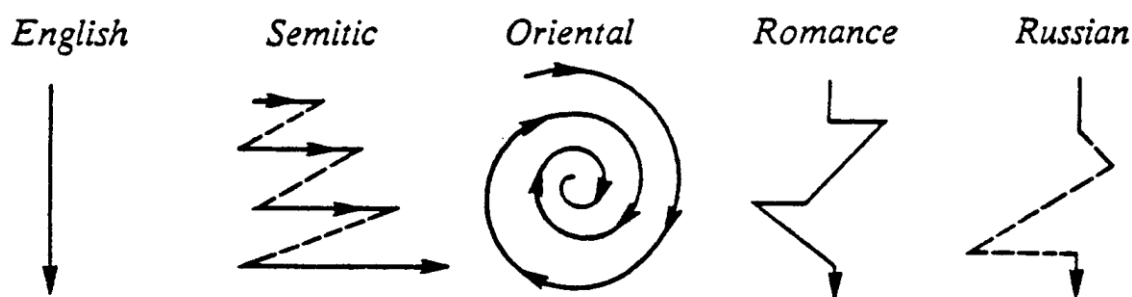


Figure 2 Patterns of written discourse Kaplan, 1966, p.14

This “turning and turning in a widening gyre” (p. 17), has become a common but perhaps misleading map of thinking and rhetoric in the ESL and EAP classrooms. As Connor would later point out, Kaplan would draw heavily upon the “eight-legged essay” (*bāgǔwén* /八股文) or *Bagu* as the model for Chinese style of writing. The *Bagu* was the dominant form of writing in the Chinese Imperial Examinations (*kējǔ*/科举) from the mid-15th to

early 20th century (Connor, 1996), therefore becoming “inseparably linked to neo-Confucian orthodoxy” (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012, p. 77). There is little doubt that the eight-legged essay has been an influence on writing in China and it is certainly a fascinating rhetorical topic to explore, however there are serious questions regarding its relevance to modern Chinese writing (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012; Mohan & Lo, 1985).

As attested to by Bloch (2012), the paper *Contrastive Rhetoric: An American Writing Teacher in China* (Matalene, 1985), is a seminal yet divisive text that is familiar to many ESL teachers who face Chinese learners. Perhaps it rings true with so many of these teachers as Matalene only taught for one semester at Shanxi University, and while she has some interesting insights, she falls into the trap – which Ryan and Louie (2007) advise to avoid – of drawing surface interpretations of cultures. She not only provides a stereotypical and mystical view of Chinese writers in a 3,000 year tradition, but also offers generalisations of Western rhetoric, stating, for example, “Western rhetoric is only Western” (p.790), by which she may only be referring to a narrow North American view of writing. While at once criticising Kaplan’s paragraph level approach to linguistic analysis of ESL learners, Matalene evokes both the importance of memorisation in and the influence eight-legged essay on Chinese literacy, which:

...requires staggering feats of memorization has profoundly affected the nature of Chinese discourse as well as the content of social interaction. In China, the hierarchy of culture, language, and rhetoric has a powerful coherence or internal logic, and because this hierarchy is so different from our own, Chinese culture often appears seamless, mysterious, and impenetrable. (Matalene, 1985, p. 79)

In terms of issues in modern Chinese culture, Matalene’s view does provide a rather outmoded view of pedagogy, focusing on the importance of calligraphy and feats of

memory and metaphor usage. As Bloch (2012) highlights, the Chinese scholars who he shared this paper with found it rather offensive. This is not to say that Matalene does not make some salient points.

Mohan and Lo (1985), on the other hand, publishing their work only a few months before Matalene, take a different, less exoticised view from Matalene and Kaplan. They argue that “[w]hat may be more critical” than language or memorisation “is the student’s general level of development in composition” (p.517). As they, and also Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012), point out, while influential the eight-legged essay was only one style of writing in China of the *wenyan* classical style (白话) which was replaced in the May 4th Movement (1919) by the *baihua* modern Chinese style (白话). In addition to this, Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012), note the directness of the modern style, with reference to a review of English language textbooks used in China. A quote from a commonly used textbook which advises “language should be used to communicate and exchange ideas”, and that the use of language should be “precise, concise, vivid, and simple” (Liu X. et al. 1979 as cited in Kirkpatrick and Xu, 2012, p. 198). If, as Mohan and Lo and Kirkpatrick and Xu both indicate, the modern style of Chinese writing and rhetoric has changed, why do these stereotypical views of Chinese learners remain? The answer, they suggest, may lay in the in the purpose and process of education in China, particularly examinations.

2.1.4.6 A question of testing?

In his 1870 article *Competitive Examinations in China*, the inaugural President of Imperial University of Peking¹⁰ and famed sinologist, W.A. Martin (1870), deemed the Chinese

¹⁰ Which became Peking University or Beida.

Imperial Examination (*keju* 科举) to be China's fifth great invention (1870).¹¹ At Martin's recommendation, the *Keju* was influential in the development of the US civil service examinations, as it was in countless other countries, including famously the UK adding it to the list of borrowings from Chinese culture (Bodde, 1948).¹² While the *keju* may have afforded "the best method of ascertaining the qualifications of candidates for government employment" (1870, p. 70), the *keju* and China's legacy of testing has been accused of being responsible for hindering its scientific development (De Saeger, 2008). As already noted, the eight-legged essay had been the dominant form of assessment in the *keju*. In the Chinese revolution, the Imperial Examination and especially the essay were derided by Chinese scholars such as Zhu (1934) who stated "as everyone knows, [the eight-legged essay] was a senseless thing, but the ruling classes used it to engage the intellectuals [...] talent selection became talent obliteration" (as cited in Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012, p. 77).

De Saegar (2008) explores the role of the *keju* in the *Needham Question* (as mentioned in 2.1.4.2), arguing that the examination acted as an epistemological obstacle to scientific thinking. Invoking Bachelard's philosophy of science, De Saegar splits knowledge between common knowledge, which is static, empirical and instrumental and scientific knowledge, which is theoretical and rapidly changing. The difference between these conceptions, according to Bachelard (1975 as cited in De Saeger, 2008) is an "epistemological rupture" needed to achieve scientific knowledge, or a break from the authoritative view of a subject. With the *Keju's* attention to particular rhetorical style and the memorisation of a set body of texts, which included the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics* of Confucian literature (四书五经) (Elman, 2013). While it may have been suitable for choosing the best candidates for government, it was not conducive to science.

¹¹ Evoking China's creative, scientific past, with the inventions of gunpowder, paper, the compass and the printing press.

¹² Hence why civil servants are referred to as mandarins.

Over the thousand years of the examination, science and especially mathematics had been covered in the exam at one time or another, however reforms had made the topics more orthodox (Elman, 2013). As Ellman (2013) details, students who failed the *keju* may turn their hands to science as alternative to civil service, yet the Imperial government and scholars were not primarily concerned with its development, instead preferring officialdom and rituals of power. While scientific advances were being made, they were not being discussed and shared widely through scientific literature as they were in Europe (De Saeger, 2008).

The “epistemological obstacle” posed by De Saegar (2008) bears a startling resemblance to the debates around the impact of high stakes examinations on students in modern China. The successor to the *keju* is the National Higher Education Entrance Examination, better known as the *Gaokao* (高考). Initially introduced in 1952 it was reintroduced in 1978 and welcomed by Chinese students as a meritocratic opportunity to enter university, after institutions had been highly politicised and essentially shut down as academic institutions during the Cultural Revolution (Muthanna & Sang, 2015). The *Gaokao* is not simply a reworking of the *keju*, it does not utilise eight-legged essays nor is it based on the Confucian classics. The exam is divided into two streams focusing on social science (political sciences, history and geography) and natural sciences (physics, chemistry and biology), with all students studying the compulsory subjects of Chinese, mathematics¹³ and foreign languages. Up until 2014, English was the foreign language until reforms shifted the focus as “English fever” reached a watershed in Chinese education, leading to the introduction of other options¹⁴ (Wang & Li, 2014; Wikipedia, 2018b). The examination is taken over days and lasts nine hours, with nearly 10 million students taking the exam annually (Wikipedia, 2018b).

¹³ Students in the natural science stream take an extended mathematics stream, including calculus and hyperbolas.

¹⁴ Russian, Japanese, German, French or Spanish.

In detailing why Chinese education is both the best and worst in the world, Zhao (2014) cites the *Gaokao*, and more generally “naked” centralised testing as a key obstacle to China’s scientific development and also the quality of life in China. Calls for reform are widespread and the government is reacting, with the change of language requirements being a major reform in recent years (You & Hu, 2013). The issue of reform, however, is not simply pedagogical; the dilemma of China’s modernisation project is whether culture change can keep up with economic development (Ci, 2014). One significant problem in regard to this is the growing inequality in China which has hindered attempts to diversify the curriculum, as students in the richer regions of the east coast have access to better resources and university places (Gow, 2016; G. Zhang, Zhao, & Lei, 2012). These factors add to the pressure cooker environment and damage the image of the system as meritocratic and fair.

This is not to say the system is not effective, in recent PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), Shanghai has been voted top for mathematics, reading and science (Tan, 2017). These results however are not without controversy and significant implications. Firstly, by only entering Shanghai into the assessment, there is admission of the inequality within the Chinese system (Tan, 2017). More significant for this study is the negative impact of the testing culture, which other countries including the UK are aiming to emulate (Sellar & Lingard, 2013). Zhao (2014) compares the problem of reform of the testing culture in China with a prisoner’s dilemma, in which whilst “new policies might bring better education for all [by relieving pressure], no player in the education game is willing to take the risky first step” (p.155). The evocative language of students as ‘prisoners’ with parents and teachers acting as prison guards may not be far-fetched. The pressure to succeed is extreme, as the *Gaokao* is often labelled the toughest examination in the world (Shen Lu & Griffiths, 2016). Student breakdowns are common, as is suicide (Bregnbæk, 2016; Muthanna & Sang, 2015; Zhao, 2014). Bregnbæk (2016)

relates the issue of suicide in educational contexts, with reference to the work of Wu Fei (2005) on suicide in rural China, to social justice and fairness, and it represents what is a complex reaction to the tensions between modernity and tradition in Chinese society. It is important to note that the testing culture in China is not only restricted to *Gaokao*. Testing is pervasive in the education system particularly at undergraduate level in China, where the exam focus remains and even moves to the Graduate School Entrance Examination (*kaoyan* 考研) (He, 2010) or the modern National Civil Service Examination (*guokao* 国考) (Liu, 2016).

2.1.4.7 A question of cheating and plagiarism?

Cheating has been a theme of education in China since the days of the *keju*, when students were discovered to wear concealed silk jackets covered with complete texts written in miniature script (Suen & Yu, 2006). The modern picture is no different. Ensuring the integrity of the *Gaokao*, for example, has proved incredibly problematic. National law enforcement is involved in policing cheating behaviours which have become widespread and increasingly high tech. A recent example saw test-taking impersonators (nicknamed sharpshooters) using plastic finger coverings with false fingerprints to beat the biometric technology used to identify candidates (Zuo, 2018). In 2013, parents and students attacked teachers in Hubei province for stopping them from cheating, resulting in the tightening of security in exams, including heavy prison sentences for cheats (Li, 2013).

In terms of the core values of academic integrity, cheating is problematic as it shows a breakdown in trust and fairness. While keeping in mind the scale of the exam and that there are no open statistics on cheating, high security and surveillance of test takers indicate that the authorities perceive a problem. Close surveillance of exams may have an impact on the students' externalisation of responsibility for integrity in the examination. The paradoxical relationship between internalisation and externalisation of responsibility

(a subject discussed in section 2.3) is not restricted to the exam itself, as students commonly report starting to focus on the test from around age 12, with the majority of their time, including weekends, being devoted to cramming for the exam. In Muthanna and Sang's (2015) study of Chinese undergraduates' recollections of their *Gaokao* experience, one student recalls spending a year away from family members in their room studying: "I felt also like I am living a world of my own, a world full of misery as all of them [parents, friends and teachers] expect me to achieve the best score. That was a lot of pressure on me!" (p.6). Again this isolation, being locked away, recalls Zhao's (2014) prisoner comparison.

The intense internal pressure felt by the students in preparing for the exam is matched by the paradoxical external support and pressure from society. The teachers and parents of students seemingly provide the sustenance and learning environment for students to spend most of their waking hours studying. Watkins and Biggs (1996) admit in their analysis of the Chinese learner that the length of time that students study for examinations is a key factor in their success. This issue was highlighted in the BBC's (BBC, 2015) *Chinese School* experiment. While ethically questionable, a British school tested Chinese teaching techniques against their usual approach, and although the Chinese approach produced higher marks, a key factor was significantly longer days and less time spent with their family.

The impact on pedagogy and teaching is also significant. Li and Edwards (2013) highlight how the environment provides teachers with little room for creative and active learning. The test focus requires guiding students through the set knowledge in textbooks while acting as moral and motivational support. The significant task becomes memorisation from a textbook for a number of different subjects, resulting in quantity rather than quality of knowledge. The pedagogical implications of this are evident in the testing of English

language and writing in China. While many students will complete a dissertation at undergraduate level, this will usually be a symbolic contribution to an undergraduate degree which will not impact their grade and so may not be rigorously checked in terms of academic integrity (Carroll, 2008). The core of the marks awarded for a degree are still based on examinations (Hu & Lei, 2012). There is also evidence that Masters dissertations are not rigorously checked for plagiarism. A study of a corpus of 733 dissertations using Turnitin software carried out by Wang (2014) at Suzhou University, found that over 50% of the dissertations contained what could be considered significant plagiarism. As Hu & Sun (2017), indicate in their study of Chinese university policies on academic integrity, the institutional approach is “dominated by moralistic and regulatory discourses and characterized by the conspicuous lack of an educative approach to plagiarism” (p. 56). This is not only a policy issue, but also a pedagogical one as students and teaching staff are traditionally not involved in the intertextual practices of academic writing (Lei & Hu, 2014b).

This returns the argument to Mohan and Lo’s (1985) contention that students in China struggle due to their lack of familiarity and experience with writing and composition. In the specific terms of English for Academic Purposes in China, this is a process in development, after years of teaching English for general purposes (Ye, 2017). Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) point out “the irony that the majority of Chinese university students are now given more instruction on how to write in English rather than in how to write in Chinese” (p.205). The impact of the testing focus, however, is evident in the College English Test (CET), a compulsory requirement at undergraduate level in China. This test does not engage in the explicit intertextual nature of academic writing in the way that a fully referenced essay does. Students are tested on short writing passages and judged primarily on structure, vocabulary memorisation and grammatical accuracy (O’Morrow, 2017; Ye, 2017). Like the preparation for the *Gaokao*, the CET tests utilise textbooks

rather than multiple sources. As a result, despite studying English for over half of their young lives, Chinese students still have limited English, which becomes evident when they study abroad (Luo & Garner, 2017). Although reforms are in place to transition to an EAP approach, the research of Luo and Garner (2017) shows that many teachers, particularly those who have not studied abroad, are neither competent nor confident enough to teach academic writing, and resort to more traditional methods.

2.1.4.8 A question of academic integrity?

In matters where the intertextual implications of academic writing and academic integrity are more apparent, the Chinese context provides further evidence of the paradox. What is clear from the research in this area is that Chinese academia is in a process of transition since reform and opening-up (Luo & Hyland, 2016). The fast pace of change and focus on catching up with the dominant, mostly Anglophone, universities has created many success stories but also an environment where there are serious concerns about the quality and integrity of academic work. The pressure of competition and inequality of opportunity for graduate students and academics are similar to those experienced by high school and undergraduate students in the system (Chen & Macfarlane, 2016; C. J. Zhang & Zhu, 2016) and not entirely unrelated. As a result of the significant examination focus leading up to Masters study in China, academic writing is neglected and there have been numerous calls for improved writing pedagogy (Lei & Hu, 2014a). The result of the combination of lack of academic writing and composition experience, with writing in a second language and unrealistic publication expectations, results in a spectrum of outcomes ranging from legitimate, world class research and publications, through to questionable practices and outright fraud (Hvistendahl, 2013; Luo & Hyland, 2016; Xia, 2017).

Judging by media attention to widespread research fraud, it may be implied that Chinese academic success is solely the result of cheating the system. Research by Chinese researchers and into Chinese academic publication practices does not support this charge, as there is significant internationally recognised, high quality research being carried out. Due to the hierarchical and also political nature of universities in China, there are differences in academic culture which may be deemed questionable by international standards. The work of Joel Bloch on plagiarism and intellectual property in second language writing with a specific focus of Chinese scholars has highlighted Chinese citation and translation practices. Working with Chinese author Ling Chi to compare Chinese and English citation practices (Bloch & Chi, 1995), the authors' analysis of 60 Chinese articles and 60 English articles proved that, despite the claims that plagiarism was acceptable in Chinese culture and that Chinese authors would not cite sources, the Chinese articles and articles in English by Chinese authors did contain citations. What is significant is that although the Chinese articles included citations, they were significantly fewer in number than their English language counterparts and also less up-to-date, especially in the social sciences. Some of this contrast may be attributed to reduced access to up-to-date texts in China at the time, yet despite the quantitative differences they found no difference in the rhetorical function of the citations. These differences, however, could be interpreted as a lack of rigour and integrity, yet Bloch and Chi (1995) found no evidence to support this.

2.1.4.9 A question of translation?

In addition to citation practices, Bloch (2001) draws attention to the 'translation culture' which has developed in China since reform and opening up. In this culture of catch-up, translators of foreign publications have served a valuable role in the spread of information and become recognised and rewarded in their own right, resulting in a blurring of the lines between translation and original authorship (Bloch, 2001). This can

result in problems, for example in the case of Wang Mingming a professor at Peking University who was authorised to translate the work of American anthropologist Haviland, but later accused of plagiarism for including sections of translated works in his own publications (Blum, 2009). A significant issue seems to be that the lines of authorship are blurred by the linguistic issues of writing in English as a second language or translating into Chinese. The former of these issues is addressed by the work of Li Yongyan who has written extensively on the subject of ESL academic publication in China (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Y. Li, 2007, 2012; Y. Li & Flowerdew, 2009). Her qualitative work exploring, among other subjects, the practices of graduate students writing for publication and the support from their supervisors sheds valuable light on the authorship process in China. As Li (2012) and numerous other authors emphasise (for example Luo & Hyland, 2016; Zhang & Zhu, 2016), the requirement for Chinese graduate scholars to publish in Web of Knowledge science citation index (SCI) in order to graduate and later further their careers creates unrealistic expectations for young academics. As publication is financially incentivised, academics can earn significant income which may even surpass their academic salary, creating inequality (Luo and Hyland, 2016).

In the case of graduate student supervision, Li (2012) documents the practices of a biochemistry professor assisting students in the preparation of the journal articles they require for graduation. Due to time constraints, the supervisor is faced with significant textual borrowing by students which would be viewed by the journal as plagiarism and as a result has to “rebuild” sentences. By utilizing the concept of textual borrowing, Li invokes the work of Chandrasoma, Thompson and Pennycook (2004) and Pecorari (2008), opting to view the novice non-native speaking students’ mistakes as a non-transgressive intertextuality rather than plagiarism. While the ideas and research detailed in the papers had been carried out by the students, the supervisor, (who is an internationally recognised expert having published widely in English despite having

never studied abroad) acts as an editor and proofreader to prepare the text for publication. In this way the supervisor is acting much in the manner of a 'literacy broker' (Lillis & Curry, 2010; Luo & Hyland, 2016) assisting the student to gain publication. Li's (2012) findings are particularly significant however, as the supervisor starts with a "presumption of guilt" that the student has lifted text and opts to rewrite the text and rarely receives any feedback from students, who simply accept the revisions. Li indicates that the supervisor's students have not received sufficient compositional experience to gain the publication expected of them and the supervisor takes responsibility for this. As it was in the interest of student and supervisor to meet the unrealistic government requirement for publication, the supervisor felt it was necessary to complete the papers for the students, which could be considered a highly questionable practice (Li, 2012).

Li's (2012) work raises similar questions to those posed earlier regarding the preparation of the students to write in Chinese education, in addition to the requirement to write in English. As a result there is a spectrum of legitimate and illegitimate services available to scholars and students ranging from legitimate third party support to ghost writers and fake journals (Hvistendahl 2013). Luo and Hyland (2016) have highlighted the role of linguistic brokers in Chinese academia with English language experts, who have often studied abroad supporting scholars to publish. While these legitimate services may certainly be needed as long as English is the lingua franca of academia, Guangwei Hu and Jun Lei (2012; Lei & Hu, 2014a) have called for a raised awareness of Anglo-American intertextual practices in Chinese education, suggesting the issue is 'pedagogically amenable' rather than deeply ingrained in culture (Lei & Hu, 2014, p. 50). As Hu and Sun (2017) conclude on their exploration of Chinese university academic integrity policies, it may be the case of China having to develop a more pedagogical discourse on plagiarism, similar to Kaposi and Dell's (2012) intertextual and developmental discourses (discussed in 2.4.7). This would however require a shift in

assessment practices, which as we have seen in this chapter, are quite deeply ingrained in Chinese culture.

As Biggs himself admits “[t]he school...is a microcosm, a subsystem within the overall cultural system” (Biggs, 1996, p. 190). Moreover, Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) connect the lack of writing practice with the problematic nature of open academic writing, particularly in the social sciences and humanities in which writing may be of a more political nature, noting it is:

[C]urrently impossible for civic-minded Chinese to engage in constructive public debate... The practical writing taught to Chinese majors aims to serve the State and bureaucracy rather than constructively challenge it. (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012, p. 206)

Therefore, while attitudes to plagiarism are certainly changing, it may be a case of political reform that will result in pedagogical reform that is necessary to ensure academic integrity in China. The experiences of Chinese students and academics involved in the intense ‘publish or perish’ culture in Chinese universities highlights the role of the government in the issues related to academic integrity. Chen and MacFarlane (2016) call attention to the paradoxical relationship of the state in creating conditions which are not conducive to academic integrity while at the same time attempting to reform and regulate academic ethics. This is an issue also raised by Zhao (2014) in addressing how China can reform education and end the “prisoner’s dilemma” which it finds itself in. Zhao argues that centralised state control of schools and universities hinders innovation in China and by creating external targets, such as test scores, citation targets and university rankings and calls for more educational autonomy. While rankings and the significant funding act as incentives, the inequality of pay for academics and opportunity for

students creates a highly competitive toxic atmosphere where the margin between success and failure is slim. Similar to Zhao, Chen and Macfarlane (2016) argue that self-regulation of academic integrity is essential to tackle the problems, however this indicates that matters of integrity are deeply related to academic freedom and the internal motivation to carry out research rather than the corrupting influence of external instrumental incentives and academics competing for political position rather than carrying out research (R. Yang, 2016). As such reforms may be interpreted as Westernisation, the current political climate, with Premier Xi Jinping's move to re-establish Marxist principles and restrict the influence of Western values in Chinese society (Du, 2018), may hinder reforms, and integrity may continue to be an issue.

2.2 Chinese Learners Abroad

I agree that we should send more people to study abroad, mostly in natural sciences. Let's send tens of thousands, instead of eight or ten . . . Deng Xiaoping, 1978 (as cited in Zhao, 2014, p. 84)

There are at current count nearly 850,000 Chinese students studying abroad (UNESCO, 2018). One must wonder how significant this student migration is in terms of the history of cultural interaction. Chinese student migration has been intrinsically related to the national goals of improving higher education in the opening up and reform era (post-1978 *gaige kaifang* 改革开放) (Liu, 2016; Q. Wang, 2017). The intention of the Chinese government's policy of encouraging students to study abroad has always been for international Chinese graduates to return with expertise for national economic development (Altbach & Ma, 2011; Saxenian, 2005). Since the late 1990s, Chinese government has pursued deals with many countries to allow increasing numbers of Chinese students to privately finance their study abroad (Turner & Acker, 2017). This was part of the massification and diversification of higher education in response to the Asian financial crisis (1997). With economic pressure and high unemployment, allowing

more students to study at university would tap into the rising wealth of the middle class and also remove these students from the employment market (Postiglione, 2011). The result, highlighted by Gu and Schweisfurth (2015), is that there are two distinct groups of students studying abroad: the educated elite (i.e. students funded by scholarships), and the socio-economic elite (i.e. mostly self-funded students).

The opportunity for international study has however resulted in a 'brain drain' of Chinese talent (Huang, 2003; Zweig, Fung, & Han, 2008) with only a quarter of those studying abroad returning between 1987 and 2005 (Mohrman, 2008). Government initiatives, such as the 2008 Thousand Talents (*qianren jihua* 千人计划) programme (Yi, 2011) aim to attract returnee scholars with incentives. In response to these programmes, the recent global financial downturn and growing prosperity in China, more students have returned home (Guo, Porschitz, & Alves, 2013). This, in addition to the 2008 financial crisis, was highly successful in reversing the brain drain, with nearly half a million returning in 2017 (MOEPRC, 2018). With what Saxenian (2005) terms 'brain circulation', the knowledge and skills acquired by returnees abroad are now filtering back into the country (Gill, 2016). Returnees are referred to positively as *haigui* (海归) a pun on sea turtles who return home to lay their eggs or negatively as *haidai* (海带) meaning seaweed or kelp gathering at the shore (Gill, 2016; Zweig & Han, 2010). The former are successful in gaining employment based on their qualifications and experience abroad, and the latter are less successful in China's competitive job market, remaining unemployed or taking lower level work (Zweig & Han, 2010).

2.2.1 Chinese learners in transition

The effect on Anglophone institutions of this vast influx of Chinese students has been reflected in the literature and the approach of institutions to help accommodate international students (Ryan & Louie, 2007). Discussions of the concept of plagiarism, of cultural difference and learning deficits have given way to a developmental discourse

aimed at accommodating students from varying educational backgrounds into internationalised institutions (Carroll & Ryan, 2005b; Flowerdew & Li, 2007). The transition to studying in a different environment is a challenge for individuals and institutions. Having so many students of East Asian, and particularly Chinese origin, in Anglophone institutions brings the issue of the Chinese learner into full relief as the grains of truth in the stereotype lead to generalisations of a diverse body of students. These students expose problems not of Chinese education but also issues with the process of internationalised higher education itself. As a result Ryan and Carroll (2005) use the metaphor of international students as the 'canaries in the coalmine' of higher education, meaning they are an early warning system for wider issues in the sector. In terms of Chinese learners, there does seem to be an issue with students being reported as performing less well in undergraduate degrees (Swain, 2014) but also being disproportionately represented in the misconduct statistics (Cheung, Wu, & Huang, 2016; Mostrous & Kenber, 2016; Qi, 2015).

2.2.2 Benefits and positive experiences of studying abroad

Despite the negative perceptions in the press and the exacerbated stereotype of the Chinese learner which lingers on campuses, it is not the case that all students are failing or committing plagiarism. Considering the challenge of studying abroad, particularly with the linguistic written and spoken difference between English and Chinese, Chinese students experience significant benefits from studying abroad, including becoming noted academics in their field (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). One such example, Professor Qing Gu, has carried out a number of mixed methods research projects on the experiences of mainland Chinese students with various research partners and has looked "beyond the accusation of plagiarism" to the positive change which occurs when studying abroad (Gu, 2011; Gu & Brooks, 2008; Gu & Maley, 2008; Gu & Schweisfurth, 2006, 2015; Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010; Schweisfurth & Gu, 2009).

In a 15-month longitudinal study of ten Chinese Masters students in the UK, Gu and Brooks (2008) found that while students did face issues of plagiarism, it was due to unintentional plagiarism and a signal of a development while studying abroad that:

[...] involves the students in on-going self-adjustment, consciously or subconsciously, to the values and beliefs of teaching and learning that are anchored in the local context. (Gu & Brooks, 2008, p. 350)

In later research with Schweisfurth (2015), Gu combined a survey of 652 Chinese alumni of British Masters programmes who have returned to China with select interviews, to explore the influence of the study abroad experience. Their research findings provide fresh and positive insight into the benefits of studying abroad from Chinese learners who had spent a varying number of years in the UK. These benefits include intercultural benefits for the alumni who often find work in the transnational context of international companies after returning home. The study clearly highlights the obvious language and communication skills which a study abroad experience provides, plus underlying negative stigma attached to international students. There is also the development of identity, confidence, independence and professionalism involved in studying abroad. A key element which participants emphasised is thinking and self-reflection, with one participant noting the experience provided:

[...] a logical way of thinking, a sensible way in which we construct an argument and make a point. This is also, in my opinion, the difference between UK education and Chinese education. Chinese education teaches students knowledge whilst UK education trains us to think (participant from Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015, p. 964).

This finding brings the research closer to a focus on the specific impact of the academic element of the study abroad experience. The study is notable for the distinct contrast

between the challenge and hardship of studying against the lighter elements of friendship and travel which are also a key part of the experience. Indeed, the research certainly raises questions about the benefits of the study abroad experience, what is the effect of study and what is due to being abroad? In terms of historical and contemporary comparisons, the study abroad experience of Chinese students bears distinct similarities to the *Grand Tour* of European nobility, *Wanderjahre* of European apprentices or of the gap year of modern 'Western' students (Söderman, Snead, & Others, 2008). The key difference is that the majority of Chinese students will receive a formal qualification by the end of the experience.

2.2.3 A question of critical thinking

Despite wanting to move beyond plagiarism and stereotypes, in highlighting the development of 'thinking' in the study abroad experience, Gu and Schweisfurth (2015) raise yet another controversial aspect of the Chinese learner paradox: critical thinking. As the debates around critical thinking mainly relate to Chinese students in an international context, when they are studying abroad, the debates around critical thinking again relate to the question of whether the seeming problem with critical thinking is a manifestation of language issues working in a second language, or of Chinese or Confucian heritage culture. As with the terms plagiarism and academic integrity, defining critical thinking poses particular problems because there is no agreed definition of the term (Moon, 2007; Tian & Low, 2011). Surveying the research of critical thinking, Moon distilled the following definition from various attempts:

Critical thinking is a capacity to work with complex ideas whereby a person can make effective provision of evidence to justify a reasonable judgement. The evidence, and therefore the judgement, will pay appropriate attention to context. (Moon, 2005, p. 7)

With this definition in mind it is easy to see why Chinese learners and academics may be perplexed by the charge that Chinese culture lacks this attribute, leaning towards language ability as being the key factor for plagiarism problems.

There is strong evidence that working in a second language can hinder perceived “critical thinking” abilities. In the case of Japanese learners, Rear (2017b) carried out four 20-minute debates, four in English and four in Japanese, with Japanese students who had reached the English language proficiency requirement to study abroad (TOEFL iBT scores ranging from 74 to 92)¹⁵. The findings indicate that the debates carried out in English were rated significantly lower in terms of critical thinking. Despite having 3 weeks to prepare, the preparation for the debate in English was hindered due to the level of sources students interacted with. Rear (2017b) found that the length, reliability and quality of the sources used for the English debate to be a lower level than used in preparation for the debate in Japanese, indicating that despite meeting the requirement for English language to study abroad, there was still a distinct language deficit which affected thinking and argumentation. This sentiment is echoed by Lu and Singh (2017) who argue that critical thinking should be judged on students’ performance in their own language. Rather than ethno-national labels, such as Chinese or Asian learners, it is more constructive to refer to multilingual students. Lu and Singh (2017) argue that lack of confidence in communicating in English results in students not only manifesting itself as a seeming lack of critical thinking but also as silent and passive in the classroom.

In terms of culture, Tian and Low (2011) have already carried out an in-detail review of the literature on this topic. They argue that a number of studies¹⁶ comparing Chinese students to ‘Western’ students “have not succeeded in providing a comprehensive

¹⁵ TOEFL iBT (Test of English as a Foreign Language internet Based Test) is used by institutions to test students English level for entry to their programmes, similar to IELTS for UK institutions.

¹⁶ Ip et al., 2000; McBride, Xiang, Wittenburg, & Shen, 2002; Tiwari, Avery, & Lai, 2003; Yeh & Chen, 2005 - using psychometric testing, mostly the California Critical Thinking Dispositions Inventory (CCTDI).

understanding of the CT [critical thinking] of Chinese students” (p.67). The authors propose that these tests present a mixed picture and seem to indicate that Chinese learners are disposed to analytical thinking but lacking in confidence, maturity and open mindedness. Despite the lack of decisive findings and taking into account their second language status, Tian and Low (2011) found researchers to be quick to draw the conclusion that Chinese learners lack critical thinking due to Chinese and Confucian culture. They strongly refute this arguing that the instruments used are biased as they were developed for the Western context. Furthermore, the majority of studies are carried out with Chinese students studying in international environments and therefore the studies lack validity to draw wide ranging conclusions about Chinese culture (Tian and Low, 2011).

Tian and Low’s (2011) solution to the lack of consistency in the analysis of critical thinking and Chinese or Confucian heritage culture is instead to focus on the local pedagogical context, a view shared by Qing Gu (2008) and Clark and Gieve (Clark & Gieve, 2006). Using Holliday’s (1999) distinction between ‘small’ and ‘large’ cultures, Tian and Low argue that the issue of critical thinking is due to the small culture of the Chinese educational context rather than the large culture of China or Confucian heritage culture in general. In this way, Holliday’s theory allows the larger culture to be viewed as evolving whereas the small culture, in this case educational context, can be analysed more effectively due to the bracketed nature of the group. The issues Chinese students face in transitioning to UK education are the result of the specific transition between contexts, as Gu and Brooks (2008) comment:

It is a process that involves the students in on-going self adjustment, consciously or subconsciously, to the values and beliefs of teaching and learning that are anchored in the local context. (p.350)

As found in an earlier study, Gu and Schweisfurth's (2006) of Chinese learners' adaptation to studying in the UK, many of the Chinese learners were highly motivated to make this transition.

The small culture view is quite distinct from larger culture views of the Chinese learner. Durkin, for example (Durkin, 2007, 2008), analysing the adaptation strategies of Chinese students to UK Masters programmes using in-depth interviews found that they used a 'middle way' between Chinese culture and UK culture. Providing the model of a middle way, Durkin's work highlights the problems Chinese learners have adapting to critical argumentation from the more stereotypical base of harmonious, collective Chinese culture. Despite using the static model of culture, their findings overlap with Tian and Low's findings and how students adapt to the local educational context or 'small culture'. The comments of the participants in the studies of Gu and Schweisfurth and Durkin for example are highly similar, discussing the benefits of critical thinking for Chinese learners studying in the UK.

2.2.4 Academic and epistemological development

Chinese learners are not the only learners to transition into higher education in the UK. Taking the issue of language out of the Chinese learner equation, there are significant parallels between the experiences of Chinese students and British students transitioning to higher education. Snapper's (2009) experience of silence in the seminar when teaching first year students in transition from A-level to university level study, echoes the experience of Chinese students. Snapper (2009) found in this transitional phase that students do the readings necessary for the seminars and understand the more traditional English literature texts, yet they struggle with the more critical and theoretical academic texts on the subject. Snapper (2009) paints perhaps an all too familiar picture of the resulting seminar:

Despite the increased opportunities for discussion, however, students were often unresponsive, and lecturers tended to 'fill in' with their own comment. Both lecturers attempted to draw out students' responses, using different techniques, but substantial dialogue never developed, and there were frequently uncomfortable silences. (p.198)

One could mistake this for an account of a session with Chinese learners. Snapper highlights the lack of criticality and seeming passivity of the new students as they adapt from their secondary school environment in which teachers provide information and take significant responsibility for preparing students for exams, versus the lecturers focusing on course content and engagement with multiple texts.

In terms of the small culture of education, the transition from secondary education to university is a challenge for all students. Snapper's (2009) findings correspond to the epistemological development models explored later in this chapter (section 2.5) in that students are shifting from the absolute model of knowledge to the individual and contextual approach described by Baxter Magolda (2004a). Indeed Moon (2005) maps this model to the development of critical thinking and furthermore, a critical outlook is one of the claimed outcomes of a higher level qualification by the UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), stressing that criticality is an outcome rather than a prerequisite of attending university (QAA, 2015).

Epistemological development and the critical outlook associated with it is part of the developmental process students, regardless of nationality, achieve at university. Lea and Street's (1998, 2006) concept of academic literacy ties together the learning theory of Marton and Säljö (1976) and the critical development of students with the physical act of writing, and intertextuality in the academic setting. The authors argue that the process of adapting to university comprises of a nested hierarchy of three elements: study skills, academic socialisation and academic literacies (Lea and Street, 1998, 2006). These three facets of adaptation to the

academic environment involve acquiring the appropriate surface level study skills, such as referencing, with the socialisation into the specialist discourse of the subject plus the ability to judge the power relations with the academic field, institutions, and journals. The power relations of becoming an academic author are significant and relate to Brookfield's (2013) 'power' based interpretation of critical thinking in the educational environment which:

[...] requires us to check the assumptions that we, and others, hold by assessing the accuracy and validity of the evidence for these assumptions by looking at ideas and actions from multiple perspectives. (p.157)

Multiple perspectives are not only key to critical thinking but are enshrined in attributive (citation practices) and rhetorical practices of academic writing. Magyar's (2012) qualitative interviews with international postgraduates in the UK has indicated that it is the complex of combination of writing in a second language, adapting to the academic literacies of the subject which poses the problem for these students. As the participants in Magyar's (2012) study describe, while they had never viewed themselves as plagiarists or lacking in critical thinking, in the strict UK context, the lack of referencing and use of one's own words was interpreted in that manner. While part of this may be attributed to ESL and lack of familiarity with the academic practices, the taking into account of the epistemological approaches explored earlier in this literature review, the engagement in a critical approach to knowledge lies at the root of the problems the students have. This is particularly the case where students have come from the monological textbook and test background. Magyar (2012) emphasises that attributing references is therefore not simply mechanical, but it relates to expectations about knowledge and is culturally situated. As Hirvela and Du (2013) have noted, the result of testing culture is that Chinese students represent ideas in writing as "knowledge telling" rather than "knowledge transformation", which is reflected in their paraphrasing and quotation practices.

2.3 Academic Integrity: Definitions and Development

Having discussed the key case study of this thesis, the Chinese learner, we now turn to discussion of the core concept under examination: academic integrity. The quote below is the plain English definition of academic integrity devised by the *Exemplary Academic Integrity Project* (EAIP) in Australia.

Academic integrity means acting with the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in learning, teaching and research. It is important for students, teachers, researchers and professional staff to act in an honest way, be responsible for their actions, and show fairness in every part of their work. All students and staff should be an example to others of how to act with integrity in their study and work. Academic integrity is important for an individual's and a school's reputation. (EAIP, 2013, p. 1)

The fact that a plain English definition of the concept exists is indicative of a problem of recognition for the term that has been in use for the last twenty years, yet surprisingly has no commonly agreed definition (Ransome & Newton, 2018; Williams & Roberts, 2016). Tracey Bretag, project lead of the EAIP, admits the definition of academic integrity “remains a subject for debate and ongoing refinement” (Bretag, 2016, p. 29) due to the multifarious nature of the concept (Bretag, 2015).

The International Center for Academic Integrity's (ICAI, est. 1992) booklet *Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity* (ICAI, 2014) frames academic integrity as adherence to a set of 6 values to promote academic integrity to “scholarly communities of all kinds” (p.9). The fundamental values are:

1. **Honesty** - *Academic communities of integrity advance the quest for truth and*

knowledge through intellectual and personal honesty in learning, teaching, research, and service.

- 2. Trust** - *Academic communities of integrity both foster and rely upon climates of mutual trust. Climates of trust encourage and support the free exchange of ideas which in turn allows scholarly inquiry to reach its fullest potential.*
- 3. Fairness** - *Academic communities of integrity establish clear and transparent expectations, standards, and practices to support fairness in the interactions of students, faculty, and administrators.*
- 4. Respect** - *Academic communities of integrity value the interactive, cooperative, participatory nature of learning. They honor, value, and consider diverse opinions and ideas.*
- 5. Responsibility** - *Academic communities of integrity rest upon foundations of personal accountability coupled with the willingness of individuals and groups to lead by example, uphold mutually agreed-upon standards, and take action when they encounter wrongdoing.*
- 6. Courage** - *To develop and sustain communities of integrity, it takes more than simply believing in the fundamental values. Translating the values from talking points into action—standing up for them in the face of pressure and adversity—requires determination, commitment, and courage.*

(ICAI, 2014, p.18-28)

These fundamental values are followed by seven recommendations for institutions to “develop effective academic integrity” (ICAI, 2014, p.30). With the exception of the need to promote the positive aspects, keep up to date on current trends and educate all members of the community about academic integrity, the majority of these

recommendations relate to the consistent and fair implementation of a clear and transparent academic integrity policy which has a system in place to adjudicate violations.

Even a brief survey of Anglophone university websites and also leading international institutions shows the extent to the six fundamental values¹⁷ have successfully seeped into university discourse and policy. For example the University of Toronto incorporates them into their definition:



Figure 3 Academic Integrity (Source: University of Toronto, 2018)

Variations on the fundamental values are also in evidence, for example the University of Swansea offers this definition:

Academic integrity reflects a shared set of principles which include honesty, trust, diligence, fairness and respect and is about maintaining the integrity of a student's work and their award. Academic integrity is based on the ethos that how you learn is as important as what you learn.

(University of Swansea, 2018a, p.1)

¹⁷ Originally five fundamental values (1999), courage being added later.

In addition to the replacement of responsibility and courage with diligence, the University of Swansea directly relates academic integrity to the individual student's work and award, rather than the whole academic community.

Academic integrity projects have been initiated around the globe with the intention of developing academic integrity at the policy level. The aforementioned ICAI, established in 1992 at Clemson University in the United States, has spearheaded the policy approach and projects have followed in Australia with the *Asia Pacific Forum on Educational Integrity* (APFEI est. 2001), which prefers the broader term educational integrity to better encompass the spectrum of issues faced by all involved in education. The APFEI acted as a springboard for further projects such as *Academic Integrity Standards Project* (2010-2012) and the *Exemplary Academic Integrity Project* (2013-2016) establishing an *Academic Integrity Policy tool kit* (Bretag, 2016). More recently *European Network of Academic Integrity* (ENAI, 2016) which has been established to provide "a trans-national portal for disseminating and sharing high quality resources for promoting academic integrity to a wide range of stakeholders" (ENAI, 2016). Finally in terms of the UK context, academic integrity is incorporated within the remit of the AdvanceHE (formerly Higher Education Academy) and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) based Plagiarism Advisory Service (est. 2002).

Despite the growing usage of the term 'academic integrity' on websites directed at students and in university policies, a recent study by Ransome and Newton (2018) found that the term was largely absent from textbooks currently used on Post Graduate Certificates in Higher Education (PGCHE) which have become widespread for academic and support staff in the UK. The authors highlight that this is problematic as the term stands "outside the mainstream discourse of learning and teaching" (p.134) and "it appears that the language used to describe 'academic integrity' is still very much focused on the negative in UK higher education textbooks" (p.133). This is counter to ICAI's

recommendation for institutions to promote the positive aspects of academic integrity, with the concept commonly associated with opposite end of the spectrum (ICAI, 2016). While Ransome and Newton's findings are telling us about the use of the term in the teaching and learning discourse, they do not offer reasons why this may be the case. Nor do the authors question the use of or reason that the term exists.

2.3.1 Academic integrity - research into cheating

In spite of the desire for a positive discourse on academic integrity, the term is often defined by what it is not. Reflecting on why there is a need to make explicit the values of academic integrity and policies to support it, it is important to note that the ICAI was originally established "to combat cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty in higher education" (ICAI, 2017a, p1. *Cultivating Integrity Worldwide*). This is in line with the negative discourse which the ICAI, Ransome and Newton and other authors advocate against (Morris & Carroll, 2015; Rettinger, 2017). While the term academic integrity has developed nuance within policies and specific research circles, Ransome and Newton's findings could indicate that the negative connotations in the original foundation of the term remain in the mainstream discourse among practitioners. While academic teaching staff may be reluctant to engage with the term academic integrity, the references to cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty, as Ransome and Newton (2018) found, are more familiar terms. Indeed the founding director of ICAI and "founding father" of academic integrity (Star Ledger, 2016) Don McCabe's lifelong research aimed at exploring student cheating and the use of honour codes by educational institutions (McCabe, Butterfield, & Treviño, 2012; McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001a).

With this in mind, the University of Swansea's reference to academic integrity as "maintaining the integrity of a student's work and their award" makes more apparent sense in the context of cheating, student dishonesty, academic misconduct, unfair

means or the litany of other terms used to refer to unacceptable behaviour. The apparent threat that cheating poses to the integrity of the work of students and, consequently, their degrees, give institutions cause to worry about academic integrity. Don McCabe's work, variously with Trevino, Butterfield and others (McCabe, 1992; McCabe & Stephens, 2006; McCabe & Trevino, 1993; McCabe et al., 2001a), is central to the modern academic discourse on student cheating. His studies, carried out in the US and Canada, have been based upon longitudinal studies of self-reported (by students) and faculty reported data (cases identified by faculty) at secondary and tertiary level. These studies have produced rather worrisome findings and damning statistics about student cheating often used and sensationalised in the media (for example see Slobogin's 2003 work *Survey: Many students say cheating's OK*). McCabe's research with others has reported startling results, such as 68% of undergraduate students and 43% of graduate students reported written or test cheating between 2002 and 2015 (ICAI, 2012). More shocking was the finding that of 70,000 students at 24 US high schools, 95% reported they "participated in some form of cheating" (McCabe & Trevino, 1997).

These headline-grabbing figures generated by McCabe and his colleagues (overview in McCabe et al., 2012), whilst sensationally reported in the press, are more sensibly framed in their articles and books. First of all, the authors are cautious to acknowledge that response rates and selection bias could have an impact on the validity of the study. Furthermore, while a high percentage of students may have engaged in "some form of cheating" in their entire educational career, the severity of the offences differ greatly. McCabe clearly defines cheating as nine different acts, which range from working with a peer to complete homework, to padding a bibliography, to cheating in an exam, all of which vary in severity. These nine acts were based on Bowers' study in the mid-60s (Bowers 1964), which McCabe describes as "ground-breaking" (McCabe et al., 2012). McCabe indeed worked with Bowers (McCabe & Bowers, 1996) and had the express

intention of using his earlier work to build a picture of how student cheating had changed over time in the US, using the same cheating acts. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995), in surveying other similar research, found that studies assessing cheating often used a varying number of cheating types with Stem & Havlicek (1986) providing participants with 36 types of behaviour to choose from. Franklyn-Stokes and Newstead (1995) therefore comment that defining the general term 'cheating' is "an immediate problem one encounters" (p.159), and therefore decide not to offer one.

Consequently, not only is term academic integrity ambiguous similarly with the concept and definition of cheating is difficult to define beyond providing a list of prohibited actions. In order to define the term, Jackson, Levine, Furnham and Burr (2002) resort to the Oxford English Reference dictionary definition of cheating:

[...] to deceive or trick, deprive of, or to gain unfair advantage by deception or breaking rules, especially in a game or examination. (Jackson et al., 2002, p.1032)

This definition allows a clear breakdown of the problem with cheating and assessing its prevalence. In terms of the fundamental values of academic integrity at play in this definition, cheating is problematic as it challenges two of the core values of academic integrity: honesty (deceive/deception) and fairness (unfair advantage).

2.3.2 Honesty, intention and ethical reasoning

Honesty, or more specifically the proof of dishonesty and the intention to deceive, is the source of great debate for legal scholars, let alone for educators dealing with cheating. The crux of the issue is that it is impossible to prove intention to deceive or knowledge of wrongdoing, known as *mens rea*, beyond reasonable doubt without an honest confession from a defendant. Therefore, if a person is guilty, you are reliant upon a

person to be honest about being dishonest. Furthermore, it may be the case someone acts illegally without knowing. Knowledge of wrongdoing (*mens rea*), as opposed to the act of breaking the rules (*actus reus*) can be problematic if cheating is to be researched or cases of academic dishonesty be pursued.

Research into cheating has found that students' perceptions of cheating vary from the academic policy definitions and staff perceptions of the acts (Moss, White, & Lee, 2018; Roig, 1997; Wilkinson, 2009; Yeo, 2007). A key finding of a study by Burrus et al., (2007) was that students' self-reporting of cheating increased significantly when they were provided with definitions of acts of cheating. Their findings supported the proposition by Gardner, Roper, and Gonzalez (1988) that student cheating could be vastly underestimated due to students' perceptions of what is acceptable. An additional factor which may also lessen the self-reported data on cheating, as highlighted by McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino (2012), is that students were reluctant to report or even acknowledge cheating activities which they knew were wrong but which they had justified to themselves.

Thus, the intention to cheat and students' perception of the definition are dependent upon two variables: the students' education and their ethical outlook. In terms of students' education, awareness of the rules and experience of assessment appear to play a key role in their perceptions of cheating. As Burrus et al.'s (2007) findings indicate, student definitions of cheating are "at best, incomplete" (p.14) and as a result they recommend providing "clear and consistent reminders of which behaviours are unacceptable." (p.14). While only including a small sample of 384 participants from economics courses at two US universities, their findings were consistent with other literature on the subject. Notably, their key contribution was the recognition that providing students with definitions of cheating reduced the likelihood of cheating, even if the student deemed the punishment

harsh in comparison to their perception of the seriousness of the transgression (Burrus et al., 2007).

Student perception of the severity of punishments associated with cheating indicate that the cause of student cheating is not simply a lack of awareness or misunderstanding of the rules. Looking beneath the surface level of awareness of cheating, ethical reasoning plays a role in students' perceptions of cheating (Granitz and Loewy, 2007). Granitz and Loewy (2007) investigated the reasons provided by students who were found to have plagiarised at one large West Coast institution in the US. They aimed to identify the ethical reasoning used to justify their actions. The authors identified six ethical approaches from previous research and found the following ethical approaches at play (percentage of participants): deontology (41.8%), situational ethics (19.9%), Machiavellianism (18.4%), cultural relativism (8.5%), utilitarianism (5.7%) and rational self-interest (5.7%). These categories ultimately split the reasoning of the students who admitted cheating behaviour into two categories: students who claim they were unaware they were cheating (50.3% = deontology/cultural relativism) and students who were aware, but provided some form of justification or neutralisation of the act (49.7% = situational ethics/ Machiavellianism/rational self-interest/utilitarianism).

The distinction between unintentional and intentional with justification provide a useful lens through which to address student cheating. The largest percentage of students argued they were not aware of the rules in Granitz and Loewy's (2007) study. This defence by students against accusations of cheating is a deontological approach, meaning duty bound ethics in which there is a moral obligation to follow rules, within this approach cheating is wrong as it is against the rules. In terms of academic integrity, the deontological approach raises the issue of who is then responsible for students being aware of the rules. In cases of specific academic offences, such as plagiarism which require specific academic skills and socialisation to avoid the offence, the argument is

that students need to be taught the rules first rather than it to be solely the students' responsibility to learn and follow the rules (Carroll, 2014). Therefore the deontological defence can be extended to cases of cultural relativism in which it is recognised that there may be different rules for different cultures, including academic culture. In terms of students who are new to academic culture, particularly international students, perceived cheating behaviour may have been allowed (or penalties not enforced) which gave the impression the behaviour was acceptable.

Beyond the lack of intention to cheat inherent in the deontological defence, Granitz and Loewy's (2007) study showed that other ethical approaches acknowledge wrongdoing but attempt to deny responsibility for the act. Essentially, students blame the transgression on situations beyond their control (usually some sort of personal issue such as a family illness) or the actions (or in the action) of peers and teachers, leading to an instrumental approach to finish the assignment without regard for what is acceptable. Students may weigh the benefits of them passing the assignment against the impact it had on classmates and teaching staff and concluding, "I didn't think it would hurt anyone", however ignore the impact of cheating on the academic integrity of their institution and qualification. Granitz and Loewy's (2007) study is therefore particularly relevant in raising the issue of responsibility.

2.3.3 Responsibility, justification and neutralisation

In terms of the relationship to the fundamental values of academic integrity, the ethical reasoning of students relate to their perceptions of fairness and responsibility. Responsibility, or rather the denial of responsibility for wrongdoing, comprises a significant part of students' defences for cheating (LaBeff, Clark, Haines, & Diekhoff, 1990; McCabe, 1992). However, using the deontological approach that cheating is against the rules, claiming "I didn't realise what I was doing was wrong", can be taken to amount to a dereliction of the students' duty to be aware of the rules. Situational ethics,

in which students blame situations beyond their control as having an impact on their decision to cheat, provides students with the grounds to justify the decision to cheat, relinquishing responsibility for their actions dependent upon the situation. Similarly, in the more pre-meditated rationalisation of cheating, such as rational self-interest, Machiavellianism and utilitarianism, students may justify their actions by blaming other people, such as teachers, classmates or the institution (Murdock & Stephens, 2007).

One theory which has been used to explain students' justification for cheating and denial of responsibility is Sykes and Matza's (1957) concept of neutralisation. Sykes and Matza (1957) theorised that when juvenile delinquents act illegally, they either rationalised their behaviour, providing valid justifications, or neutralised their behaviour, by providing invalid justifications. An example is the distinction between murder and manslaughter: a person could (a) legally justify killing someone through self-defence, or (b) neutralise the act by arguing that the person deserved it. These responses would be treated differently in the eyes of the law (Bouville, 2007).

Neutralising strategies typically not only blame others for their decision but also attempt to remove personal responsibility for their actions. Pulvers and Diekhoff (1999) summarise five methods of neutralisation utilised by cheating students, the first three identified by LaBeff, Clark, Haines, and Diekhoff (1990), and an additional two added by McCabe (1992):

1. Denial of responsibility (situational ethics);
2. Condemnation of the condemners (attacking the motives of the accusers)
3. Appeal to higher loyalties (loyalty to own social group rather than the academic community)
4. Denial of injury ('it doesn't hurt anyone')
5. Denial of the victim ('the teacher was so bad, the course didn't deserve my effort')

Through use of these neutralising strategies, students externalise any causes of their transgression to other individuals and situations, avoiding ultimate responsibility. As Murdoch and Stephens' (2007) exploration of the psychology of cheating found, students move the responsibility onto others:

not only do cheaters see themselves as less responsible for cheating than do non cheaters (i.e. neutralise more), but they also report that effective cheating interventions would rely on external rather than internal controls. Reducing dishonesty is not their responsibility! (p.234)

Neutralisation, despite the seeming logical relationship of neutralisation to empirical data in numerous studies (McCabe et al., 2012; Murdock & Stephens, 2007), is not an uncontested concept. Bouville (2007) argues that the use of neutralisation is problematic in the context of research on cheating. He firstly questions the ability of surveys, contending that the results of various studies on neutralisations find inconsistencies in the data which are taken to be neutralisations but, in actual fact could be incoherent responses from students who have not carefully considered their responses. In relation to the contested definition of cheating, he comments that "we do not know what students take to be acceptable since we do not know what they mean by 'cheating' when they say that cheating is wrong." (p.5). Hence Bouville is essentially making the same claim as Gardner, Roper, Gonzalez, & Simpson (1988), that cheating is difficult to estimate due to students' perceptions of the concept.

Bouville (2007) goes even further to highlight the qualitative findings of Stephens and Nicholson (2008) that high school students may feel guilty about cheating and therefore do not neutralise their behaviour. In their study, Stephens and Nicholson (2008) noted that in two cases where the students violated the norms, they did so for different reasons. In one case the student felt compelled to cheat through being overwhelmed (too much

work to do) whereas another student was underwhelmed (lack of engagement) by school work. Stephens and Nicholson highlight the broader implications of their findings that students know what is right but do what is wrong. The authors' assessment of the cause of cheating by students in their study was "to advance themselves in a system that has placed an ever-increasing emphasis on grades" (Stephens & Nicholson, 2008, p. 371), with students viewing school as something to be passed.

2.3.4 Fairness and education as competition

Bouville's (2007) argument against the proof of neutralisation gains more clarity when we consider whether students are gaining an "unfair advantage" through their actions, as the definition of cheating suggests. The concentration on grades, as Stephens and Nicholson (2008) point out, can force students into a zero sum game at either end of the classroom performance spectrum. Students cheat to avoid failure but they also cheat to keep up with the top performing students (McCabe et al., 2012; Stephens & Nicholson, 2008). As Rettinger and Kramer point out, "if cheating behavior is seen as normal, there is no violation of ethics and thus no need for neutralisation" (p.310). Cheating may therefore be justified, rather than neutralised, where there is the perception that "everyone else is doing it" so therefore it is fair that I cheat (Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999). This could be viewed as the *Lance Armstrong defence*.¹⁸ In terms of academic integrity, there are numerous problems with the Armstrong defence by students. The argument that cheating would not be an unfair advantage views education mainly as a competition (Bouville, 2010). High

¹⁸ Armstrong, who was stripped of his seven consecutive Tour de France victories for doping, argues that while he did use performance enhancing drugs, he did not cheat as his rivals were doing the same (Hardie, 2015). Evidence shows, however, that it may have been only the top riders that were doping, therefore his attempts to defend his actions would fall into the category of neutralisation, essentially "knowing the right, doing the wrong" (Stephens & Nicholson, 2008). Furthermore, from the perspective of honesty, Armstrong not only denied doping on numerous occasions, he was even overtly anti-doping and viciously attacked the integrity of his critics (Bloodworth & McNamee, 2017; Møller, 2009).

stakes testing, such as university entrance examinations, may put students in direct competition with each other. Education, however, unlike professional cycling, is not primarily about competition. The goal is not to win but to learn. Yet McCabe finds that today's students are increasingly competitive and instrumental:

As some students tell us, getting their degree with good grades is what counts; how they do it is less important. (McCabe et al., 2012, p. 166)

The key problem with this, in essence, Machiavellian approach is that grades become the ends of education, and the end justifies the means. This is opposed to the more idealistic view of higher education which Philip Altbach (2015) of the *Centre for International Higher Education* sees as “a set of skills, attitudes, and values required for citizenship and effective participation in modern society—a key contribution to the common good of any society.” (p.2). The perception that cheating is justified and therefore fair is obviously problematic for the concept of academic integrity. McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino (McCabe et al., 2012) relate this to the broader problem of a perceived culture of cheating and integrity in society and in education. Despite the utopian aspirations of academic integrity (Bouville, 2010), the ivory towers of academia which the students enter are not free of controversy. The integrity of science and academia have been publicly tainted in recent years by high profile academic misconduct cases and politically motivated attacks, such as the *climategate* scandal (Leiserowitz, Maibach, Roser-Renouf, Smith, & Dawson, 2012).

2.3.5 Influence of peers, teachers and classroom context

The individual ethical approach of a student that results in their academic transgressions are not formed in a vacuum (Granitz & Loewy, 2007). While we can speculate as to the

influence of a broader culture of cheating on students, there is a body of research exploring the surrounding environmental and cultural influences on the prevalence and perception of cheating in universities (McCabe et al., 2012; Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). The externalisation of responsibility for cheating, whether to an external person or situation, is key to students' justification or neutralisation of the act. Although the university environment is made up of many people, the key persons who may directly influence students' behaviour in respect to cheating are their peers and the teaching staff.

One study which provides insight into the significant role which peer behaviour has on students is Rettinger and Kramer's (2009) investigation of the situational and personal causes of cheating. Using vignettes of hypothetical scenarios (n=158) and a self-report survey on cheating (n=139) at a private US institution, their research "supported a model of cheating behavior that includes both direct knowledge of others' cheating and, separately, neutralizing attitudes" (p. 310). This is important as, traditionally, neutralising attitudes would be viewed as enablers of cheating, yet Rettinger and Kramer concluded that neutralisation is actually a cause of cheating. The authors argue that direct knowledge of other students cheating provides new students with a model for acceptable behaviour in their social learning process and development of their approach to university. This is in line with McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino's (2012) extensive research which indicates the influence of peers is particularly relevant for first year students, or those in transition from a different form of education. Furthermore, these findings are supportive of the need to foster a positive discourse on academic integrity. As Rettinger and Kramer (2009) found, students self-reported less cheating behaviour than they perceived their peers committed. Students therefore believed cheating was more prevalent than it appeared to be according to the authors' data. As Rettinger (2017, p. 103) argued in a later paper, "prosocial responses" to cheating are more effective than shaming students,

which could increase the perception of cheating by peers, therefore leading to more cheating.

Teaching staff are the other key group which form the social context of academic life for students. While the primary role of the teaching staff should be to guide students through the learning environment and provide positive role models for students, their actions, or inaction, is frequently used by students to justify cheating (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). Through the externalisation of responsibility, students place the teacher in an authoritarian role in which they are expected to judge students' performance, police their transgressions and provide a quality educational experience (Murdock & Stephens, 2007; Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009). There is a certain dissonance between these roles. This dissonance is further complicated by student expectations of integrity within the educational context. In one study using student impressions of vignettes displaying contrasting teacher behaviour and whether students would be justified cheating (study 1 n=224/study 2 n=195), Murdock, Miller and Goetzinger (2007) found that perceived fairness of the classroom environment was the key variable which mediated students' assigning blame for cheating. While students may learn behaviour and norms from peers, if they do not think their learning context is fair, they can more easily justify transgressive behaviour. Murdock et al.'s (2007) study found "judgments of justifiability were...much more strongly related to assessments of perceived cheating likelihood than were morality ratings" (p.163). In short, a student's decision to cheat is based on situational ethics, rather than a student's moral compass. In terms of cheating specifically, for a teacher to act fairly, transgressions must first be identified and then be dealt with in a fair manner. Therefore, through inaction when encountering cheating, teachers can form the norm that the behaviour is acceptable (Murdock & Stephens, 2007) or alternatively deter students via the threat of a fair punishment that fits the offence (Ogilvie & Stewart, 2010).

The students' attention to fairness when faced with cheating is significant. As we have already discussed, fairness is prominent if education is viewed as a competition, which may not be helpful in terms of academic integrity. What is interesting to consider, is that universities are populated by students who have been successful in the competitive, high stakes testing environment of school. Murdock, Miller and Goetzinger (2007) point out the significance of this:

[S]tudents bring clear expectations with them to the classroom about what constitutes appropriate and fair behavior on the part of the teacher and that a teacher's failure to behave in ways that are consistent with these expectations may legitimize students' engaging in behavior that would otherwise not be viewed as appropriate. (p.164)

If students' expectations are not met or the level of instruction is misjudged, students may blame staff for their transgressions when they have not been given clear instruction, or even where students find the work too taxing (Brimble, 2015; Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, & Clark, 1986). As Murdock, Miller and Goetzinger (2007) highlight, students' perception of fairness and respect are mediated precisely by their goal structures and the quality of teaching, which are formed by their previous educational experience. Therefore, when a student is in a performance-based (competitive) setting, where judgement is external, their responsibility for integrity is also externalised. Whereas in a mastery-based educational setting, where individual improvement is central, students also take responsibility for the integrity of the process (Murdock & Anderman, 2006; Murdock et al., 2007) and are less likely to justify cheating, as they are only cheating themselves, to coin a phrase.

Thus, an individual student's perceptions of the acceptability or frequency of cheating is determined to a significant extent by the students and staff they are surrounded by. These peers and authority figures are the key social components of what Pulvers and Diekhoff (1999) refer to as "the psychosocial milieu of the classroom" (p.491). The authors highlight that the integrity of the social context of the classroom may be further exacerbated by group membership, such as fraternity or society membership, and large class sizes. The authors make the further link between potential for cheating and student satisfaction with their course, either due to it being "less personalized, less satisfying, and less task oriented" (p.495). These three factors are directly related to anonymity within large classes, and also dissonance in their expectation of the teaching and of performance in the course (grades). As a solution to the issues, they stress the importance of developing relationships with students to improve integrity.

The question still remains whether there is a need to improve academic integrity. While McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino's (2012) research has reported high and increasing prevalence of cheating behaviour, other research indicates it may not be as prevalent as their figures suggest. Pulvers and Diekhoff found that 11.4% of 277 participants reported cheating, which is a relatively small number compared to the more headline grabbing figures of McCabe's research. Furthermore, in a recent study Tracey Bretag and her colleagues found in a mass study of contract cheating behaviour¹⁹ that of over 14,000 students, 5.78% were involved in what might considered serious cheating behaviour. There are therefore still serious contradictions and ambiguities in whether cheating is becoming more prevalent or whether cheating is a reflection of behaviour in broader society. In respect to this, the work of Duke University-based behavioral economist Dan

¹⁹ Contract cheating is the latest cheating scourge of universities. It involves students purchasing assignments or supporting materials for assignments from third party providers. We shall explore this issue in greater detail in the next section.

Ariely (2012) is of significance as he has found in decades of research that “[v]ery few people steal to a maximal degree. But many good people cheat just a little here and there” (p. 239). It could be the case that the increase of research focusing on cheating is merely reflecting this broader societal trend for people’s tendency to cheat a little and rationalise the behaviour.

2.4 Plagiarism, intertextuality and the internet

Whereas the previous sections have explored the concepts of academic integrity, cheating, the following section explores the concepts of plagiarism and authorship. Academic writing, in the form of essay and report writing, is the dominant form of assessment in higher education, particularly at Masters level. Assessment by writing has developed in the modern European university tradition, influencing Anglophone traditions in the US, Australia and Canada. Academic writing has its roots in the modern scholarly communication that emerged in 1665 with the publication of journals on both sides of the Atlantic, first in Paris and latterly in London (Anderson, 2018). This emergence coincides with the burgeoning European book industry and the concept of plagiarism. With the increase of publication and the evolution of the modern university, particularly through the Humboldtian tradition of combining teaching and research, the oral form of defence of ideas shifted to assessment of written dissertations (McClelland, 1980). In terms of the topic of Chinese learners and education traditions, the ‘Western’ origins of academic communication and notions of plagiarism can be distinct from the Chinese literary tradition. These differences are often misrepresented as plagiarism being acceptable in China, when in fact this is not the case. Moreover, the context internationalisation of higher education is further complicated due to the impact of the internet which has but the notions of plagiarism, authorship, copyright and intertextuality into a state of flux.

2.4.1 The cultural concept of plagiarism

Plagiarism and imitation are major faults in poetry; and even the ugliest thing of all is for a writer to patch together phrases from the older poets, leaving obvious traces. (Wang Shizhen (1526-1590) in Owen, 1996, p. 581)

Papers on plagiarism often begin with references to the development of the concept in the West. However, the quotation from Wang Shizhen questions the common misconception that plagiarism does not exist as a concept in Confucian heritage culture (CHC)²⁰, and resultantly in Chinese culture. The extract which opened this section was written by a leading light of Ming Dynasty literature and bureaucracy, Wang Shizen (Strassberg, 1994). Wang was the contemporary and arguably equivalent in terms of prose writing to Shakespeare, one of Britain's most famous writers, or plagiarists, depending on your perspective of the concept (Thomas, 2000; Waltner, 1987). This quote demonstrates the complications and misconceptions which abound around the concept of plagiarism in China.

As much of the discourse on plagiarism is written from the Anglo-centric 'Western' perspective, a standard opening to a paper regarding plagiarism will perhaps begin with the reference to the Roman poet Martial's popularisation of the term:

I'm entrusting you, Quintianus, with my - if I can actually call them my writings, which your poet is running around reciting - if they complain about their harsh servitude, come as an advocate and stand by them, and, when that fellow calls himself their master, say that they are mine and that they have been

²⁰ Confucian heritage culture is a catch all term for East Asian countries with culture significantly influence by the teachings of Confucius. Originating in China, Confucian thought was a significant influence in Japan, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan (Tran, 2013).

freed. If you declare this three and four times, you will shame this kidnapper (*plagiario*). (Martial 1.52 (circa 85-86 c.e.) in Seo, 2009, pp. 573–574)

As Seo (2009) explains, the topic of ‘plagiarism’ had been broached previously by Greek and Roman poets, even Horace referring to his imitators as a flock of slaves or servile cattle (*servum pecus*). Yet, in using the word *plagiarius*, meaning the kidnapping for the purposes on enslavement (also to plunder), Martial goes further than the mere handling of stolen goods, *furtum*. As Seo (2009) further highlights, Martial departs from previous commentary on plagiarism by introducing the legal aspect of the stealing of intellectual property and by that, objectifying and commodifying his poetry.

In the Western tradition, plagiarism, like many other elements of Roman civilisation, disappeared from Europe only to be rediscovered in the Renaissance. Plagiarism re-emerges in English dictionaries of the early 17th century as book stealing or literary theft (Terry, 2010). Bishop Joseph Hall’s (1597-98) reference to ‘a Plagiarize sonnet-wright’ (Virgidmiae in Terry, 2010, p. 18) appears a little after Wang’s death in China, showing a similar disdain for plagiarism of poetry. Yet, in China, there are numerous mentions to *chaoxi* (抄襲, to copy or steal) or *piaoqie* (剽窃, to rob or steal someone’s writing) throughout the medieval period, from as early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907) (Bloch, 2012; Liu, 2005). Sela (2013) comments on the array of terms in Chinese for plagiarism with “the semantic range of stealing, robbing, plundering, attacking, deceiving, and so on, reminding the reader of the etymology of plagiarism” (p.578).

Rather than the “crude East/West dichotomy” (Pennycook, 1996, p. 217) in which plagiarism exists in the West but not the East, the reality is plagiarism is a universal concept but highly dependent on context. The one significant difference being the enshrinement of certain elements of plagiarism in copyright law after the 1710 statute of

Queen Anne in England and later in the US constitution (Alford, 1997; Sutherland-Smith, 2008). In China, plagiarism remained relevant in the early modern period and was the topic of fierce debate in the early 20th century (Sela, 2013). However, as Alford (1997) points out in his book regarding Chinese intellectual property law, *To Steal a Book is an Elegant Offence*, there was no civil law code with which to prosecute plagiarism and furthermore, there was a Confucian distaste for profiteering. In the West, although plagiarism was not the sole object of copyright and legislation aimed at protecting intellectual property, the legal implications for plagiarism equated the offence with theft, as Martial had done in the Roman period.

2.4.2 Intertextuality and authorship

As noted in the previous section, what is considered plagiarism or *chaoxi* (抄袭, to copy or steal) depends heavily on the context. Within this brief historical overview we have already hit upon two distinct interpretations, that of a thief of idea versus that of a follower. Martial's term, plagiarism, like the Chinese terms, both have their connotations of theft and deception. Mallon (2001) has suggested that the strength of this act is carried into the modern meaning and moralizing is often attached to plagiarism. The Horatian reference, however, to view his imitators as 'slaves' and book sellers as pimps, provides an interesting counterpoint. (Seo, 2009). In this approach to plagiarism, it was not the stealing of his words which is problematic, but the denial of their own artistic genius and authorial identity. From an educational perspective, perhaps the latter view is more significant.

This brings the debate regarding plagiarism into the context of what it means to be an author. According to Woodmansee (1994), an author is "an individual who is the sole creator of unique "works", the originality of which warrants their protection under laws of "copyright" and "author's rights." (p.279), which is a relatively romantic and modern

convention from the 18th century. As Howard (2007) points out, this coincides with mass literacy in Europe, in which the demand for literature was met by an increase in authorship as a profession, in addition to personal letter and diary writing (Martha Woodmansee & Jaszi, 1994). This concept was challenged in the 1970s by Roland Barthes' *Death of the Author* using a combination of psychoanalytic and linguistic approaches to challenge the notion that there was an individual author (Simandan, 2011).

Despite Barthes' work, rumour of the author's death were greatly exaggerated, and sole authorship remains the norm in international publishing. Barthes' work, however, influenced and dovetailed with Kristeva's concept of intertextuality (Williams, 2015).

Intertextuality: because of the principle of history, all communications (particular utterances) borrow from other discourses and texts and are, in turn, used in later discourses (Scollon, Scollon, & Jones, 2011, p. 273).

Intertextuality therefore relates to the way in which people are the sum of their influences and reflects that language is socially constructed through imitation and recontextualisation (Kristiva as cited in Borg, 2009). The romantic notion of a sole author to a certain extent is opposed to this concept as it entails that the author is a single, monological voice. Bakhtin, one of the leading purveyors of intertextuality, argued that in the reality, all texts were the result of dialogic interaction between texts (Alfaro, 1996). In this way the self is a dialogic construction and therefore closely tied to identity, as explored by Ivanič (1998). To understand the influence of this on authorship, Chandrasoma, Thompson and Pennycook (2004) break down intertextuality in writing into three roles:

1. the conceptual, in which concepts are reused;
2. the complimentary, in which complimentary themes and formats are used; and

3. the metalinguistic, in which context specific language is learned and used.

Thus, the construction of texts is a complex blend of influences, and it is the different blend and quantities of influences which form the representation of self in writing.

Intertextuality is represented differently in socio-political and technological contexts, which is reflected in the attribution of authorship (Howard, 1995, p. 791). For example, academic writing relies on the explicit indication of sources, whereas in more artistic pursuits, such as novel writing or poetry, influences are referenced implicitly. In all contexts however, authorship is tied to authority. Randall (2001) has therefore claimed that “plagiarism is power” (p.1), meaning that through taking ownership of a text, people take the authority assigned to the text. Another interpretation is to say that assigned *authorship* represents authority and power, not exclusively plagiarism. What is considered plagiarism is therefore dictated by the contexts of power. Religious or political ideologies have similar approaches to authorship in that authority is placed in a higher power, which is interpreted through core texts which are then used dogmatically. In these contexts, while the majority follow the texts, the elite are able to benefit due to their ability to interpret the texts in providing meaning to social context. In this manner, while not assigned authorship of the texts; bureaucrats, priests, imams or wise men are able to skilfully wield their intertextual power. As Pierre Levy (2001) writes, in the Jewish tradition of commentaries on the Talmud:

[A]n interpretation by a legal scholar doesn't assume its fullest authority until it becomes anonymous, when the name of the author has been erased and is integrated within a shared heritage. (p.133)

As a result, a problem seems to occur when writers transition between different contexts in which there are different expectations of attribution. You Xiaoye (2010) provides the example of Confucian scholars' use of the four books and five classics of Confucian

literature (*sishu, wujing* 四书五经). As work was authored based upon this limited pool of resources, which the educated audience has read and memorised, it was not necessary to cite all of the texts explicitly. In this way implicit references to texts provide a different form of authorship conventions to represent intertextuality. Repetition of memorised text was non-problematic but in fact desired. You (2010) highlights how this caused Confucian scholars to be open to accusations of plagiarism when they shifted to writing at modern colleges after the Chinese revolution. Similarly, Rev. Martin Luther King faced problems with accusations of plagiarism in his doctoral thesis (Miller, 1998). The accusations arose due to the difference in expectations between his preaching background, in which he used the technique of ‘voice merging’ and the academic expectations of citation and quotation. When preaching, his own message would be created with numerous unattributed quotes and spiritual analogies that were not directly quoted (Howard, 1995; Miller, 1998).

Whether or not authorship is implicit or explicit, it is clear that power may be wielded through intertextuality. In relation to integrity, we again see the emergence of whether this power is wielded responsibly for the common good or corrupted for personal or political gain. For example, there is a common misinterpretation of intertextuality as plagiarism, whereas plagiarism is usually defined as using the work of others where there is an expectation of originality (Fishman, 2009). The following quote, attributed to T. S. Eliot, is often used to justify plagiarism: “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal”.²¹ This quote, which is ironically also attributed to Steve Jobs and Pablo Picasso, implies that plagiarism is part of the creative process and that those with power can take other’s work. The full quote however, paints a different picture:

²¹ Davenport Adams and Elliot as cited by Quote Investigator (Investigator, n.d., p. 1)

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn; the bad poet throws it into something which has no cohesion. A good poet will usually borrow from authors remote in time, or alien in language, or diverse in interest.

T.S. Elliot writing in 1921 (Elliot, 1967, p. 11)

This quote provides a different perspective similar to the Horatian interpretation of stealing, in which someone who blindly follows is actually a slave to those they have copied. The Chinese tradition has similarly juxtaposed sayings:

Memorizing 300 poems from Tang dynasty,
Even if you don't know how to write,
You can steal the pieces to write a poem.

(as cited in Bloch, 2008, p. 223)

If a man who knows the three hundred Odes by heart fails when given administrative responsibilities and proves incapable of exercising his own initiative when sent to foreign states, then what use are the Odes to him, however many he may have learned?

(Analects of Confucius, 13:5 as cited in Tweed & Lehman, 2002, p. 92)

It seems that when it is claimed that everything is plagiarised, in actual fact what is meant is that it is all intertextual. Plagiarism implies that an ethical transgression has been committed, whereas intertextuality implies that we are all *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants* or rather, in their shadow, as suggested by Howard (1999). Even without the attribution of direct authorship, intertextual practices require the work of a person and

reflect the competence, expertise and integrity of an individual, as the Confucian quote above suggests.

2.4.3 The internet and intertextuality

In addition to the socio-political context, the concepts of intertextuality, authorship and plagiarism have been shaped by the technology of the historic era (Howard, 1995). Whereas Martial's use of the term plagiarism coincides with the birth of the Roman book publication industry (Seo, 2009), the first use of the modern terms in China are in the Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE) accompanying the invention of the printing press in China (Elman, 2009). The emergence of the term plagiarism in the early modern era correlates with the burgeoning book industry on the back of the invention of the printing press by Gutenberg in Europe (Howard, 2007). As an interesting example of the technological influence on authorship, La Fleur (1999) details the Tang Dynasty method of long drafting as recorded in the Song Dynasty (960-1279 CE) by famous historian Sima Guang. This long standing practice involved the compilation of historical documents using his "scissors and paste method" on printed texts to create a text that lacked narrative structure but provided an editable chronological and analytical document using an array of state records and private accounts. This use of technology to transform intertextual approaches is not dissimilar to the copy and paste function used in computer based writing today.

In the modern context the impact of the internet on intertextuality, authorship and plagiarism cannot be underestimated (Martha Woodmansee & Jaszi, 1994). As Woodmansee wrote (1994), "the computer is dissolving the boundaries" between texts, and this was even before the full impact of the internet was apparent. Whereas in the print age the individual "author is credited with the attributes of proprietorship, autonomy, originality, and morality" (Howard, 1995, p. 791), Lessig (2008) has christened the internet era the age of *remix culture*. This cultural shift was slowly ushered in during the

post war era with technological changes, such as the word processor and the advent of digital sampling, which has had tangible creative benefits while at the same time challenging norms of intellectual property.

Remix culture has resultantly provided challenges to outdated copyright laws reliant upon the permanence of texts and artefacts (Howard, 1995). This has resulted in the development of new approaches to copyright, including creative commons to help adapt to a more fluid sense of intellectual property. In terms of traditional notions of authorship, however, “the Internet’s rich repository of online texts provides an unprecedented opportunity for plagiarism” (Kitalong, 1998, p. 255). In addition, although the internet has increased the quantity of information available, it is often of dubious quality and from anonymous sources (Sutherland-Smith, 2008). Due to the ease of the copy and paste function and the resulting remix or mashup culture of the internet, it becomes increasingly difficult to assess the quality of online sources and identify what Baggaley (2012) terms the genealogy of texts and the sources of information. The wider effect on society has manifested itself in recent political debates around fake news, alternative facts and post-truth society. In this context it has become increasingly challenging to stay up-to-date with the vast amount of information online and, as a result, find trustworthy information (Peters, 2017). As the community entrusted with the search for truth, academia has been seriously challenged by this technological and cultural shift, particularly in relation to the concepts of authorship and plagiarism (Sutherland-Smith, 2008).

The internet era has therefore caused problems for universities in both sides the research and teaching nexus. In the teaching context, plagiarism is not the same legal transgression it is in terms of copyright and intellectual property (Sutherland-Smith, 2008). As student work is not written initially for publication but for the purposes of assessment, the problem of plagiarism impacts the trust between student and teacher, and also between institutions awarding qualifications and society (Carroll, 2014). The

changes to the nature of authorship and the mode of written communication with the internet and computer have therefore had significant implications for student writing. Rebecca Moore Howard has been instrumental in mapping the changes since the 1990s as they started to become more apparent. She emphasises that one of the problems with the change of intertextual landscape is that “there’s currently a trend to equate students and plagiarists, as if all students were plagiarizers” (Howard, 2018, p. 1). Wendy Sutherland Smith’s research in to the internet and student learning found that the internet throws down the gauntlet to teachers and policy makers “to scrutinize our concepts of authorship and text in hyperspace” (p.202) noting:

It is unclear in many cases how the responsibility for plagiarism is shared between the institution, teachers and students (p.181)

As such, plagiarism has become synonymous with student cheating and this has been instrumental in the development of the concept of academic integrity (Bretag, 2015).

2.4.4 The implications of remix culture for academic integrity

Despite the numerous benefits of the internet for creative pursuits and the spread of knowledge, it has arguably resulted in a dystopian, “near-obsessive fear” of plagiarism in the academy (Thompson & Pennycook, 2008, p. 126). This is the point at which the discussion of plagiarism dovetails with the issue of cheating and academic integrity in the previous section. While Don McCabe’s research at first concerned a whole array cheating behaviours identified by Bowers (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2001b), the transition from general cheating research into the concentration on academic integrity and particularly plagiarism emerged in the early 1990s as computer based software and particularly the ability to ‘cut and paste’ text (Sutherland-Smith, 2008). Combined with the availability of texts online, ‘copy and paste’ made the re-use of text simply the click of a button, whereas before summarising, and therefore transformation, of the text had been more expedient.

Whether or not this leads to more intentional cheating or dishonesty is a difficult question. As Diane Pecorari (2008, p. 155) notes, there is “insufficient evidence to decide the question either way”. Pecorari (2008), who approaches plagiarism from a linguistic perspective, argues that much of the evidence for an increase in cheating is anecdotal. There is, however, some evidence that copy and paste has resulted in increased re-use of text. McCabe’s (2005) figures show an increase from 13% to 40% use of cut and paste by students between 1999 and 2000. Liu notes that a similar effect was noted in the Chinese journal *Academics in China*, where the discussion of plagiarism rose from 1.5% of articles in 1999 to 16% in 2000, which is attributed to the increased use of copy and paste (Liu, 2009). Gallant’s (2008) analysis of the moral panic concerning plagiarism poses that the perception of decline in academic integrity could plausibly be attached to the increase in copying, however it could also be down to the increased ease with which copying can be found. There is also the question whether increased copying means an increase in academic misconduct rather than a shift in approaches to authorship.

A key example is Wikipedia. The “collaboratively edited, multilingual, free internet encyclopaedia” (Wikipedia, 2018a) launched in 2001 is a source of online information held up as an *epistemic disruption* to the existing academic model:

Academic knowledge does not fit the Wikipedia paradigm of social production and mass collaboration in a number of respects, including the non-attribution of authorship and the idea that any aspiring knowledge contributor can write, regardless of credentials. (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009)

As Baggaley highlights, Wikipedia is the sixth most visited website in the world and also the “most commonly plagiarized source” according to the available software (Baggaley,

2012, p. 9). While Wikipedia is recognised as a “general reference” site and a useful starting point for information on a topic, teaching staff are at pains to stress to students that it is not an academic source of information (Howard & Davies, 2009). The proliferation of this ‘anonymous’ and ‘collective’ textual culture online has resulted in a crude technological approach to address student plagiarism.

2.4.5 Text-matching software

New technology has resulted in the ease of copying yet also the ease of detection (Lyon, Barrett, & Malcolm, 2006; McGowan, 2005). Cole and Kiss (2000) analogise the emergence of the internet as the start of a “dispiriting “arms race” between students and educators, each side developing ever more sophisticated methods of outwitting the other. In a scene reminiscent of a James Bond movie...” (p.6). In response, higher education has witnessed the industry wide purchase of non-originality detection software (NODS) (Clarke & Lancaster, 2006). These have been developed to detect originality in texts against an ever-growing centralised database of published material and assignments submitted by students in previous and current courses across institutions (Heather, 2010). This software is often referred to as “plagiarism detection software” (Heather, 2010; Introna & Hayes, 2011) or “anti-plagiarism software” (Stapleton, 2012). As Badge and Scott (2009) indicate, this definition is problematic as the software does not detect “plagiarism”, it detects non-originality of text. Consequently, “academic judgment is required to make the decision about whether non-original text should be classed as plagiarism” (Badge & Scott, 2009, p. 2).

There is now a multitude of free and paid NODS services available. *Turnitin* (iParadigms) has emerged from the crowd as the dominant software provider in the UK and US higher education markets. Between 2003 and 2005 the Joint Information Services Committee (JISC) funded UK institutions for a two-year trial of Turnitin software. By 2008, 95% of UK institutions were fee-paying iParadigms customers and Turnitin now serves 10,000

institutions in 135 countries (Barrie, 2008 as cited in Badge & Scott, 2009). With a shift to an anti-plagiarism discourse, more staff discuss and consequently search for plagiarism. Furthermore, textual plagiarism is both easier to find and to commit (McGowan, 2005), which leads to a spiral of plagiarism accusations.

Despite a preference for this type of software, teachers have actually proved to be disappointed that software merely checks for textual copying rather than finding proof of plagiarism (Sutherland-Smith, 2008). As Heather (2010) contemplated in his call for student to *Turn-it-off*, savvy students and researchers have found ways to beat the software although these are often either too obvious to teachers or too complex and time consuming for a student to contemplate. Students have also legally challenged the software and iParadigms' right to hold student assessments on their database (). Ironically, the claim is that the software designed to prevent plagiarism is actually infringing copyright (Morris and Stommel, 2017). iParadigms has successfully defended against the suits, arguing that Turnitin and their other software programmes use student material with signed agreements and in a transformative manner (Marsh, 2004). The use of NODS, however, is treated with suspicion by students and does not help to dissipate the adversarial discourse between students and staff (Carroll & Ryan, 2005a). Furthermore, they have led to the evolution of plagiarism: the contract cheating industry (Lancaster & Clarke, 2015).

2.4.6 Contract Cheating

Rather than solve the problem of student copying via the internet, the use of text-matching software has created a far more subversive force in the academy in the form of contract cheating companies. As students' writing is essentially under surveillance by software, the decision to cheat may become a more direct decision in order to avoid detection of plagiarism. In order to do this students require a writer to write them an

'original essay' or an ironically titled 'plagiarism free' essay in order to beat the software (Newton & Lang, 2016). This third party support may be in a number of forms, including classmates, friends and families or private tutors. Although this type of illegitimate support has existed prior to the internet, the internet has enabled this to occur on a larger scale (Bretag et al., 2018). Thus the term contract cheating has been coined by Clarke and Lancaster (2006) and defined as "the process of offering the process of completing an assignment for a student out to tender" (p.3). Contract cheating has resultantly become a lucrative industry which blurs the line between cheating and legitimate study support through claims they act as consultants for students (Ellis, Zucker, & Randall, 2018; Lancaster & Clarke, 2015). While this phenomenon is also attributed to increasing marketisation of higher education (Bretag et al., 2018), Ellis, Zucker and Randall's (2018) research shows how the internet in combination with high concept business planning has had a large role to play in the rise in visibility and profitability of these services.

Despite the seeming threat of these companies researchers have found it difficult to assess the prevalence of use of these services. The profitability and visibility of these services has caused the media to grasp on to the issue and has also resulted in increasing attention to the issue which places strain on the staff-student relationship (Ellis et al., 2018; Sokol, 2017). The latest large scale research (survey n-14,086) from Australia found that 5.78% of students were involved in what might be considered serious cheating via this approach (Bretag et al., 2018). It is interesting to note that while this is a significant proportion, it is more in line with regular cheating estimates rather than a complete collapse of academic integrity. As Clarke and Lancaster (2006) suggest in their initial development of the term, contract cheating is the successor to more traditional plagiarism. The act of buying essays, however, removes much of the moral ambiguity that the act of plagiarism presents with students learning to write. When combined with

the influence of marketisation of higher education, however, students may feel justified in paying for third party support if they do not feel supported by their institution.

The shift to the post-Gutenberg paradigm has therefore highlighted a long-standing issue in academia and brought about the “hysteria” and fear as a consequence (Gallant, 2008). Plagiarism has always been an issue of concern in the academic community, even prior to the “electronic revolution in text production” (Flowerdew & Li, 2007, p. 162). The new technology has uncovered existing layers of plagiarism, while creating new opportunities for plagiarism. It has also provided new insight in intertextual practices and authorial development which are being complicated by elements of online remix culture proving incompatible with academic norms. Hunt (2003) and Cope and Kalantzis (2009) describe the change as potentially cataclysmic for knowledge industries and intellectual property. However, they also indicate the emergence of a positive discourse which could use such changes to shape the future of academic teaching, assessment and publication for the better.

2.4.7 Academic discourses on plagiarism

In this context of changing approaches to knowledge and text, understanding plagiarism may provide a significant obstacle to students in transition to the academic context. Not only that, but the shifting landscape has challenged teachers in communicating the corresponding expectations of integrity and dealing with academic misconduct. In order to explore the academic debates on plagiarism, Kaposi and Dell (2012) identified four discourses on plagiarism related to corresponding epistemological, moral and political considerations. The authors highlight the need to consider these perspectives as it shapes how the problem of plagiarism is approached, whether to “discipline or teach, punish or educate, or discourse and invite for political criticism” (Kaposi & Dell, 2012, p. 814). These four discourses relate to the moral, procedural, developmental and

intertextual nature of plagiarism and are useful markers to frame our discussion of these debates.

2.4.7.1 Moral discourse

In the following quote, Jude Carroll, one of the leading authorities on academic integrity in the UK, reflects on the impact of the internet in the mid 2000's:

Resources were being developed at eye-watering speed (especially in English) and search engine improvements meant that finding and harvesting these riches became easier, week-by-week; they also facilitated student networking and sharing of resources. It was clear that a growing number of students used copy-paste strategies to generate texts – exactly how many...was unclear. They also recycled coursework from other students and accessed essay banks to generate assessments. All in all, the 2005 teaching and learning context around student plagiarism was characterised by confusion, concern and more than a bit of panic (Carroll, 2014, p. 1).

This quote describes the impact of the internet in tandem with the expansion of universities creating a panic within institutions, which they are still grappling with. It is within this context that the development of academic integrity research emerges in order to combat the negative discourse of “moral decay” (Howard, 2001). Within this discourse plagiarists have been described as thieves, shoplifters, forgers, criminals, embezzlers, mentally ill or diseased (Hexham, 1999; Park, 2003), symptomatic of a “moral panic” (Gallant, 2008).

As Kaposi and Dell (2012) emphasise, the moral discourse on plagiarism is more connected with Martial's legalistic interpretation of plagiarism as the stealing of

intellectual property. It paints plagiarising students as thieves. In one of her landmark works on the topic, Howard pleads the case for ending the treatment of plagiarism as “academic death penalty” in which it marked the exclusion of the student (Howard, 1995). Her argument called for a reevaluation of the way students write and learn requiring the recalibration of the approach to plagiarism accordingly:

This new policy does not endorse a "more lenient attitude" toward plagiarism; rather, it suggests an enlarged range of definitions and motivations for plagiarism, which in turn enlarges the range of acceptable response (Howard, 1995, p. 789)

Carroll makes a similar argument in her 2014 reflections on plagiarism research. She notes that when viewing plagiarism as the academic death penalty, only very serious cases of plagiarism would be brought to light and dealt with by the institutions. The serious nature of plagiarism also lead to a lot of cases being swept under the carpet due to the difficulty of dealing with it (Carroll, 2014; Howard, 1995). In the new context however, the ease of copy/paste and detection via text-matching software meant this was no longer possible and there was a need to deal with plagiarism. In this context the adversarial, “catch and punish” discourse had become self-defeating and in need of updating along with assessment practices (Carroll & Appleton, 2001). Thus, a more constructive, pedagogic and sympathetic approach from a community of academic integrity researchers of diverse backgrounds has emerged to guide universities through this textual revolution (Flowerdew & Li, 2007).

2.4.7.2 Procedural discourse

By removing the moral element, the procedural discourse views plagiarism in terms of breach of rules and therefore reduces the question of intention to cheat. In this way Kaposi and Dell (2012) highlight that this discourse aims to defuse the alarmist approach

to plagiarism. The development of policies and procedures aimed at ensuring effective approaches to academic integrity (ICAI, 2014), at least in Anglophone universities, has been successful (Bretag, 2015; Morris & Carroll, 2015). This discourse is having a more broad impact in internationalised higher education with the various initiatives described earlier. The European Network of Academic Integrity and also evaluation of policy on academic integrity in China (Chen & Macfarlane, 2016; Hu & Sun, 2017), are examples of how the procedural approach is spreading.

Central to this discourse is to have consistent and fair implementation of a clear and transparent academic integrity policy which has a system in place to adjudicate violations (ICAI, 2014, p. 30). In Carroll and Appleton's (2001) seminal report *Plagiarism: Good Practice Guide*, the case was made for "combining academic and policy decisions in a systematic, fair and coherent way in the belief that this is the most effective way of dealing with plagiarism" (p.4). The rationale behind this procedural approach is that it has balanced approach to plagiarism as cheating but also as a learning issue (Carroll & Appleton, 2001; Park, 2004). Park's (2003, 2004) work analysing student issues with plagiarism and developing effective policy for addressing the problem provides a good example of the procedural discourse. Park provides a policy framework for dealing with plagiarism at an institutional level around the pillars of academic integrity, framing prevention and deterrence with a supportive and developmental process based around institutional culture.

In this approach, while intent is not completely removed from the picture, it allows academics to highlight a range of problems with student work which could be interpreted as plagiarism whether intentional or otherwise (Park, 2004). This establishes plagiarism as a strict liability offence meaning the act itself (*actus reus*) is enough to proceed with the case. Therefore, intention or knowledge of wrongdoing (*mens rea*) or negligence are

not considered. Strict liability usually applies to regulatory offences (in this case the regulation of academic standards) and where the liberty of a person is not at stake (Elliott & Quinn, 2008).²² Either the student has intended to commit the act or they were sufficiently negligent to have committed the act, however it also places a degree of responsibility on the university to fulfil its responsibility to provide the student with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the norms and standards of the assessment.²³

This strict liability approach has meant policies and procedures have been put in place by many institutions (Carroll, 2014). These bureaucratic procedures have meant many more cases of plagiarism, and other forms of misconduct can be dealt with without the need for the moral discourse or the academic death penalty. As well as ensuring students are dealt with fairly, this procedural approach takes into account the findings of research into prosocial responses to cheating (Rettinger, 2017). This entails that teachers enforce fair punishments rather than overlook transgression (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). In addition to enforcing the rules, importantly, staff must make sure students are aware of what is considered cheating and given “sufficient opportunity to learn how not to plagiarize” (Carroll, 2016, p. 20). One of the key steps in this process has been to attempt to define plagiarism. Carroll (2016) and others (for instance Weber-Wulff, 2014) have identified Teddi Fishman’s (former director of ICAI) definition of the term “transcends theft, fraud and copyright” (Fishman, 2009, p.5). She writes:

“Plagiarism occurs when someone:

1. Uses words, ideas, or work products
2. Attributable to another identifiable person or source

²² The legal interpretation of strict liability has been taken from Elliott and Quinn (2016).

²³ This approach is similar to speeding offences when driving (Bailey, 2014).

3. Without attributing the work to the source from which it was obtained
4. In a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship
5. In order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain which need not be monetary”

(Fishman, 2009, p. 5)

Within Fishman’s definition of plagiarism, there are three key distinctions within the academic context which outsiders may not be accustomed to: attribution, expectation and benefit. These relate to the third discourse which Kaposi and Dell (2012) identify: the developmental discourse.

2.4.7.3 Developmental discourse

As Kaposi and Dell (2012) indicate, the moral discourse presupposes that the education is the sole responsibility of the student, therefore questioning the very purpose of teaching in higher education. The procedural discourse lays instead the groundwork for fair and workable policy and procedure to deal with plagiarism without necessarily viewing it as a moral or intentional act. This procedural approach leads the way for an understanding of plagiarism as a learning issue, as Carroll again notes: “too much focus on integrity implies that students lack it – when in fact, most just lack skills and knowledge” (Carroll, 2014, p. 1). The developmental discourse therefore treats students as apprentice scholars, who are learning the rule of the game by developing their study and writing skills and the academic norms (Angélil-Carter, 2000; Neville, 2016).

Referring back to Fishman’s (2009) definition of plagiarism, in essence this means teaching students what is expected of them (the expectation of original authorship), particularly the importance of attributing work using referencing, citation and the use of one’s own words rather than other peoples’ (Park, 2003). Initially this approach aimed at a pedagogical approach to the problem of plagiarism and by helping students to understand the concept. As McGowan (2005) argued, however, this approach was

putting the cart before the horse observing that plagiarism does not make sense to the students outside of the academic context. She refers to Hunt's (2003) baseball analogy of the problem which can be adapted to the British context as "looking for a way to teach the offside rule to people who have no clear idea what football is".²⁴ A key takeaway from this illustration is that students cannot know plagiarism is wrong unless they understand the academic context. Therefore, in respect to Fishman's definition, students cannot be aware of any benefit they may have by plagiarising, especially if it is unintended. McGowan's (2005) response to this problem, and at the centre of the developmental discourse, advocates an apprenticeship model in which students are introduced to the culture of enquiry and given opportunity to develop.

In the developmental discourse, Kaposi and Dell (2012) include the 'holistic' and 'authorial identity' approach within the developmental discourse. In the holistic sense, plagiarism can only be understood within the whole academic culture which students are becoming accustomed to. This approach, including the use of honour codes, has been called for by McCabe, Butterfield and Trevino (2012), explaining that contextual factors are just as important as the individual characteristics of students. The holistic approach is advocated by many of the experts in the field (Bretag et al., 2014; Drinan & Gallant, 2008; Macdonald & Carroll, 2006; Sutherland-Smith, 2008). An empirical illustration of this is demonstrated in the large scale Australian research project, again lead by Tracey Bretag and including McGowan (Bretag et al., 2014) (n-15,304 students) at 39 institutions, followed up by focus groups and interviews. While the study found that students were hardly 'blank slates' in terms of their understanding of plagiarism and they

²⁴ "...offering lessons and courses and workshops on "avoiding plagiarism" - indeed, posing plagiarism as a problem at all - begins at the wrong end of the stick. It might usefully be analogized to looking for a good way to teach the infield fly rule to people who have no clear idea what baseball is" (Hunt, 2003). <http://www.stu.ca/~hunt/4 reasons.htm>

did have a range of resources available to them, they still needed time and opportunity to develop their understanding of academic integrity. As the title of their paper suggests, however, rather than all the warnings of plagiarism and implications that students lack integrity, as one student mentioned, they would prefer staff to “teach us how do it properly” (p. 1161). This approach brackets intentionality and complements the procedural approach, including advocating the use of text-matching software to help students develop their writing in a formative manner (Davis & Carroll, 2009; McGowan, 2005).

The second key element which Kaposi and Dell (2012) highlight is the development of authorial identity. They argue that in addressing the development of authorial identity by students, the research is attempting a revolutionary reimagining of writing, however it will still inevitably face the moral and procedural discourse if students do commit plagiarism. They note that plagiarism still remains a problem in this discourse as, once students have had the opportunity to develop, they still might commit the moral and procedural transgression. They posit that the authorial identity discourse starts to develop into the intertextual discourse, but it stops short by not altogether eliminating the idea of plagiarism in the traditional sense.

2.4.7.4 Intertextuality discourse

The final discourse is the most radical in which plagiarism is replaced completely with new terms which acknowledge the intertextual nature of writing as a social practice, rather than a technical or moral matter. This discourse brings us back to Howard’s call for the end of the academic death penalty and also the concept of plagiarism, instead preferring the new acts of:

- **Cheating:** Submitting someone else’s work under your own name, a deliberate attempt to deceive.

- **Non-attribution:** Can be deliberate or accidental, the author omits footnotes or quotation marks indicating the use of other sources.
- **Patchwriting:** “Copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one synonym for another” (1999, p.xvii), paraphrasing the source too closely, not usually with intent to deceive.

(Howard, 1995, 1999)

In addition to Howard, other terms have been raised to replace plagiarism, with its moral connotations, such as ‘textual borrowing’ (Pennycook, 1996; Thompson & Pennycook, 2008) or transgressive ‘intertextuality’ (Borg, 2009; Chandrasoma et al., 2004; Thompson, 2009). The argument here is that less laden terminology will enable us to “focus primarily on textual relations and secondarily on whether such intertextuality transgresses institutional conventions” (Chandrasoma et al., 2004, p. 179). Chandrasoma, Thompson and Pennycook (2008) are adamant of the need for this approach in the age of the internet where students are adapting to new ways of manipulating, borrowing and collaborating on texts.

The key drawback of the discourse, which also highlights one of the core issues facing the concept of academic integrity, is its idealism. By removing the emphasis on morality and the detection of plagiarism, it argues that writing can be better understood as a social practice, in which the identity of the writer is formed and certain cultural practices are embedded (Chandrasoma et al., 2004, p. 179; Ivanič, 1998). The similarities between the experiences of mature students in the work of Ivanič on the development of writer identity and of international students in Chandrasoma, Thompson, and Pennycook’s exploration of international students’ experience of intertextuality, display that this is a universal issue of authorship. It is notable that participants in research in this area,

particularly committed to in-depth qualitative research studies, are usually “engaged” in learning as opposed to students who would be more susceptible to cheating. As a key distinction from the “holistic” approach, citing the work of Thompson (2009), the authorial identity approach to plagiarism “promises the revolutionary insight that writing itself cannot quite be taught, only engaged with” (Kaposi & Dell, 2012, pp. 822–823). It is therefore less suited to understand why students may cheat deliberately.

Within these four discourses, we see the problem of the ideal theory of students learning to become authors and the instrumental policy and procedure of managing student cheating. The reality, of course, lays somewhere between the two poles, as Chandrasoma, Thompson and Pennycook (2004) allude to:

Unfortunately, the more pedagogically oriented strategies to be found in writing manuals and academic skills and language courses also do little more than scratch the surface of the issues by focusing largely on paraphrasing and referencing skills. We are by no means underestimating the teaching of citation and referencing conventions; we need to know to what extent such mechanical exercises can in fact help students to work out, relate to, and find some kind of investment in the obscure language games of the academy, but we also need to know how such exercises can help students engage with issues of identity, knowledge, and interdisciplinarity. (p. 188)

This solution, as the authors admit, would be far more labour intensive requiring teachers to have more intimate knowledge of students’ work and their identities. The intertextual approach may therefore be problematic in the current context of massified and marketised higher education (Macdonald, 2000). While the intertextual approach views students as authors engaged in intertextual practices, students may not share this view.

The recent return of the moral panic in the face of contract cheating (Gallant, 2016), in which students completely disengage from the intertextual process through buying essays, indicate that idealism needs to be backed up by a degree of moral judgement and proceduralism. These discourses raise significant questions about approach to learning, their motivation to learn and the problem of plagiarism. As we see in the next section, these questions are addressed in the research focusing on epistemological development which students undergo at university and are highly relevant to this project.

2.5 Theories of Epistemological Development

As already noted, cheating and threats to academic integrity are a complex mix of psychosocial classroom variables which have a direct influence on the student's ethical decision making. A student is influenced by external factors of their classroom context in their particular institution in their specific social context interacting with and forming the students' internal motivations to study and their moral development. The broader contextual factors which indirectly impact classroom cheating behaviour, such as the marketisation of higher education and the impact of the internet, have been discussed in the preceding chapters. Now we turn to the internal, cognitive development of students as they progress into and through higher education, looking at their motivation to study, moral engagement and maturation through the process. The implications of this are profound not only for academic integrity but for understanding the meaning and purpose of higher education in general.

Entering higher education, students are making the shift from compulsory education to non-compulsory further study. Students are usually provided with more choice in the educational process through focus on subjects of particular interest through the narrowing of subjects chosen, for example at GCSE and A-level in England. Ostensibly at least, the transition through primary, secondary and on to tertiary education is a

journey to independence and self-identity (Baxter Magolda, 2003; Haggis, 2004). While external factors, such as overbearing parents, social pressures and market forces certainly play a role in motivating students to go to university, there are strong internal forces at work in a student's decision to further their education and transition to adulthood. As an example, the International Student Survey (2017)²⁵ of pre-enrolment students (n=62,366) at 65 institutions worldwide found that students ranked passion for the subject being studied as the top reason for going to university (58.4%) with independence and a greater sense of freedom also ranked highly (29.1%). Even when considering other highly ranked motivators for further study related to employability, such as career development, increasing earning potential and improving employment prospects, these factors are related to gaining financial independence and professional identity. The debates regarding the wisdom of elevating employability to a primary reason for higher education aside (Frankham, 2017), there is a body of research exploring the benefits of attending university for fostering intellectual development and independence (Richardson, 2013).

2.5.1 Models of Epistemological Development

[H]igher education is a process during which a student's conception of knowledge is expected to undergo a considerable shift along a continuum that we can broadly describe. (Moon, 2005, p. 10)

As Moon (2005) indicates, the conception of knowledge, or epistemological approach, develops along a continuum during university. There are several models which may be

²⁵ This question was omitted from 2018 survey

used to chart this (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997)²⁶ In order to understand students' engagement in higher education and, conversely, their engagement in cheating behaviour, it will be argued here that the epistemological approach is deeply connected to academic integrity.

The various theories of epistemological development share common origins in the work of Jean Piaget and colleagues' work on the development between childhood and adolescence (Inhelder & Piaget, 2013; Richardson, 2013). Richardson's (2013) review of these theories highlights the emergence of converging accounts of epistemological development by European and American researchers. These theories generally build upon the Piagetian school's work on *genetic epistemology* (Piaget 1950 in Hofer & Pintrich, 1997), expanding the focus to analyse the development of young adults in secondary and higher education (Perry, 1997; Richardson, 2013). While university may not be the only place in which people may achieve epistemological development, there seems to be the consensus that the academic environment can foster a 'deep' approach to knowledge (Marton & Säljö, 1976). This may particularly be the case where students are entering a subject which they have no experience of or in the more constructivist subjects in the social sciences (Lea, Stephenson, & Troy, 2003; Richardson, 2013).

As there are numerous models, ranging between stage and non-stage, qualitative and quantitative approaches (Richardson, 2013), the focus of this study is restricted to stage models of epistemological development. Although the stage models suffer by providing linear and simplistic models of development, they provide a clearer base to understand development of an approach to knowledge and attempt to map it as students' progress through university (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). William Perry (1970, 1997) produced exactly

²⁶ For an overview of these, John T. E. Richardson of the Open University has provided a historical and integrative review of 50 years of research into stage and non-stage theories exploring epistemological development (Richardson, 2013).

this kind of stage model in his landmark qualitative study of Harvard undergraduates over a twenty-year period. Perry devised nine positions of intellectual and ethical development. Perry described this as a “Pilgrim’s Progress of ways of knowing” (Perry, 1997) from dualism of right and wrong answers to the relativism as “diversity of opinion” where “knowledge is qualitative based upon context.” (Perry, 1997, p. 80). Commitment to relativism provides individuals with true power over knowledge as they experience agency, essentially their choice of understanding of reality. As Perry (1997) highlights, this transition through this process places particular pressure on the students but also requires they have freedom to go through the process.

In essence Perry paints the picture of how the university environment fosters the development of the individual by changing their relationship to knowledge and, consequently, to authority. Perry’s work has been reconciled and validated by the work of subsequent authors who have explored students’ development over time (Baxter Magolda, 1992a) and in different cultural contexts (Säljö, 1979; Zhang & Watkins, 2001). Despite the consensus on the developmental trajectory, there is little alignment of the terms, definitions and delineations of these constructs (Hofer and Pintrich, 1994). It appears that each theorist interprets the process in ways suited to their context, therefore when looking to apply these theories, the context dictates the selection of an appropriate model. In this case, two models are appropriate for Chinese learners in order to clarify the connection between epistemological reflection and academic integrity: Baxter Magolda’s *Epistemological Reflection Model* (ERM), which presents the epistemological continuum and the clear mapping of her terminology (Baxter Magolda, 2004a); and Marton and Säljö’s (1976) research on *conceptions of learning*, due to the relevance of their concepts of deep and surface learning to Chinese learners.

2.5.2 Baxter Magolda's *Epistemological Reflection Model*

As highlighted earlier, cheating behaviour bears a close relationship with the externalisation of responsibility. Conversely, Baxter Magolda's development of the *Epistemological Reflection Model* (Baxter Magolda, 1992) and the concept of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2004b), provide a model of how higher education influences graduates' trajectory towards internalisation of responsibility and the development of self. Baxter Magolda (2001) argues that this transformation "is central to knowledge construction" as "authority and expertise are shared in the mutual construction of knowledge among peers" (p. 188). Reflecting the influence of Perry, Baxter Magolda has carried out various longitudinal qualitative studies at institutions in the United States, the findings of which have been highly correlated (Richardson, 2013). In her initial study, based on interviews with 101 students over five years, she developed the ERM in which students may proceed through four ways of knowing at university:

Table 1 **Baxter Magolda's Epistemological Reflection Model (1992)**

Ways of Knowing	Description
Absolute Knowing	Knowledge should be acquired. It is quantifiable, inflexible, and unquestionable and comes from higher authorities.
Transitional Knowing	Starting to understand knowledge as a process. Less certain of the absolute authority of facts.
Independent Knowing	Open-minded approach to knowledge as uncertain. People have the right to hold different perspectives.
Contextual Knowing	Context defines knowledge, admits the uncertainty and relativity of information. Uncommon among undergraduates.

This shift through ways of knowing represents a change in a student's epistemological reflection, which Baxter Magolda (2004a) defines as the "assumptions about the nature, limits, and certainty of knowledge" (p.31). The transition from absolute knowing to contextual knowing is not simply an epistemological exercise but in practical terms it shapes the student's concept of self and also of their surrounding environment. One of the key shifts in this process is a change in the role of peers and teachers in this environment. This is highly significant to students' trouble transitioning to pedagogical approaches in higher education, which manifest themselves as problems with academic integrity due to the influence of peers and teachers on students' cheating behaviour,

Baxter Magolda's (1992) model highlights the challenges of promoting "communal learning and complex thinking" (p.267) in university. There are problems at both ends of the spectrum of epistemological reflection. From the students' perspective, when traditional age (18-22) students arrive at university, they do so by excelling in a high stakes examination-based system which rewards the absolute approach to knowledge. Within this model the student's role is to obtain knowledge from their teacher who is responsible for communicating (usually using standardised textbooks) and ensuring they understand the knowledge (usually via testing). According to Chinn and Malhorta (2002) textbook activities have almost no epistemological authenticity, especially in combination with strict right and wrong assessments which restrict the nature of knowledge and search for truth from the students' control. This absolute approach, termed dualism in Perry's scheme, bifurcates the world into right and wrong, good and bad, us and them (Perry, 1997). This view posits fellow students as competitors. Classmates, however, also serve a more communal role as people with which to share materials containing the 'right' answer and to discuss the common concepts which they are learning. As the students progress through the ERM, the role of the learner, teacher and peer change to

a more active and relativistic approach to knowledge in which authority of the teacher is diffused and students become more independent. While a hierarchy remains, the structure is flattened as power is distributed more evenly (Baxter Magolda, 2004a).

University teachers instructing students at the absolute knowing end of the spectrum face a dilemma in helping students progress to independent or even contextual knowing. The teacher must break with students' conventional expectation of the teacher to provide a fair and appropriate educational process. Baxter Magolda (1992) highlights the problems which may emerge with this transition:

When students derive their ways [of] knowing from their teachers' objectivist epistemology and conventional pedagogy, they view knowledge as certain, see the teacher as the authority, and define learning as individual mastery. Student involvement then becomes a matter of engaging with teachers and peers to demonstrate one's learning prowess or refusing to engage with others to avoid the competition. Students with this orientation are likely to resist—or at least feel confused by—new pedagogies based on mutual sharing, creative conflict, and consensus. Perhaps this explains the frustration many teachers encounter when they initiate classroom discussions, only to find that no meaningful exchange takes place. (p.267)

When faced with the silence of the seminar, the temptation is therefore for the teacher to assume the conventional role of the teacher and impart their objective information on to the students. There is the added temptation to do this as it is easy to assess this in a quantitative manner. Baxter Magolda recommends that in order to avoid this “[we] must start with students' knowledge rather than teachers' knowledge, recognizing that helping students think about their perspectives is more useful than having them memorize those

of others.” (p.286). Baxter Magolda’s (1992) research therefore highlights the importance of developing students’ perspectives at university. Between the test-taking, absolutist approach to knowledge of secondary education and the “new pedagogy” of higher education, students must face the uncertainty of knowledge, which can be stressful and isolating. This involves a significant change in the relationship between student and teacher, and also with their classmates.

2.5.3 Marton and Säljö’s *Conceptions of Knowledge*

Parallel to Perry’s work, Ference Marton and Roger Säljö of the Göteborg School carried out their research into how students develop their conceptions of knowledge at university in Sweden (Marton & Säljö, 1976). There is a striking resemblance between the schemes of student development developed by Perry and Marton and Säljö, no doubt due their Piagetian roots (Entwistle, 2000). Marton and Säljö’s novel research approach differs from Perry in that it analysed students’ understanding of text. Therefore it focused on the specific learning tasks to understand how students engaged with their studies over a year (Gibbs, Morgan, & Taylor, 1982; Marton & Säljö, 1976). Despite the lack of longitudinal analysis of students in their research, as noted by Säljö (1982), the comparability with Perry’s scheme provided validity for their results. Marton and Säljö’s qualitative and phenomenological approach and findings have been further validated by research in British universities (Entwistle, 2000; Gibbs et al., 1982) and around the world, including in China (Marton, Dall’Alba, & Kun, 1996; Marton & EDB Chinese Language Research Team, 2010).

Marton and Säljö’s approach differs from Perry and Baxter Magolda in that they relate the students’ epistemological approach, or *conceptions of knowledge*, more directly to student tasks at university rather than the holistic experience. In relation to academic integrity, Marton and Säljö provide a nuanced perspective on student development due to their concentration on engagement with academic texts. The key concept associated

with their research is the dichotomy between *surface* and *deep approaches to learning* which are defined as:

- *Surface learning* (information reproducing): “the learners are focusing on surface characteristics of the situation, on the very wording of a text being read, of an argument put forward, on figures in a problem, on formulas used to solve a problem. They want to be able to answer the questions they are anticipating and they will probably fail even though they are trying so hard (they would also fail, of course, if they did not try at all). They will fail because they are not focusing on the meaning of the text.”
- *Deep learning* (knowledge transforming): “the learners are focusing on the object of learning, they are trying to get hold of the phenomenon dealt with in the text they are reading or in the presentation they are listening to [...] And, paradoxically enough, because they do not immediately aim being able to recall a text or to come up with an answer to the problem given, they will probably be better off when it comes to recalling the text or solving the problem.”

(Bowden and Marton, 2003, p.8)

While this may be a simplistic dichotomy (Beattie, Collins, & McInnes, 1997), according to Entwistle (2000) the distinction has practical value due to its “accessible language... with metaphorical associations” (p.9). It is valuable in the context of this research as it highlights students’ different engagement in assessment which impacts expectations of academic integrity.

In relation to responsibility for learning and motivation to learn, the surface and deep approach could also be understood as an externalised and internalised approach, respectively. Marton and Säljö (1984/2005) refer to this as the “paradoxical circular relation between approach to learning and motivation to learn” (p.55). In the specific case of university students, they are moving from compulsory education to post-compulsory education. Not only this, they are transitioning to legal adulthood in which they are personally responsible for their actions. One simplistic interpretation of the transition would be to understand surface learning as that which is done at primary and high school and deep learning is that which is done at university, however this would be an overgeneralisation. There are studies that show that even high school age students are capable of higher order thinking depending on a student’s engagement in the topic (Marton & Säljö, 1984/2005; Schommer and Walker, 1997 in Richardson, 2013).

What Marton and Säljö’s *conceptions of knowledge* does make clear is the connection between the forms of assessment, the learning environment and the approach to knowledge. While it is an overgeneralisation to say that deep learning may not occur at secondary education, there are fundamental differences in the pedagogy of higher education due to the learning environment. The pedagogy of secondary education is more oriented towards surface learning, or information reproducing (Hirvela & Du, 2013; Pabian, 2015). As secondary education is compulsory, the students have external motivation for being there and the increasing focus on high stakes testing places the teacher and textbook as the absolute source of knowledge, as also highlighted in Baxter Magolda (2003). Marton and Säljö (1976 and Marton, Hounsell, & Entwistle, 1997) highlight the primacy of extrinsic motivation correlating to a surface approach. The deep approach, on the other hand, is intrinsically motivated, which Marton and Säljö (1984/2005) define as the absence of threat and resulting anxiety.

The transition to studying at university therefore involves a change from a surface to a deep approach. As highlighted by Baxter Magolda (1992a), this entails a change of role of the learner and teacher. Marton and Säljö (1976) link the conceptions of knowledge with the approaches to knowledge when reading academic texts, which the following table illustrates:

Table 2 Approaches to Learning and Conceptions of Knowledge

		Säljö (1979) Conception of Knowledge	
		Surface	Deep
Marton (1976)	Approaches to Learning	Surface	A quantitative increase in knowledge
		Deep	An interpretative process aimed at understanding reality
			Changing as a person (added subsequently Marton et al., 1993)

The quantitative focus of the surface approach relies upon memorisation, which causes students problems in the university environment. This is not to say memorisation is not useful, however, as the deep process is focused on interpretation and meaning, the ability to recall becomes less important. As memorisation has served students well during their previous study experience, they bring these surface strategies but find them less successful in the new context (Marton et al., 1996). In the case of reading exercises for example, it was found that when asked to read a task with the expectation that questions would be asked, the students with a surface approach would ‘question-spot’ in order to anticipate on the key information they may be questioned about (Entwistle, 2000). Whereas students with a deep approach would read in a ‘holistic’ manner to get the meaning of the text (Marton et al., 1997; Marton & Säljö, 1976). The success of the approach depends on the context and what the student is expected to achieve.

The goal of the student in completing a task is part of the “paradoxical circular relation” (Marton & Säljö, 1984/2005, p. 55) between learning and motivation. The teacher must still have the semblance of authority in setting the task, however the type of task and context it is set in may dictate which approach will be effective. The study skills and strategies which have served the students well before university are effective for the short form answers and multiple choice answer tests in which there is a clear right and wrong answer. In this case the student is motivated by the demands of the teacher (grades). Marton and Säljö (2005) describe the paradox in this:

[A]dopting a surface approach means that the learner focuses on the “text” or tasks in themselves and not on what they are about. But it is hardly possible to be interested in a “text” unless one is paying attention to what it is about. Not being motivated by an interest in the “text” tends thus to lead to the adoption of a surface approach, and the adoption of a surface approach tends to block any interest in the “text”. (p.55)

Students using a deep approach interact with the text in different way, a way which may not be effective for short answer questions (Svensson, 1977). University assessments however require longer form answers, such as essays in order to reflect understanding. Marton and Säljö (2005) note that while understanding incorporates memory of the concepts, it requires the further act of finding meaning as well, which is an altogether more complex task. In this way the training of the memory during secondary school is useful in the higher learning process but only as a means to the end of understanding rather than the end itself, as is the case with high stakes testing. In their initial research, which focused on students aged from 15-76, Marton and Säljö (1976) found that the

deep approach occurs even with secondary school students dealing with high levels of information.

Understanding rather than recall of information therefore becomes the key goal for students with a deep approach to knowledge. A study by Entwistle and Entwistle (1992) utilizing Marton and Säljö's (1976) theory to explore how British students developed understanding in academic contexts, produced this insightful quote from a participant:

If you *really* understand something, why it works, and what the idea is behind it, you cannot *not* understand it afterwards - you cannot '*de-understand*' it! (Entwistle and Entwistle, 1992, p.9)

Where Marton and Säljö's (1976) initial studies had focused on student interaction with individual texts, Noel Entwistle's work with various colleagues (Entwistle & Marton, 1994; Entwistle & Tait, 1995; Marton et al., 1997) brings the focus on cognitive development out to look at the holistic student experience (Entwistle & Entwistle, 1992). As other participants in their study described, understanding knowledge involved de- and reconstructing the arguments and ideas on an individual textual level. The deep approach requires students to extract meaning from the text, which is initially a two-way process between the reader and the writer of the text. As the text is deconstructed, the reader encounters further authors via references/citations and then must engage with these ideas. Students then engage with further texts, lectures and conversations with classmates and academic staff (Entwistle & Marton, 1994).

Entwistle and Entwistle (1992) note that the process of development of a deep approach is not simply a cognitive process but the result of a holistic experience of the academic environment. Memorisation faces problems as a strategy due to not just the volume of

information students are dealing with but the need to establish “a web of interconnections pulled into a coherent whole” (p.18). Entwistle would later go with Marton to explain these “coherent wholes” as knowledge objects (Marton and Entwistle, 1994). Rather than the memorisation of facts or theories, *knowledge objects* in this context were defined as: “an entity that could be surveyed and yet was sufficiently flexible to be adapted in ways which guided the answering of essay questions”. In their research they found, through serendipity due to a parallel research project, that students’ descriptions of their interactions with knowledge objects bore similarities to Nobel Laureates’ experiences, and hypothesised how these were used in the development of scientific intuition at higher levels. For students however, they had less high ambitions, and were aiming to answer long form essay questions rather than win Nobel prizes.

2.5.4 Relativism, self-authorship and personal transformation

The various schemes for epistemological development share similarities, yet their terminology and focus highlight nuanced areas of development. The models share their focus on the development of students through university. Marton and Baxter Magolda would go on to further their models to include the similar categories of *changing as a person* (Marton, Dall’Alba, & Beaty, 1993) and *self-authorship* (Baxter Magolda, 2004b) respectively. The theories are extensions of the developmental models, however, they highlight the major impact of higher education which is to foster independence and agency of students. As Entwistle and Marton’s (1994) exploration of how students develop knowledge objects alludes to, this is the embryonic stages of how Nobel prize winners develop their *scientific intuition*. The implications of this is that there are features of the academic environment and experience that act as a catalyst for epistemological development.

The transition from secondary to higher education is an epistemological shift which is manifested in a pedagogical shift. As Bowden and Marton (2003) assert, the pedagogical shift is problematic as learners “handle the learning environment in accordance with their experience of it” (p.8). As Marton and Säljö’s (1976) approaches to learning show, the pedagogies of their approach are based on epistemological assumptions beneath them. Furthermore, a student’s approach may be shaped by what they are trying to achieve (Bowden & Marton, 2003). In the case of secondary education, students are aiming to go to university and as a result are increasingly test focused. Bowden and Marton state the problematic implications of this:

One of the greatest problems of institutional forms of learning is that students study for the tests and exams, instead of studying to grasp the object of learning and instead of studying for life. The surface approach...is a reflection of this. (p.13)

The surface approach or absolute approach to knowledge is not a problem in itself but becomes problematic when the aim is to foster autonomy. In essence a test-taking pedagogy externalises motivation and, importantly, responsibility. It would be too simplistic to say secondary school students are completely extrinsically motivated and graduates are completely intrinsically motivated. As we have seen, not all graduates reach contextual knowing (Baxter Magolda, 1992b) and some high school students adapt a deep approach (Marton & Säljö, 2005). However, there are significant differences in the aims of secondary and higher education, which are reflected in the way students are assessed.

2.5.5 Epistemological Implications for ethical and moral development

In terms of academic integrity, the epistemological approach has significant implications for how and why students cheat in different contexts. The theories of epistemological development detail significant changes in a student's identity, environment, expectations and, consequently, their behaviour. This can create what Vermunt and Verloop (1999, p. 270) term as "destructive friction" between a student's and teacher's epistemological approaches which can result in disengagement from studies. In respect to cheating, when teachers do not meet the expectations of their students, this provides them with opportunity to externalise responsibility for their actions. It could therefore be seen that in the transition from school to university, cheating could be a reaction to the change of environment and expectations of the learner.

The key change for the student is one of authority and internal motivation. From preparing for a high stakes test looking to textbook and teacher as their authority and motivation, they enter into the relativist world of multiple perspectives of knowledge. As suggested by Perry (1997), the development of identity and self-awareness are an intellectual and ethical process. Becoming aware of the individual and contextual factors provides students with control over their actions and the influence of others on them, students take internal responsibility for their actions. In this way Perry's understanding of ethical development bears a strong relationship to Bandura's (2015) triadic codetermination of moral development which recognises the personal, behavioral and environmental influences on moral development. Cheating, and the tendency for students to externalise responsibility for their transgressions, is therefore related to the epistemological development of students, as Bandura explains:

If human behaviour were controlled solely by external forces,
it would be pointless to hold individuals responsible for their actions.

The various epistemological and intellectual development models involve the student taking further responsibility for their knowledge, which involves deep personal change. As responsibility is a core value of integrity, epistemological approach can be seen as having a central role in learning at university.

Within the university environment, the pedagogical approach of lectures, seminars and free time still has pressures yet it also entails more freedom. In addition, many of the students are living alone for the first time. Entwistle (2012) cautions that this is a stressful and isolating process, which only emerges slowly over a degree programme. The process, however is not a change to complete freedom as it is scaffolded through an undergraduate programme to transition students in the new way of thinking. This requires students to ultimately take responsibility for learning away from the teacher. In this way university ostensibly prepares students for adulthood by internalising responsibility for learning, and conversely, by making them accountable for cheating. In addition to a new way of thinking there is a change of assessment aimed at examining the deep learning, which requires a more qualitative a meaningful approach. The most common form of assessment is in the form of academic writing. Not only do the assessments have academic norms which the students must learn but they are often open assessments, which unlike examinations, are not invigilated. Therefore students must police their own behaviour and transitional issues often become apparent in the form of plagiarism.

2.6 Concluding the literature review

In summation, the concept of academic integrity is very much a product of the current context of higher education and dissemination of knowledge in a state of flux. Although

cheating is not a new phenomenon, research has emerged to understand why students cheat and whether, as is the common perception, it is increasing. The perception of cheating being on the rise and a 'moral panic' in education is caused by two distinct but not entirely unrelated developments: the massification of higher education and the emergence of the internet. While not the initial intention, the massification of HE has led to marketisation and internationalisation, with an increasingly neoliberal agenda. This has not only created a more diverse student body but also shifted the motivation of students to pursue a higher education. Within this context competition has increased in higher education, leading to a focus on the fairness of the process, quality assurance and credentialism. Concurrently, the development of internet and associated technologies have challenged norms of authorship. With writing playing such a significant role in academic communication and assessment, this has caused deep reflection on intertextual practices with the impact of casting students as plagiarists. Academic integrity has emerged as concept aimed at addressing these issues in a constructive manner.

A holistic exploration of Chinese learners in this context provides a unique perspective for understanding academic integrity. Higher education and research have played a significant role in China's economic rise, with the government dedicating significant resources to highly ambitious programmes to create world class universities. The migration of Chinese students abroad has played a role in this process, with a brain circulation of intellectual talent, which has significant benefits for knowledge exchange. The rapid rise of instrumental targets, such as university rankings and targets for international student numbers have resulted in strains on academic integrity, both in terms of quality assurance of credentials and also in terms of the integrity of academic culture. The Chinese learner paradox and stereotype is the product of this context. With an increasing number of Chinese students in Anglophone campus environments, their

transition to a different learning environment enables educators to study the process of learning in higher education.

In order to understand the developmental process which learners go through in higher education, this review also explored models of epistemological development. The connection between these epistemological models and cheating and assessment is not initially apparent, however they are related by motivation. As Marton and Säljö (2005) emphasise, there is a “paradoxical circular relation” (p. 55) between learning and motivation. Motivation, in the context of this literature review, can be understood as the spectrum between internal, or intrinsic motivation, and external motivation, not only to study but also to cheat. On the macro level, the broader socio-economic context of the university in the neoliberal global context has been explained above, with implications for the reasons students go to university. These broader external issues impact upon what Pulvers and Diekhoff (1999) term the psycho-social milieu of the classroom or which Holliday (2001) cites as the small culture of the classroom. Within this environment an individual’s perceptions of academic norms, standards and transgressions are shaped by their classmates’ and teachers’ actions. As Bandura (2015) noted, however, if external forces were the sole factors “it would be pointless to hold individuals responsible for their actions” (p.4). The key core value of academic integrity in this case is therefore responsibility, as students who cheat often externalise responsibility for their actions, blaming others for their behaviour.

As Perry’s (1970) original model of epistemological development noted, university is a process of not only cognitive but also ethical development. Furthermore, the models described by Marton and Säljö (1976) (conceptions of knowledge) and Baxter Magolda (1992a) (epistemological reflection model) indicate that higher education relates to the internalisation of responsibility as students reflect on their approach to knowledge. With this in mind, the surface approach or absolute knowing could be understood as the

externalisation of responsibility for the authority of knowledge. These approaches to knowledge are more related to assessment with great reliance on memorisation and the static nature of knowledge, such as examinations using textbooks.

The deep approach or individual/contextual knowing, on the other hand involve a more internalised approach to knowledge. This approach is embedded in the teaching and research based university model explored due to the exposure to the academic environment and an increased degree of autonomy in learning. This approach involves assessment, to a greater degree through academic writing, in which students become researchers and authors adding their voice to the intertextual process. As writing becomes a significant form of assessment, thus the intertextual complexities of plagiarism come to the fore as students transition to the different environment and different form of assessment. In terms of the Chinese learner in the Anglophone context this is significant as writing involves the three key elements of the paradox: language, culture and testing. These are the three elements which will be explored in the empirical section of this thesis.

CHAPTER 3: THE HABERMASIAN LENS

3.1 Introduction

The key aim of this thesis is identify an existing theoretical framework to help understand the problems faced by mainland Chinese students in transitioning to study in English universities. In the course of exploring the research in this area, as set out in the previous chapter, numerous frameworks were identified and considered. This search led to the work of Jürgen Habermas, whose unique lens for viewing issues of communication and knowledge, provided clarity to the issues of academic integrity, academic discourse, and epistemological development in addition to the social, cultural and economic forces at play in higher education. The key theoretical framework used in this thesis, therefore, is Jürgen Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* hereafter TCA). In this section I lay out the relevant elements of the theory and the ways in which it has been utilized in educational research, most notably by Mezirow (1997) in his *transformative learning theory*; Hayhoe (1988) in the context of Chinese academia, and McLean (2006) in her critical approach to university pedagogy in the UK.

3.2 Jürgen Habermas: Critical Theory & the Frankfurt School

Habermas emerged in the post-war period aiming to reassess the *Enlightenment* and the modern origins of the democratic tradition from a particular perspective of how knowledge is communicated (Terry, 1997). Habermas's personal struggle with communication as a youth²⁷ and post-war Germany's efforts to develop a liberal

²⁷ Habermas was born with a cleft palate, he details the impact of this in his 2004 Kyoto Lecture (Habermas, 2004). He indicates the trauma of the resulting surgery left him with a speech impediment which took him years to adjust to.

democratic society resulted in him producing a body of work which centres on the conceptual triad of public space, discourse and reason (Habermas, 2004). These concepts help to build his first major work: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. In subsequent work Habermas (2012) built upon this notion of the public sphere in an attempt to save enlightenment ideals and complete the *unfinished project of modernity*²⁸ through “the moral and epistemic values that nourish and maintain democracy - equality, liberty, rationality, and truth” (Finlayson, 2005, p. 14). As Thomassen (2010) highlights, the red thread running through Habermas’s work is the public use of reason, and so is of particular use in studying academic discourse.

3.2.1 What is Critical Theory?

Critical Theory originated in the interwar period of the 20th century with the practitioners of the Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University, notably Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (Dahms, 2011; Ritzer, 2008). Researchers using critical theory have become collectively known as the *Frankfurt School*. Horkheimer coined the term *critical theory* in his 1937 essay *Traditional and Critical Theory* however it was not until the 60’s that the term came into common usage and gained popularity (Jay, 1996). Critical theory was devised in opposition to the traditional empirical approach to science and technology aimed at the quantification and mastery of nature which had gained dominance in the 18th Century through the Enlightenment (Finlayson, 2005). While the empirical approach may be suitable for the natural sciences, critical theorists argue this

²⁸ Habermas describes the *unfinished project of modernity* in his 1980 essay *Modernity: An Unfinished Project*. Unlike post-modernists and other critical theorists who had become pessimistic of the positive nature of modernity, Habermas continues to view the utopian objectives of modernity as achievable, hence why the project is unfinished.

approach is not suitable for the complex social world which humans inhabit (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994).

As a result, critical theory is a critique of positivism and instrumental reason which contributed to the bureaucratisation, industrialisation and, eventually, the dehumanisation of society exemplified by the atrocities in Nazi Germany (Finlayson, 2005; Hoy & McCarthy, 1994). It is argued that the instrumental approach of these regimes culminated in inhumane acts of the purges, concentration camps and the development of nuclear weapons (Ritzer, 2008). Critical theory can also be understood as a response to the more mechanistic forms of Marxism which concentrated on the economic and technical factors of domination rather than examining society, culture and rationality (Dahms, 1997; Ritzer, 2008). Critical theory, reinvigorated Marx's critique of capitalist political economy and his desire to emancipate people from social oppression caused by forces of production (Boucher, 2014; Finlayson, 2005). This was achieved through reinterpreting Marx through Weber and Lukacs²⁹, and also through revisiting Marx's Hegelian roots.

Weber's *iron cage* and his concepts of rationality are of significance to understanding Habermas's critical theory. Weber's posits *formal rationality* as an instrumental, means-to-an-end approach to reason. This approach results in people choosing the most effective method to achieve a goal. This is problematic as it does not reflect upon societal norms nor the ethical impact of the ends which it wishes to achieve. Domination can result from formal rationality as those in power can choose goals which are pursued in an unreflective manner and which may not be in the interests of society. This is

²⁹ For a full account of Lukacs reinterpretation of Marx and the concept of reification see Feenberg (2014) chapter 4.

Weber's iron cage which imprisoned individuals in an instrumental society devoid of humanity. *Substantive rationality*, on the other hand, presents value-rational action which places reasoning within a holistic context which does not only value the ends but also the ethical means and societal norms to achieve them. By favouring substantive rationality, critical theory aims to emancipate people from domination of technocratic and empiricist absolutism using a holistic and reflective approach to social theory (Ritzer, 2008).

A second way in which critical theorists reevaluated Marx was the re-Hegelianisation of his theory (Dahms, 1997). Like Weber's substantive rationality, Hegel's dialectic approach is totalising, therefore "one component of social life cannot be studied in isolation from the rest" (Ritzer, 2008, p.151). This dialectic approach is central to critical theory's objection to the empiricist absolutism which was being transferred from the natural sciences to the social sciences. Whereas the positivist epistemology of the natural sciences seeks to isolate variables in order to study them in an objective fashion, Hegel's dialectic model of subjectivity rules out this possibility (O'Conner, 2003). When interpreting phenomena, particularly social phenomena, it is not simply the case of an object existing, there must be a subject who is interpreting the object through a particular subjective, or interpretivist lens.

Hegel's dialectic model has two significant consequences for critical theory. Firstly, it questions the validity of positivism by positing that objects are interpreted within the existing knowledge and worldview of a subject. For critical theorists, such as Horkheimer and Habermas, this position informs their objections to the mathematisation of nature and society which, they argue, reduces humans to passive actions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). By acknowledging the agency of subjects, Hegel's *Phenomenology* places each subject in relation to other subjects and the external world, therefore the

world can only be understood intersubjectively. Active agency and intersubjectivity result in the need for critical theorists to be self-reflective in order to emancipate themselves from Weber's iron cage. This is crucial to critical theorists focus on theory and practice. In their view, capitalist society has severed theory from practice through empiricist instrumentality and absolutising of facts. Through acknowledging intersubjectivity and emancipating the subject from the iron cage of reason, they can unite theory and practice, initiating an immanent critique of society (Ritzer, 2008).

3.2.2 Critiques of Critical Theory

Critical theory, however, is not itself free from critique and has, as a result, evolved in significant ways since the first days of the Frankfurt School. A common criticism of critical theory is its seeming unintelligibility. Put simply by Leonardo (2004 p.14) "[i]ts highly academic discourse is not only hard to understand, it seems to demand much previous knowledge from its readers", which results in accusations of elitism and exclusivity. This is inconsistent with an approach which aims to help the masses escape domination. As a result of this inaccessibility critical theory is unable to step out of the ivory tower, which is detrimental to one of critical theories main aims: the unification of theory and practice (or praxis) (Ritzer, 2008).³⁰ The esoteric nature of the jargon of critical theory and its multidisciplinary make it difficult for the ideas generated by this form of enquiry to have any real practical effect (Ritzer, 2008). There is therefore the danger that critical theory becomes little more than an "aimless, impotent intellectual game" (Hoy & McCarthy, 1994 p. 14). In contrast, another critique is that critical theory's tendency for immanent critique has been derided for its dystopian outlook and "incessant negativity" (Ritzer, 2008 p.148).

³⁰ Martin Jay (1996 p.14) on praxis "Loosely defined, praxis was used to designate a kind of self-creating action, which differed from the externally motivated behavior produced by forces outside man's control."

3.3 Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action

From Horkheimer through Habermas, the unity of critical theory consists in the critique of empiricism.

Rasmussen (1996,p.70)

Where Marx had applied the Hegelian dialectic to labour with his *dialectical materialism*, and Horkheimer and Adorno applied the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in their landmark text, Habermas attempted to free enlightenment from the iron cage through the dialectic of reason in his *magnum opus*, *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA) (Ingram, 1989). By enlightenment, Habermas (2012) means:

[...] the project of modernity as it was formulated by the philosophers of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century consists in the relentless development of the objectivating sciences, of the universalistic foundations of morality and law, and of autonomous art, all in accord with their own immanent logic (p.444).

In this landmark work, Habermas explores his main question: "how is social order possible?" (Cooke, 1997; Finlayson, 2005). He achieves this through the analysis of how reason or rationality are used in modern society through particular actions in two distinct ontological spheres: *lifeworld* and *system*. It is not a work that lends itself to simple summarisation because it represents the culmination of Habermas's reconstructive approach, providing an amalgamation of numerous theories, shifting between historical

and systematic analysis (Outhwaite, 1994)³¹. Over nearly 1000 pages (in the English edition) spread across two volumes, TCA is a combination of critical theory's Weberian Marxism and Talcott Parson's *Structure of Social Action*, Noam Chomsky's *Universal Grammar* with the social theories of Herbert Mead and Emil Durkheim, and the developmental psychology of Piaget and Kohlberg. It is an amalgam of sociological theories of action and language with rationality theory (Thomassen, 2010) creating a theory of communication that explores "how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge" in a modern society (Habermas, 1984, p. 11). TCA is therefore a theory of how consensus or agreement (*Verständigung*) is reached (Finlayson, 2005). TCA was divided into two volumes; *Reason and the Rationalisation of Society* (Habermas, 1984) and *Lifeworld and System - A Critique of Functionalist Reason* (Habermas, 1987).

Due to Habermas's highly complex lines of multidisciplinary thought, I aim to explain TCA in simple terms in order to provide clarity on the powerful way that it can be used to interpret social phenomena. I will briefly summarise these volumes describing in detail the core concepts relevant to this thesis referring to direct quotes from TCA but also using the summaries of the work by Boucher (2014) Thomasson (2010) and Finlayson (2005).

3.4.1 Volume I: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society

As the title suggests, TCA centres around the concept of *communicative action*, the central point of volume I is to make the distinction between *communicative action* and *instrumental action* (Finlayson, 2005). Habermas's explanation of this is that for there to

³¹ The author recommends Finlayson's (2005) *Habermas: a very short introduction* or Outhwaite's (1994) *A Critical Introduction* as an entry point into Habermas's theory.

be social order, people's communication must primarily be orientated towards understanding. Habermas explains in the volume that:

[...] rationality has less to do with the possession of knowledge than with how speaking and acting subjects acquire knowledge [...]. The rationality of their expressions is assessed in light of the internal relations between the semantic content of the expressions, their conditions of validity, and the reasons (which could be provided if necessary) for the truth of statements or for the effectiveness of actions (Habermas, 1984, p. 8-9).

Therefore language is orientated towards validity claims. In other words, people must, for the most part, be truthful with each other for society to run effectively. In TCA Habermas determines validity claims as:

1. Truth - Objective
2. Rightness - Subjective
3. Truthfulness/sincerity - Intersubjective or Social

These validity claims are usually explained through a short utterance, Thomassen (2010, pp. 66–67) uses the following example:

I promise to submit my essay tomorrow at 4 o'clock

This claim can then be explored via three validity claims:

1. Truth - the essay will be submitted tomorrow
2. Rightness - the norms governing the situation say this is right

3. Truthfulness/sincerity - the student fully intends to submit the essay tomorrow

If an act of communication fulfils all three of these claims, it may be considered a *communicative act* in which the action and language are linked. These three claims can, however, be questioned as to whether they are valid, this would be achieved via discourse which Habermas notes:

I shall speak of discourse only when the meaning of the problematic validity claim conceptually forces the participants to suppose that a rationally motivated agreement could in principle be achieved [...] if the argumentation could be conducted openly enough and continued long enough. (Habermas, 1984, p.42)

For example, in order to verify the claim that the essay will be submitted, the lecturer may enter into discourse with the student and point out that tomorrow is a weekend:

1. Truth - the essay may not be submitted tomorrow as it is a weekend
2. Rightness - the essay cannot submit on a weekend
3. Truthfulness/sincerity - the student has no intention of submitting tomorrow and is trying to get an extra couple of days for the essay and will submit on Monday

In the first two examples it may be the case that the student was unaware it was the weekend, and makes an honest mistake. After discussion it could become apparent that the third example was in fact the student's true aim, to get an extra couple of days to submit the essay after the weekend. In this case the discourse has led not to agreement but to the actual intention of the student, which was dishonest. In this case the students'

goal was not honest communication but an action orientated towards success, what Habermas defines as an instrumental action.

Here we see the distinction between communicative action, geared towards mutual understanding, and instrumental action, geared towards success. Habermas's interpretation of action bears a relationship to Weber's formal rationality and substantive rationality. Habermas, however is not so pessimistic as Weber, in that he believed that instrumentality or formal rationality has displaced ethical, substantive rationality. Habermas's communicative action provides the means of understanding communication as an intersubjective endeavour between people. As Roderick (1993) points out, Habermas goes beyond the empiricist, positivist monologic view of the objective world and sees the world in terms of dialogue, "we become selves in our interaction with other selves" (7 mins 45secs) showing Mead's influence. In this way people are not just selfish individuals geared towards their own desires but members of social groups who coordinate actions through communication. There are, however, times when individuals may seek their own ends through an instrumental action in which they aim to bring about the desired end. Habermas also identifies strategic action, in which another person is manipulated to another's ends. One way to understand this in an educational setting would be the difference between a student studying for a high stakes national examination (instrumental action) versus a teacher preparing a student for to pass the examination (strategic action).

3.4.2 Volume 2: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason

The second volume of TCA concerns the analysis of how reason or rationality are used in modern society through particular actions in two distinct ontological spheres: *lifeworld* and *system*. By a *critique of functionalist reason*, Habermas means a critique of the functional coordination used by *systems* in society, with this proposition becoming clearer after we have defined Habermas's terms. The distinction between these two

spheres is necessary in order to understand how modern societies function after they have grown too large to function merely on intersubjective communication, for example once there are too many people to discuss every aspect of day-to-day life efficiently.

The first sphere is the *Lifeworld*. In simple terms this refers to a person's culture, personality and integration into society (McLean, 2006). The lifeworld is an informal place of shared meanings and understandings. It is a complex web that unites a culture yet also provides space for individuals to exist through personality traits and social contexts. The lifeworld is an implicit place where the reproduction of culture is achieved through communicative action and discourse, in which participants partake in genuine communication to reach understanding, share knowledge and create social cohesion through reasoned consensus (Finlayson, 2005). In the lifeworld, validity of expression must be achieved in order to find mutual understanding, therefore statements must make a claim to truth, truthfulness and rightness. In other words, communication must have *integrity* for the lifeworld to be reproduced through mutual understanding or, eventually, social cohesion will break down. The significance of communicative action and discourse is that truth is an intersubjective consensus, rather than an objective fact, which is important for later considerations of academic writing and referencing.

The second ontological sphere is the *system*. As opposed to the lifeworld, which is orientated towards understanding, the system is formed by the economic and bureaucratic subsystems which are steered by the mediums of money and power. Where the lifeworld enables social integration through communicative action and discourse, the system is maintained through instrumental action orientated towards success. Habermas theorises that while traditional societies are contained within the lifeworld, post-traditional societies become too complex resulting in the uncoupling of money and power from the lifeworld into bureaucratic and economic sub-systems.

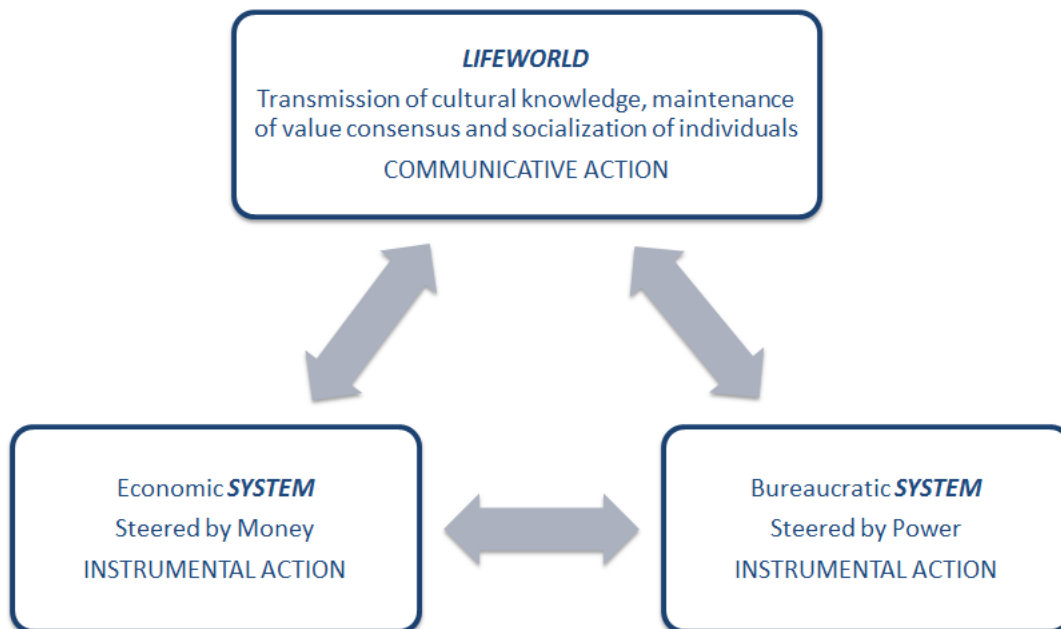


Figure 4 Lifeworld and System (Adapted from Boucher, 2014, p. 192)

The uncoupling of system serves the purpose of supporting the material reproduction in a more complex society because it relies on norm-free, impersonal, instrumental action which achieves aims more efficiently than the lifeworld (Outhwaite, 1994). Taking academic culture as an example of a *lifeworld* in which scholars communicate ideas with each other, the university and academic publishing can be viewed as systems set-up to support the academic lifeworld and help reproduce academic culture and socialize new members into the community.

Systems are not in themselves inherently negative but are actually put in place to support the lifeworld. Habermas's concept of system is heavily influenced by Talcott Parson's *Systems Theory* in which systems provide stability and a state of equilibrium in society (Ingram, 1989). Within Parson's *systems* there are rewards for good behaviour (goal attainment) and also punishments in place (law) in order to enforce social norms (Finlayson, 2005). Habermas therefore positions his theory between Weber's iron cage

and Parson's systems, by neither being too pessimistic nor too optimistic about the role of rationality. Habermas achieves this through the concept of *colonization of the lifeworld*.

Lifeworld and system exist in a "fragile equilibrium" where the system supports the complexities of post-traditional societies to assist where the lifeworld has become unable to successfully coordinate activities alone (Finlayson 2005, page 56). There is, however, the danger that the lifeworld may be *colonised* by the system, in that the imperatives of the systems "turn back destructively upon the lifeworld itself" (Habermas, 1981, p. 189). Here Habermas is drawing on his Weberian roots and the fear of an iron cage of rationality characterized by an instrumental, means-to-an-end approach. This is opposed to value-rational action aimed at using ethical means within societal norms to achieve goals (Ritzer, 2008). Thomassen (2010), explaining Habermas's theory, provides a poignant example of the impact in UK higher education of marketisation, when imperatives of the economic sub-system start to colonise the academic lifeworld:

Increasingly, the market logic is being rolled out across universities and education more generally. Universities must make money and the bottom line matters for their future. As a result, more and more things are measured in terms of time and outputs[...] Teaching and research increasingly look like the commercial production of goods to consumers...This also influences the relationship between students and professors. Whereas this relationship may have been communicative, it risks becoming increasingly strategic (p.77).

Thomassen is implying that once the student-staff relationship becomes strategic or instrumental, agents become more orientated towards a means-to-an-end approach to learning, focused on grades rather than mutual understanding. While instrumental action is not completely negative, when it becomes the sole focus of the education system, this indicates colonisation.

A final issue to consider here are the pathologies which Habermas describes as resulting from the colonisation of the lifeworld and their relationship to the concept of *systematically distorted communication*. Habermas's work of communicative action builds upon his earlier work, the concept of *systematically distorted communication* emerged in 1970 as Habermas was starting to make his linguistic turn away from his approach in 1968's *Knowledge and Human Interests*. In TCA, Habermas alludes to systemic distortions:

Such communication pathologies can be conceived in the confusion between actions orientated to success. In situations of concealed strategic action, at least one of the parties behaves with an orientation to success, but leaves others to believe that all the presuppositions of communicative action are satisfied (p.332).

By pathologies, Habermas refers to the results of colonisation of the as loss of meaning; anomie (loss of moral values); alienation (disassociation from the world); the inability to take responsibility, or even mental illness. In the case of systematically distorted communication, depending on the powers at work, a person may be attempting to deceive another person or may be deceiving themselves, for example, if a person is subject to an ideological outlook which prevents them from having a true perception of the communicative act. Habermas provides the following diagram to illustrate forms of communication:



Figure 5 Forms of Communication (Habermas, 1984, p. 333)

Whether conscious or not, these distortions and manipulations impact the lifeworld by preventing the reproduction of culture and, rather than support social stability, they undermine it. In attempts to combat these effects, legal systems may be put in place. However these can actually become part of the problem in a process Habermas calls *juridification*. While laws can disincentivise immoral behaviour, as in Parson's view, Habermas argues too many rules can actually have a colonising influence. While laws can help to provide a degree of freedom, they can also start to inhibit free, communicative action and break down trust (Thomassen, 2010). An educational example of this may be the academic misconduct process. While it has good aims to protect the integrity of the assessment, the process may actually hinder mutual understanding between a student or teacher due to the time it consumes and the stress it places on all parties. Rather than attempting to come to mutual understanding around the issue, which could take more time, processes may become more bureaucratic for efficiency's sake resulting in a more instrumental outcome.

3.4.3 Critique of the Theory of Communicative Action

Habermas's TCA aims to reassure us that while we are not fully in Weber's iron cage, we must not also rest easy in a Parsonian *system*. Rather, we must be aware and maintain honest communication with our peers in order to keep in check the systems that colonise culture and society and exploit the individual.

The theory of communicative action is meant to provide an alternative to the philosophy of history on which earlier critical theory still relied, but which is no longer tenable. It is intended as a framework within which interdisciplinary research on the selective pattern of capitalist modernization can be taken up once again (Habermas, 1987, p. 397).

Reflecting on and attempting to save the project of enlightenment, Habermas stresses that, while *systems* may support order in the lifeworld, the lifeworld is the basis of culture, society and the individual. The social order of the lifeworld presupposes the systems it has created, and was initially possible due to free and sincere intersubjective consensus on truth necessary for mutual understanding (Bohman & Rehg, 2014). In doing so Habermas provides a more holistic framework for revitalising the philosophical groundings of the enlightenment and, therefore, attempting to save the modernisation project from the empiricist dystopian future of control. He is not rejecting positivism but appreciating that human development is not solely about technical advances but the holistic nature of human progress (Ewert, 1991). In viewing the power of intersubjective discourse, Habermas enables society to reflect on the colonisation of the lifeworld and reclaim agency from the economic and bureaucratic systems that colonise it.

While Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* has been of significant sociological influence (ISA, 1998), it has not been without critics. Despite translating Habermas's

work, Thomas McCarthy argues that Habermas oversimplifies the system-lifeworld distinction resulting in contradictions of various intentions of his work (McCarthy, 1993). While never directly criticising his work, Habermas's distinction of the two spheres is at odds with work of Michel Foucault, which similarly to McCarthy expressed doubt about whether systems of power could be so easily distinguished from the lifeworld (Thomassen, 2010). Further critiques aim at the all-encompassing nature of the theory, whether modernity is in itself worth saving (Outhwaite, 1994) and whether his universalism takes into account issues of gender and culture. In regards to gender, while Habermas himself did not address the power structures at play, his work has benefited greatly from the critique of domination and power relations generated by critical theory, and the influence can be seen in the work of Judith Butler (Butler, Habermas, Taylor, & West, 2011), Amy Allen (2012) and Seyla Benhabib (d'Entrèves & Benhabib, 1997). In relation to culture and modernity, despite attempts to incorporate Eastern cultural aspects, TCA is Western centric. The result is the tendency to lionize the enlightenment despite the colonial implications it had for the rest of the world. The critique of systems and focus on the emancipatory power of discourse, however, has been used by researchers to empower various cultures in the era of globalisation and neoliberalism (Hayhoe, 1989; Martín-Barbero, 2006; Staats, 2004). It is, resultantly, of particular use in exploring the experiences of power relations.

A final critique levelled at TCA is that Habermas expects too much of the individual agent in the process of discourse, envisaging a world populated by "sublimely rational agents" (Rienstra & Hook, 2006, p. 326). In this way, Habermas is accused of a utopian ideal of human communication, by which in Heller's view constant consensus would make everyone the same and devoid of humanity, having therefore the opposite effect to Habermas's intention (Heller, 1981 as cited in Rienstra & Hook, 2006). In their cutting critique of Habermas's agents, Rienstra and Hook (2006) highlight numerous issues from

over optimistic expectations to particular empirical obstacles to the feasibility of a Habermasian agent. In spite of these critiques, TCA remains highly influential. Even in criticising Habermas, McCarthy (1993) admits this utopian view that “we may at least recognise when we are compromising [the Lifeworld] and why.” (p.172). This is why his theory has been particularly potent in critical social theory, and especially in the field of education.

3.4 Habermas’s use in Educational Research

In a systematic review of Habermas’s influence on educational research, Ewert (1991) identified that his work had significantly shaped not only pedagogic practice but also enabled reflection on the purpose of education. In relation to the practice and process of higher education and academic discourse, the first volume of TCA with the concentration on validity claims and distinctions of action proves particularly powerful in analysing how individuals are socialized into the lifeworld. In terms of the purpose of higher education and academia, the concept of the university as a system established to enable the reproduction of academic culture has far reaching implications. We shall now explore several works which utilize Habermas’s approach and are relevant to this study.

3.4.1 Student Development

Viewing education through the lens of the *Theory of Communicative Action* we see the distinction between the instrumental action of schooling and testing and the communicative action of learning, discourse and mutual understanding. In Amy Allen’s (2013) study of autonomy, she points out that despite having unrealistic expectations of human agents, Habermas’s theory is “extremely useful for thinking through how subordinated individuals can achieve critical and reflective distance on the power relations to which they are subject.” (p.100). The implication of this is that the development of an individual perspective on knowledge is vital to partake in the discourse on knowledge and therefore highly significant to students entering the

academic lifeworld. A prime example of this is the integration of TCA in Mezirow's theory of *Transformative Learning* (Mezirow, 1997). Mezirow (2008) owes a significant debt to Habermas noting he "has provided us with an epistemological foundation defining optimal conditions for adult learning and education" (p. 92). Initially working with adult women re-entering education later in life, Mezirow (1978) found that, through exposure to intersubjective discourse and self-reflection in higher education, students experience transformations of an *epochal* (sudden) or *cumulative* (progressive) nature and significant perspective changes (Mezirow, 2008).

As with Habermas, Mezirow did not dismiss instrumental action, or learning, altogether but incorporates it into a holistic learning process. Whereas the development of instrumental learning is goal focused and based on hypothetical-deductive logic (testing hypotheses), this is complemented in higher learning process by the analogic-abductive (questioning, exploring) logic of communicative learning (Mezirow, 2008). The implications of this in terms of academic discourse are significant as the individual scientist may work alone and compete with others, for example for patents, however in the communicative aspect, they encounter new perspectives, evidence and arguments, therefore collaborating to further knowledge. Mezirow integrates this with Kuhn's (2012 originally published 1962) theory of scientific revolutions to show how paradigm shifts³² can occur through dramatic *epochal* shifts in perspective. Thus, while free scientific discourse acts as a catalyst for technological advances, it also grounds them in ethical considerations of the purpose and whether they are beneficial.

³² In the introduction to the 50th Anniversary edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 2012), Hacking succinctly defines paradigm shifts as: "normal science with a paradigm and a dedication to solving puzzles; followed by serious anomalies, which lead to crisis; and finally resolution of the crisis by a new paradigm." (p. xi).

For adult learners, the non-scientific benefits are the impact on their autonomy as they reflect on how their learning and place within power structures, identified by Mezirow as the emancipatory aspect of transformative learning. Brookfield (2001) however argues that Mezirow does not go far enough in the *critical* aspect of his theory, noting that in transforming people, education “must also try to identify assumptions they hold dear that are actually destroying their sense of well-being and serving the interests of others: that is, hegemonic assumptions”(126). Brookfield (2001) believes that thinking cannot be *critical* thinking without the analysis of power relations and as a result Mezirow ignores the colonisation of the lifeworld aspect of ideology critique. Mezirow (Mezirow & Ed, 2000), however, prefers the more neutral understanding of criticality, that it can be emancipatory without being revolutionary. For example, a women returning to education may not decide to suddenly abandon her husband and patriarchal structure once engaging with feminist works, but her raised awareness may give her increasing control to change rather than dismantle it.

Mezirow is not alone in mobilizing the power of Habermas's critical theory. Carr and Kemmis's (2003) *Being Critical* shows the importance of communicative action in theoretical development and the development of research questions. In relation to this study, academic writing has also been the subject of research using both Habermas and Mezirow's theories. Kember and colleagues (1999) found the significance of Mezirow's transformative learning in assessing student's reflective thinking via the use of journals. In a more direct use of Habermas's TCA in relation to academic writing, Grady and Well's (1985) explored the implications for the rhetoric of intersubjectivity:

An intersubjective rhetoric based on the notion of communicative competence would recognize that writing is undertaken within a social situation[...] For the student writer this means learning to participate in the

norms, customs, and discourse formulas of a speech community - the community of college educated writers. And entrance into such a speech community is not merely a matter of learning certain conventions-say, a specific style of documentation. Questions of truth and value, of social roles and sincerity, are implicit in all discourse oriented toward understanding. (Grady & Wells, 1985, p. 37)

Here Grady and Well's provide a useful example of the instrumental and communicative aspects of writing. They refer to the conventions of writing which must be learned, however these are merely the instrumental aspects of the system. Referencing as an example, provides an efficient manner in communicating information to the reader. This information alone, however, is not the core of the writer's communication, simply an instrument to support it. Yet in the current climate of universities, a lack of referencing has become an indication of plagiarism, or lack of authorship, which may not be the case. However, taken to the opposite extreme, if a writer over-cites and quotes information, while avoiding plagiarism, they may equally be accused of lacking authorial voice. As the authors concluded at the time, reflecting on students' entrance into discourse communities "may raise far reaching questions about domination, distortion, and the equality of speakers" (p.45). As Habermas points out, this results with schools resorting to "possible threats, whether open or disguised, of sanctions for behaviour that conflicts with the norms" (1987, p. 372), making this of particular relevance to academic integrity.

3.4.2 Academic Lifeworlds and Systems

As a lifelong academic himself, Habermas's TCA was heavily influenced by the nature of academic debate and also how this related to the state policies and political context influencing them (Pusey, 1987). In the case of the university, we can see the micro level of the subject (students/academics), the meso level of the university and the

macro systems level of national and international economic and state power (McLean, 2006; Pusey, 1987). Through TCA we can analyse the academic lifeworld and the systems, which may, nevertheless, result in the colonisation of lifeworld that aims to support it. To finish this chapter we shall examine two examples of this from the mainland Chinese context by Ruth Hayhoe and the UK context by Monica McLean. As this thesis concerns students from China studying in the UK, it is significant to look at the theory in these comparative contexts.

3.4.2.1 Defining the academic lifeworld

As the term lifeworld will be used a significant amount in the course of this thesis it is important to briefly to clarify its use in the specific context of academia and higher education. This, however, can be quite challenging due to the fuzzy nature of the concept. It is hard to define one individual lifeworld in much the way as you can may broadly define a single internet (which is short for contraction of interconnected network). There are multiple lifeworlds, as there are networks in the internet, which lay at the intersection of where individual lifeworlds overlap through communication, agreement and integration (McLean, 2006). In terms of debates around academic integrity, it must be understood that there is an idealised academic lifeworld where researchers communicate and reach an intersubjective consensus on truth in various fields of study: often known in the abstract sense as academia. There may be nuances within different subjects of faculties, but ultimately there is a common culture aimed at truth. This academic lifeworld is supported by various systems, such as the university, publication and associated citation practices to help cultivate the common endeavour of academics. While there are distorting influences of money and power from the system, an idealistic view as academic integrity presents, shows how these support rather than colonise the academic lifeworld with their instrumental aims, do not challenge the foundation of truth, or integrity, upon which academia is based.

When students go to university (a research intensive one) this can be understood as system of higher education aiming to support students' integration into the academic lifeworld. The ultimate aim for a traditional university would be to gain the best minds to enrich and reproduce the academic lifeworld. In order to do this students must take part in honest communication and discourse. On a small scale this could be cultivated through a more informal apprenticeship style of education. On a larger modern scale, universities have complex systems of assessment aimed at essentially assessing the students' integration into the lifeworld. This includes adherence to systemic practices or academic norms, such as citation and structure. It could be argued that the various degree levels in higher education represent levels of integration into the academic lifeworld, with students coming from the secondary education system, through Bachelors, Masters and finally to Doctoral level, representing a high level of integration.

Not all students, however, wish to become academics and the university's purpose to support the academic lifeworld starts to become distorted as the system caters to the increasing numbers of students in the massified (requiring more bureaucracy) and marketised (involving further economic steering) model. In this system, the students' instrumental goals do not entirely map to the reproduction of the academic lifeworld, as students are exposed to the systemic distortions of credentialism and employability (as explored in the previous chapter). In an optimistic evaluation of higher education, it could be argued that while there are distorting influences of money and power, for the most part, universities maintain academic integrity and the system supports the academic lifeworld. Critiques of the neo-liberal agenda in higher education (such as Collini, 2017; Marginson, 2011; Naidoo & Williams, 2015), however, would argue that the system of marketization has colonised the academic lifeworld leading to corruption of its aims and purpose, which result in threats to academic integrity.

Transitioning students into the academic lifeworld provides a challenge which is amplified within the internationalised context of higher education. Idealistically, internationalisation allows for the sharing of knowledge in an intersubjective discourse across cultures. The challenge comes for a number of different reasons. Firstly studying in a non-native language can inhibit the ability to engage in discourse. Secondly, education systems are not equivalent despite the seeming equivalence of the terms used, which may result in different degrees of enculturation into the academic lifeworld and also a contrast of academic norms. Finally, despite the aspirations of systems of higher education, not all systems provide support to the academic lifeworld and, in fact may be have colonising influence. In the Chinese context for example, the arguments for the invasive aspects of China's political system may actually hinder research and lead to the pathologies of plagiarism (Altbach and de Wit, 2018; Zhao, 2014; which will also be explored further below in the work of Hayhoe). For students transitioning between two contexts, such as the UK and China, they face the usual challenges of integrating into the academic lifeworld, with a significant language barrier and plus the associated *pathologies* and *systemic distortions* of the education systems. In the following section these two contexts will be explored with the systemic distortions of political colonisation in the Chinese context and market colonisation in the UK context, both of which have implications for academic integrity.

3.4.2.2 Hayhoe and The Chinese academic lifeworld

Ruth Hayhoe has been in a unique position to chart the development of higher education in mainland China in the era of reform and opening up. A long time China scholar with a wealth of experience, Hayhoe has applied Habermas's TCA to the comparative study of Chinese universities and their global counterparts during their rapid development in the 1980's (Hayhoe, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1993) and has also

revisited the theory in her later work on Chinese higher education (Hayhoe, 2007; Hayhoe, Li, Lin, & Zha, 2012). In a series of works spanning the period before and after the Tiananmen incident,³³ Hayhoe (1989) uses TCA to map the Chinese project of modernity and how communicative action can benefit developing nations in learning from international discourse. Implicitly drawing on the *Needham Question*, in which British sinologists questioned why, despite being the world's most advanced nation until the 16th century, China did not achieve scientific enlightenment (Sivin, 1982, 2013), Hayhoe (1989) raises her own *Chinese Puzzle*:

I came to see China's dilemma in terms of aspirations for economic modernity that demanded a transformation of the rigid Confucian regimentation of knowledge, on the one hand, coming up against notions of political order that were conceived entirely in terms of regulation and control of knowledge, on the other (p.22)

In the optimistic ferment leading up to the Tiananmen incident, Hayhoe (1988) draws on the experiences of Chinese scholars studying in the West and returning with ideas to China. Observing of the liberal environment at China's universities of the period, including the student protests of 1986, which were a prelude to the events of 1989, Hayhoe (1988) seems to be witnessing communicative action *in action*. She sees China's scholars involved in testing the validity claims of truth, authenticity and

³³ The Tiananmen Square incident, known in China as the June Fourth Incident (六四事件), or often referred to as Tiananmen Square Massacre in the West is a particularly contentious event. What is not of debate is that there were student protests for democracy and against corruption and inequality. It culminated in a crackdown on the protests and can also be seen in the wider trend of civil unrest across the communist sphere which led to the collapse of many regimes. The Chinese Communist party was able to weather the storm and survive intact, however the incident ended the first stage of reform and opening up as the party went back to the drawing board to stabilize social and economic development, it is a topic not openly discussed in China. For an overview of the issues see Craig Calhoun's (1997) *Neither Gods Nor Emperors*.

rightness and calls for them to be more than “simply passive transmitters of technological know-how” (p.127). As the decade unfolded, it seems that Chinese academics were not passive, but active in provoking a strong response from the system.

Hayhoe’s work was prophetic in that she comments on the “mystical pendulum swings of revolutionaries and reactionaries” (p.22), which seem to dominate intellectual history. While the Chinese government had been allowing the burgeoning of the academic lifeworld to flourish, the political backlash resulted in a crackdown on scholars abroad and international partnerships. Hayhoe (Hayhoe, 1993; Hayhoe et al., 2012) turned her approach to comparative historical education in an attempt to reconcile the events and provide a positive outlook on the past and future of Chinese higher education. Chinese higher education would witness a dramatic expansion in the post-Tiananmen era after the government and universities had recovered and replotted a less tumultuous rise of Chinese institutions. Viewed through the Habermasian lens, however, rather than being a holistic flourishing of the lifeworld, the development of Chinese higher education in the 21st century would be via an instrumental, systems based approach. Focusing on the ranking of institutions and academics via citations, the bureaucratic state would take a very much goal orientated approach. While it has been successful, it has arguably colonised the academic lifeworld not just of China, but of international institutions, sucking them into an instrumental publish-or-perish culture, having significant implications for academic integrity.

3.4.2.3 McLean and the UK academic lifeworld

As Hayhoe witnessed communicative action *in action* in 1980s China, Monica McLean’s work bears witness to colonisation of the lifeworld and instrumental action *in action* in UK higher education in the 2000s. In her book, *Pedagogy and the University*,

McLean (2006) argues for creating the environment for critical pedagogy in UK universities using Habermas's schema producing:

an understanding of the experience and meaning of everyday working practices – in this case university pedagogy – [that] can be illuminated by an understanding of how action is made possible or constrained by social, political and economic contexts. (p.23).

McLean views universities as “custodians of culture” and producers of “universal truth”, conceptualising the university as a *public sphere*³⁴ under threat from massification as a Trojan horse for commodification of higher education. McLean paints the picture of how the imperatives of money and power brought in to the university by massification and marketisation are shaping pedagogy and practice away from the university for public Good.

McLean's (2006) central thesis is that university pedagogy should be grounded in the lifeworld as an aspect of cultural transmission in what Habermas termed 'communicatively structured activity' or an 'area specialized in cultural transmission' (Habermas, 1987, p. 330). Instead, this lifeworld is being colonised and distorted by the instrumental action of managerialism. Habermas himself referred to this in more general educational contexts:

³⁴ As laid out in Habermas's first major work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Habermas, 1991). The *public sphere* is an early incarnation of communicative action in which intellectual, intersubjective and free debate was held amongst people of all classes in the 18th century coffee houses of Europe.

Socialization in schools is broken up into a mosaic of legally contestable administrative acts[...]This has to endanger the pedagogical freedom and initiative of the teacher. The compulsion toward litigation-proof certainty of grades and the over-regulation of the curriculum lead to such phenomena as depersonalization, inhibition of innovation, breakdown of responsibility, immobility and, so forth (Habermas, 1987, pp. 371–372).

Though not eradicated by the system, McLean (2006) believes that the validity of true, authentic and sincere communication is therefore under threat. Rather than achieving the aims of massification or universal higher education, in which students are socialized into the lifeworld, they are actually inflicted with the pathologies of colonisation, such as invasive competition and a decline in trust. As she notes:

[...] the over-emphasis on utilitarian 'transferable skills' for employability is a clear symptom of pedagogy colonized by technical rationality. Universities are not configured as spaces where students form their identities and develop as citizens (p.66)

Instead, students are viewed as consumers of an educational product. Another symptom of this is characterisation of the student as a consumer is the concentration on the 'student experience'. Such a characterisation is problematic as the transformational nature of higher education can be both engaging, challenging, alienating and not always a pleasant experience. By attempting to lay out a manicured and comforting educational experience, with everything detailed in handbooks and marking criteria it seems to resemble more a bureaucratic system than a lifeworld, the following statement from Habermas illustrates this:

The Lifeworld is the unspecific reservoir from which the subsystems of the economy and state extract what they need for their reproduction: performance at work and obedience. (Habermas, 1987, p. 35)

3.5 Conclusion

The work of Hayhoe and McLean provides a useful point of closure and departure for this chapter on Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* as the theoretical lens through which this thesis shall be framed. Though focusing on different higher educational contexts, their work details the how academic lifeworld, involving staff and students, can be colonised by the systems of money and power. Whereas Hayhoe concentrates on Chinese academics and McLean explores issues of pedagogy, both concern the successful socialisation of new members in the academic lifeworld for the reproduction of that culture. While Habermas's work has been variously criticised for its oversimplification and exaggerations, in these two works we can see how TCA enabled the researchers to identify issues and be prophetic in identifying problems which may occur. In documenting the burgeoning lifeworld of Chinese scholars studying abroad and returning to China, Hayhoe used TCA to analyse the reproduction of academic culture in China, which in the end has destabilising effects for China's one-party state.

McLean's work documents the colonisation of the lifeworld, predicting further systematic distortion of communication as UK higher education seeps deeper into marketisation. McLean argues that producing the environment for critical pedagogy, in essence decolonizing the university lifeworld, involves checking the managerialist tendencies that come with the marketisation of higher education, this involves reconnecting the university with its role in democracy and strengthening the links between science and democracy and re-establishing these as key goals of the university. Her analysis raises awareness of a key problem of systems interference in the lifeworld, in that while they may punish

poor teaching in higher education, they also restrict good ones. Drawing on Oxford academic David Acheson's reflection on a career in academic teaching, she highlights the climate of trust necessary to motivate good teachers, rather than the climate of mistrust created by managerialism which achieves good results on paper but not in the reality of the lifeworld. This climate of trust, or academic integrity, is therefore necessary not only for free and quality teaching but also provides the same conditions for free and quality science and academia. In identifying this, McLean channels Habermas's optimism that the project of modernity can be rescued and is hopeful for the future of higher education.

3.6 Research questions

Having reviewed the relevant literature clarifying the theoretical space for the thesis and identified and set out the theoretical framework, the research questions are set out below. These questions will be explored through the lens of Jürgen Habermas's (1981): *Theory of Communicative Action*:

1. What are mainland Chinese students' perceptions of the challenges they face in adapting to a UK Master's programme and how do they overcome these challenges?
2. How can analysing these perceptions and experiences through the identified framework help to deconstruct the stereotypical view of the mainland Chinese learner?
3. What implications do findings have for the concept of academic integrity in the context of internationalised of higher education?

CHAPTER 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the methodological considerations and data analysis of the focus group data collection used. The primary purpose was to use a hybrid inductive/deductive (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2008) approach to explore mainland Chinese Master's Students (MCMS) thoughts and feelings on academic integrity within the broader context of their UK study experience. Through using this approach I increased familiarity with Chinese students' perspective on academic integrity within the UK context, having conducted my previous research on transnational education in China (Gow, 2014a). This also gave the participants opportunity to reflect on their collective experiences and to reach an intersubjective consensus on their experience in line with Habermas's TCA.

4.2 Focus Groups

The term "focus group" may be loosely defined as an informal but concentrated discussion of a topic by a purposively selected and a manageably sized sample (the group, max 12 participants) who are of shared background (Barbour, 2008; Morgan, Krueger, & King, 1998; Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996; Wilkinson, 2004). The academic genealogy of this qualitative research method can be traced to Chicago educated sociology pioneer Bogardus in the 1920's (Liamputtong, 2011) and Merton at Columbia university in the 1940s (Vaughn et al., 1996). Focus groups subsequently emerged as a powerful tool in market research (Morgan et al., 1998) before experiencing a resurgence in academic circles in the 1980s (Liamputtong, 2011). Use of this method is widespread in social, psychological, health and educational research (Barbour, 2008; Vaughn et al., 1996) and has become distinct for its methodological rigour (Bloor et al., 2001).

In the case of this research project, the use of focus groups has been selected for practical, methodological and theoretical reasons. From a practical perspective, Bloor et al. (2001, p. 18) highlight that “focus groups are most frequently encountered as an adjunct to other methods, deliberately chosen to complement, prepare for, or extend other work”. This is in part due to the opportunity for low cost and timely research (Liamputtong, 2011) which allows for simultaneous familiarisation with the research context. Barbour (2008) recommends focus groups for exploratory and sensitive research, such as academic integrity, provided methodological and ethical considerations are clearly thought through. As an exploratory phase of the project, while not a replacement for survey, interview or ethnographic data, focus groups are methodologically omnivorous and agnostic offering a mix of benefits attributed to these differing approaches (2008; Kidd & Parshall, 2000).

Admittedly, focus groups are “dangerously small to make generalizations” (Morgan et al., 1998, p. 14), however due to the exploratory nature of this study, generalisations are not the purpose at this stage, as the findings of this project can lead to future quantitative research. In Bulmer’s (1998) view, in certain cases a focus group may be more valuable to a researcher than a more representative sample, this is especially true in exploratory studies. By allowing participants to respond with their own words, descriptions and values, the focus groups generate emic data which enables the researcher to appreciate participants’ perspectives which can be analysed in both an inductive and deductive manner (Stewart, 2007). Thus the researcher is able to identify both data and theoretically driven themes in the resulting exchanges, testing previous hypotheses and generating original lines of enquiry (Boyatzis, 1998).

This process of qualitative analysis aims to bring meaning to a situation rather than the quantitative focus on “truth” (Rabiee, 2004, p. 657). The focus group is in fact a contained

social context (Wilkinson, 2004) in which the thoughts and feelings of multiple participants may be analysed using ethnographic methods (Krueger & Casey, 2001). In “increasingly privatised societies” (Bloor et al., 2001, p. 17) natural observation of the acts or discussion of certain phenomena by researchers is unlikely, especially with sensitive or illicit issues such as those surrounding academic integrity. As a result, focus groups emerge as a genuine alternative to more traditional ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, in the compilation of emic data (Frey & Fontana, 1991) . Furthermore, this approach offers the opportunity to contact more participants in a limited time frame with the added benefit of interaction between those participants.

Methodologically it is clear that while this account could be derived through individual interviews, what the focus group can powerfully draw out are the common bases for these understandings, as well as the differences in the way those understandings manifest themselves in practice (Callaghan, 2005 section 6.9).

The focus group method is bound within the interpretivist paradigm and the theoretical framework of symbolic interactionism (Barbour, 2008). This approach recognizes that humans do not form concepts in isolation; the true nature of meaning making in society is collaborative (Liamputtong, 2011). Consequently, a focus group acts as a *collective testimony* (Liamputtong, 2011) which has the advantages of eliciting and analysing communal perspectives and dynamics (Lloyd-Evans, 2006). The unique ability to examine shared and contested opinions is a distinct advantage, as group members will be challenged on more controversial or erroneous claims (Liamputtong, 2011). The resulting interaction reveals the process of attitude formation by participants as they negotiate them within the group (Barbour, 2008). Therefore a degree of reliability and depth can be achieved through simultaneous clarification of both individual and collective

views (Callaghan, 2005) . As Morgan (1997) notes “the group, not the individual, must be the fundamental unit of analysis” (p.60), which is why focus groups lend themselves to cross-cultural contexts, eliciting community viewpoints and dynamics (Lloyd-Evans, 2006) .

Focus groups have been successfully used in the past with the target sample and the research topic. Timms (2008) used the method to compile the highly informative *Report on Higher Education in China*. This included focus groups concerning the writing practices of international students. Edwards, Ran and Li (Edwards & Ran, 2009; 2007) have already successfully used focus group discussions with staff dealing Chinese students and for their holistic approach to the experiences of Chinese students. This included the unproblematic discussion of academic issues and plagiarism with students, and candid insights into staff difficulties with Chinese students’ linguistic and pedagogical incompatibilities with British higher education. Gulliver and Tyson (2014; 2010) also successfully piloted thematic analysis of focus groups with Australian undergraduates at various stages of their courses. The authors found that the method was effective for exploring the issue, however warned against drawing generalisable conclusions from the data.

Hence, focus groups are a tried and tested methodology for exploratory research. While initially this method was chosen as part of a mixed methods approach which would go on to analyse the academic writing of Chinese students, the initial focus groups generated such rich descriptions of the Chinese student experience in the UK it was decided to carry out further groups. This was due to the method’s ability to provide a culturally sensitive forum for eliciting negotiated collective testimonies in the participants’ own terms. The resulting emic data enables the researcher to explore the issue of academic integrity with a degree of depth, reliability and theoretical sensitivity.

4.3 Overview of Data Collection and Focus Groups

There were three rounds of data collection:

1. April-May 2013 - 5 groups at 2 institutions in the North of England (1 Russell Group universities/1 Post 1992 University)
2. November 2014 & June 2015 - 2 institutions in the North of England (2 Russell Group universities)
3. May 2016 - 5 groups of alumni of British universities in China in Shanghai, Beijing and Hangzhou

The three stages of data collection were due to practical obstacles in the progression of the project (described below) and also due to the development of the theoretical approach. As the initial focus groups were intended to form the basis for textual analysis of academic writing, no follow up research was planned with the students who left the UK later in the year. The second focus groups in 2014/15 were intended to provide a longitudinal analysis of students development, with two focus groups carried out near the start of the students' programme and another meeting with same students near the end of the programme. The final stage of research was carried out with alumni of British universities who had returned to China after completing their studies. It was hoped that participants reflecting back on their experiences in the UK would provide distance from going through the process of studying in the UK. One student took part in two focus groups in the UK and also in a group in a China. While not explored in this thesis, the experiences of this individual student may make interesting analysis for future research. Furthermore, if carrying out further research using these methods, it would be preferable to follow students from applying for programmes in the UK, through an English language

pre-sessional course into their programme and then following up with the participant once they had returned to China.

There was no intention to look at students from a particular programme of study, however the majority of participants were engaged in social science subjects, particularly related to forms of management. As McGowan and Potter (McGowan & Potter, 2008) note, it is common for Chinese students to be attracted to management programmes. The groups were therefore interdisciplinary with participants gathered from programmes in the fields of education, electronic engineering management, events management, hotel management, tourism, business management and computer science. Each focus group lasted approximately two hours including in depth discussion.

Table 3 Number of participants in each focus group

Total Participants		37 distinct participants (some participants took part in more than one of the focus groups)			
UK April/May 2013		UK Oct 2014/June 2015		China May 2016	
FGUK1	6	FGUK6.1	4	FGC1	2
FGUK2	3	FGUK6.2	4	FGC2*	1(2)
FGUK3	6	FGUK7	4	FGC3	3
FGUK4	2			FGC4*	1
FGUK5	3			FGC5	3

* These groups had 1 participant and so were technically interviews.

4.4 Sampling, size & participation

As the research was aimed at deconstructing the stereotypical view of the mainland Chinese learner in terms of academic integrity, the participants from UK Masters programmes provided a unique sample for research. Firstly, a UK Masters programme is of only one year duration, compared to longer programmes in China and other Anglophone countries (Timms, 2008). The problems Chinese learners' face in transition to studying in the UK are, therefore, exaggerated and exacerbated due to time constraints. Furthermore, this group of students present a significant percentage of international students enrolled on UK Masters degrees, with Chinese students studying overseas as a consequence of the PRC's historic shift of human capital and attempt to transition to a knowledge economy (Altbach, 2009). In 2016/2017 there were over 95,000 students from the PRC studying in the UK (UKCISA, 2018), accounting for over a quarter of postgraduate students and roughly equal to the number of UK students on postgraduate programmes. This amounts to nearly a 100% increase in the ten years since 2006 (UKCISA, 2017). The result is that mainland Chinese students are 'ghettoised' on particular courses, which can result in a lack of integration with other national groups (McGowan & Potter, 2008). Mainland Chinese students are differentiated from students of other Chinese territories such as Hong Kong and Taiwan due to educational, political and cultural background (Yau & Smetana, 2003).

Due to the exploratory and familiarising nature of the focus group research, a purposive sample of mainland Chinese Master's students was sought from three institutions. As the research concerns the sensitive topic of academic integrity, to a certain extent, a convenience sample was used in order to gain participants who would be willing to candidly discuss the topic (Vaughn et al., 1996). Consequently, selection bias (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013) is an issue. However as the research is intended for the

purpose of exploration rather than generalisation, the willingness of participation is seen as an advantage in gaining emic data.

After receiving ethical approval of the focus group schedule (Appendices 1 & 2), the instrument was piloted with two Chinese born PhD students from mainland China in March 2013. One participant in the pilot had emigrated to the UK and was a British citizen. Certain details from the pilot were however relevant to the research topic and so have been included for analysis. The pilot also revealed minor procedural issues and wording in the informed consent form which needed clarification but was otherwise successful in generating a stimulating discussion comparing UK higher education, Chinese higher education, and, specifically, academic integrity.

Course tutors were contacted at three institutions and asked for permission to request participants from their classes. The research project was briefly described to prospective participants and volunteers were requested to sign up on an email list. At one institution only a single participant came forward, resulting in a decision not to return to this institution at a later date. At the other institutions 5 focus groups of 6-8 participants were scheduled using the *Doodle* online scheduling tool. Participants were emailed with detailed information of the research project, basic overview of the discussion topics and an electronic copy of the informed consent form for reference. A suitably sized room was booked for the focus groups in order to provide a conducive location for discussion (Krueger & Casey, 2001). The moderator (in this case the author, Stephen Gow) arrived early to position seats, recording equipment and refreshments (Chinese tea and British sweets). A hard copy of the informed consent form was issued on arrival, which participants were asked to read and sign. Verbal informed consent was confirmed with the introduction of the researcher and project.

Participation rates were lower than expected due to attrition which is commonly reported in literature on the focus groups (Bloor et al., 2001, p. 17; Rabiee, 2004; Vaughn et al., 1996). Over recruitment of 10-25%, as advised by Rabiee (2004), was attempted by requesting 6 to 8 participants. It was expected that 4 to 6 participants would suffice to discuss this sensitive topic. Two groups had the optimum number of participants (6), with a further two having three participants and one group with only two participants. It is expected that the attrition of these group was due to a lack of priority for the group and possibly the detailed description of the sensitive nature of the research. It was decided to proceed with the focus group with two participants as they had made the effort to attend. Although the group dynamic was lost, the two participants still engaged in an in-depth discussion of the issues with the moderator. During the second round of longitudinal focus groups in the UK in 2014/15, attrition affected one of the groups. While I was able to arrange a follow up focus group with all four of the participants at one institution, at the remaining institution students were suffering from acute stress and busy with their dissertations, making it difficult to arrange a follow-up focus group meeting. Individual meetings were arranged with two of the three participants. However, due to their stress, I took the ethical decision to cancel the follow-up interview and, instead, help them with their dissertations in the allocated time.

The same procedure was followed with the second round of focus groups in the UK, however arranging the focus groups in China proved more complicated. Participants were contacted via social media, one participant was contacted via *LinkedIn* and the rest were contacted using a *Wechat* (Chinese amalgam of *Facebook/What's App/Twitter*) alumni group. Again attrition played a role and only small groups of a maximum of three participants were arranged. As research was being carried in three Chinese mega cities (Shanghai, Beijing and Hangzhou), coordinating a suitable and convenient meeting place was problematic. The focus groups were carried out in cafes and restaurants,

however due to the busy work schedules and traffic issues, participants would often be delayed. In two cases this led to interviews rather than focus groups being carried out. While the methodological implications of interviews are distinct from focus groups, by the stage of research, this did not have a significant impact on the findings.

4.4.1 Sojourning students and long term settlers

In the pilot and the first focus group a distinction was noted between mainland Chinese students who have settled in the UK longer term (immigrants) and those who have arrived in the UK specifically to complete their postgraduate studies, defined as sojourners (Cox, 1988). It was found that students who have been in the UK for an extended period (usually over two years) have experienced a greater degree of acculturation and have a different educational background. Therefore the immigrants' views differed from sojourners who only have limited interaction with the host culture and are still adapting to the new environment. Although this difference provided interactions within the groups, the long term settlers developed the role of a pseudo expert (Vaughn et al., 1996) on British culture, resulting in a change of group interactions and also led to effects on the homogeneity of the group. The long term settlers were also usually mature students compared to the younger sojourning students. As maturity is a factor in academic integrity and learner motivation this was also considered (Park, 2003). As a result, participants were confirmed as sojourners prior to the focus groups to maintain the shared backgrounds of the participants. While the views of the immigrants are certainly valid, they have been excluded from consideration in the findings.

4.5 Ethical considerations collecting data

The research project was subjected to full ethical review by the University of York, Department of Education Ethics Committee and approved for research carried out in the UK and China (see Appendix 2). Discussions of academic integrity and specifically plagiarism, may involve the exposure of 'guilty knowledge' (De Laine, 2000) or

'overexposure', divulging too much information without forethought (Bloor et al., 2001). Extra care was taken in the development of clear informed consent and voluntary participation with the opportunity to opt out at any stage prior to submission of the research. Verbal clarification of the purpose of the research and right to withdraw was confirmed at the beginning of the focus group schedule which directed the discussion in a constructive and developmental rather than accusatory manner. It was clearly explained in both written and verbal form that the members of the group shall be rendered anonymous and that members of the group are expected to act with discretion in regards to what is discussed in the group. As the members of the focus group were collectively expressing common views of their group, this removed the pressure on individuals which may have been felt in one-on-one interviews. In the case of the interviews which were carried out (FGC2 & 4), one participant was comfortable with the interview situation as they were teaching in China and had a keen interest in the topic. In the other case, however, the participant was not comfortable with some of the questions regarding academic integrity due to the one-on-one context and grew defensive.

In the group situation the researcher also acted as the moderator rather than the controller of the discussion which has the advantage of leading to unexpected findings (Barbour, 2008). The moderator also had the ability to step-in if the discussion moves off topic or veers into sensitive territory (Liamputtong, 2011). The moderator plays a key role in the focus group method facilitating participants to express, explore and expand on their perspectives (Bloor et al., 2001; Liamputtong, 2011). Due to cultural considerations and my experience as an international student and teacher in China, I acted as an active participant moderator where necessary in the group discussions. While a passive moderating approach is advocated to encourage interaction between participants (Krueger & Casey, 2001), Chinese students have a reputation for reluctance

in group discussions (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). As recommended by Puchta and Potter (2004), I used my own transferable skills and cultural knowledge gained through years of teaching in China to encourage participation. Acknowledging the reflexive process of interacting with the group members and designing the focus group schedule (Barbour, 2008), it was felt that the dangers of influencing the participants' answers was preferable to securing minimal responses.

This required active moderation through the use of personal anecdotes from my experiences living, studying and teaching in China to encourage discussion. These were only resorted to if patient silence and prompts had been unsuccessful in gaining responses (Vaughn et al., 1996). It is acknowledged that the students were conducting the discussions in their L2 and this was taken into consideration. Although the groups were conducted in English, Chinese was allowed due to my working knowledge of the language, but each point had to be clarified and translated into English. Despite being more active than with native speaking or other cultural groups, this was in keeping with Krueger and Casey (2001) description of the skilled moderator. Through active participation in the early stages of the group, I was able to develop a rapport with the students through my in depth knowledge of Chinese education and culture. As a result the participants felt comfortable to interact and the responses were insightful and interaction increased as each group progressed. As a result participants could voluntarily and comfortably partake in the research without fear of embarrassment or hurt (Stanley & Wise, 2010). They also found the experience a positive learning experience through the constructive discussion of academic development. Indeed the opportunity to interact with a British student was seen as key attraction to attending the focus group. Participants commented on the group as having been one of the longest periods of English language interaction during their 9 months stay in the UK as this example for focus group three demonstrates:

P4: It's interesting to tell an Englishman about your feelings.

Multiple participants: Yes

P5: Yes, this is my first time.

P6: Talking English for so long.

Multiple participants: Yes

P1: We talk for two hours

P5: And this is my first time that I talk how I feel studying in the UK

Moderator: And do you find that useful then?

P5: Yes

4.6 Focus Group Schedule

The focus group schedule was adapted from Krueger's (2002) guidelines. The goal was to build a conducive and informal atmosphere to make participants feel at ease and slowly open up to in depth, free-flowing discussions of the topic. Krueger (2002) offers advice on moderating techniques and constructing a schedule using open and probing questions which maximize participation. Prior to conducting the schedule, the opening remarks are critical to establish a rapport between the moderator and participants (Krueger, 2002). The opening remarks serve four key purposes: (1) Welcome, (2) Overview of the topic (3) Ground rules and (4) First question (5) Summary of the discussion to check consensus.

The welcome included a brief introduction of the moderator. I used this as an opportunity to emphasise my experience as an international student and teacher in China. This was to clarify with the participants that I was familiar with Chinese language and culture and that we could discuss cross-cultural concepts and terms, for example the China's high-

school examination (*Gaokao* 高考). This developed a relationship (*guanxi* 关系) with the group and also gained face (*mianzi* 面子), which are important concepts in Chinese culture (Gold, Guthrie, & Wank, 2002). I was however careful to keep my introduction informal and not divulge too much of my experience on the subject of plagiarism and Chinese education. Instead, I stressed my capacity as a fellow student interested in Chinese students experiences in the UK, this was to maintain a sense of equality conducive to open discussion (Vaughn et al., 1996). Although the participants were made aware of the focus on academic integrity via the informed consent form, in our first verbal exchanges I was keen to downplay my research role. If a moderator or fellow participant displays too much expertise in the topic of discussion, this can negatively affect the responses (Vaughn et al., 1996).

The overview of the research in the opening remarks also contained less detail than the informed consent form with the main theme headings displayed using Powerpoint. The sensitivity of the topic was stressed and participants were encouraged to talk personally and generally about Chinese students' experiences without giving identifiable examples. This was to avoid overexposure of information which could cause participants distress after the group, I also carefully reminded participants of this during the interaction. In addition, the ground rules were expressed: students should participate, speak one at a time and respect each other's opinions. Chinese was permitted but should be clarified. It was also noted that their shared Chinese background was reason for selection and vital to the research project. It was requested that mobile phones be turned off and that they were free to take a break at any time and informed of the locations of toilet facilities. Name tags were distributed and at this stage they were assured that the identities of participants would be kept anonymous outside the focus group room. Finally, members were asked to introduce themselves and to ask any final questions prior to beginning.

As recommended for social science focus groups by Liamputtong (2011), a flexible structure was utilised for the schedule. Certain questions were raised explicitly while other themes emerged naturally and this also provided the opportunity to explore unexpected lines of inquiry. The first section of the schedule was the most general in order to build a rapport between the participants and bring the group into the context (Vaughn et al., 1996). This section asked the participants to reflect on before they had arrived in the UK and compare their preconceptions with the realities of studying abroad. This included a discussion of the challenges faced while living in the UK, leading naturally into the discussion of studying as this was the main purpose of coming to the UK. The second section provided a description of study skills in the UK and participants were asked to compare and reflect upon their experiences in Chinese education. This resulted in the progression from comparing education systems to specifically discussing research and essay writing.

The question of academic integrity at Masters level would mainly concern the issues of collusion during the research and planning process and plagiarism during the writing stage of assessed essays. In order to explore this issue, the fourth section discussed use of Turnitin, the originality detection software commonly used by institutions worldwide. All students must submit assignments via Turnitin in the participating institutions, and the primary purpose of the software is to assist staff with identifying plagiarism. The students' views on the software would naturally include reference to plagiarism and academic integrity. Finally, the two connected issues of proofreading and contract essay writing services were explored, these issues emerged naturally in a number of the groups.

Section 1 – Expectations and impressions of the UK and the university

- Why do Chinese students choose to study in the UK?

- Is studying in the UK what you expected?
- What are the biggest challenges Chinese students face while living here?

Section 2 – Study skills and educational expectations in China and the UK

- What are the biggest challenges Chinese students face while studying here?
- How have you overcome these challenges? Ask for examples.
- Are there any differences between the way you study in China and in the UK? If yes, what are they?

Section 3 – The Writing Process

- What is biggest challenge you face when writing an essay here in the UK?
- What are the similarities and differences from writing in a Chinese University?

Section 4 – Academic Integrity & Turnitin – impressions and use

- *Hopefully the topic of writing will elicit references to plagiarism.*
- What are the similarities or differences between plagiarism and academic integrity in China and here in the UK?
- Have you read about Chinese students involved in plagiarism?
- Why do Chinese students represent such a large percentages of plagiarism cases at the university?

Section 5 - Turnitin – impressions and use

- What do you think of *Turnitin*?
- How do you use *Turnitin*?
- Are there any 'special' strategies for using *Turnitin*?
- What effect, if any, does *Turnitin* have on your writing process? Positive or Negative?

- What is the overall effect which *Turnitin* has in the university?
- Would *Turnitin* work in a Chinese University? Why/why not?

Section 6 Proof-readers & Essay Writing Services

- Have you heard of proof-readers or essay writing services?
- How widespread do you believe the use of these services is amongst Chinese students here at the university?
- Why do students use these services?

4.6.1 Focus Group schedule for China

The original focus group schedule was truncated for the focus groups carried out in China and an additional two sections were added to explore returning to live and work in China. The intention was to explore the impact of the study abroad experience and the participants' reflection on the issue of academic integrity and a compare studying in China and the UK.

Section 5 Returning to China

- What was the impact of studying abroad on you?
- What do you think will be the impact of students studying abroad in general for China?
- What do you think British education could learn from Chinese education and what could Chinese education learn from British education?
- What advice would you give to students looking to study abroad?

Prompts: Most valued skills, memorable experience, was it worth it?

Section 6 Teaching/Working in China?

- Has studying in the UK affected the way that you teach/work?
- What do you feel are the similarities and differences between Chinese academics/people who have studied in the UK and those who haven't?
- What do you believe are the differences in teaching style/working style between China and the UK?
- Is plagiarism more problematic in China or the UK? Please explain your answer.

4.7 Thematic Analysis

This section presents the approach to thematic data analysis of the focus groups.

Thematic analysis (TA) is a qualitative tool for the interpretive identification of implicit and explicit patterns (themes) in data (Boyatzis, 1998; Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011).

The roots of this constructivist research tool lie in phenomenology and it is therefore suited to the subjective data generated by interviews and focus groups (Guest et al., 2011). To illustrate the process of TA, it is expedient to explain the method within the context of the focus group data collection. The stages of TA in this focus group project are as follows:

1. Identify research interest, epistemology & methodology
2. Construct focus group schedule and recruit participants
3. Data collection: conduct focus groups - write memos
4. Transcribe recording and write further memos
5. List and merge codes
6. Establish codebook
8. Identify themes - optional usage of software
9. Review themes and engage with related theory
10. Report findings

As with any research project, the primary step is to identify the research focus and appropriate methodology. This project was intended as an extension to my Master's thesis and research conducted as an academic English teacher in China. My previous research had used semi-structured interviews to examine UK educated mainland Chinese postgraduates' concept of plagiarism after returning to China (Gow, 2014a). Through this experience I have become well acquainted with the research literature on the topic of academic integrity. The goal of this initial stage of the research project was to gain familiarity with mainland Chinese Master's students within UK higher education; a new research context. Of particular interest was the development of research skills and understanding of academic integrity. Focus groups were chosen to explore mainland Chinese Master's students' thoughts and feelings concerning their adaptation to academic integrity in UK universities. This was on the practical basis of the focus group's ability to access in-depth data from numerous participants in a limited timeframe. The choice of this method of data collection also reflects the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of the project.

For Braun and Clarke (2006), clarification of the epistemological assumptions of a research project is essential for rigorous thematic analysis. The selection of focus groups reflects a qualitative approach within the interpretivist paradigm (Flick, 2009). Focus Group research is grounded in symbolic interactionism, which views the world as constructed through interactions between active participants (Barbour, 2008). For this reason focus groups are useful for exploring not only *what* participants think about a particular topic but also *why* they think in that way (Morgan, 1997). In order to interpret these thoughts and beliefs, the researchers must break down the data in to small manageable sections of meaning, called codes. Through the conscious and subconscious (Boyatzis, 1998) organisation and interpretation of these codes, the researcher may identify the "big ideas" in the data (Vaughn et al., 1996), commonly

referred to as themes. The analysis of the themes identified in the data may vary depending on the epistemological and theoretical approach.

Thematic analysis has been variously interpreted as research tool by Boyatzis (1998) and a method by Braun and Clarke (2006). Despite sharing similarities with approaches such as grounded theory and discourse analysis, the flexibility afforded by TA allows the researcher to remain unbound by either theory or epistemology (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, due to a shared background of symbolic interactionism (Milliken & Schreiber, 2012), focus group research guides often recommend grounded theory (GT) (Barbour, 2008; Vaughn et al., 1996). In common with thematic analysis, the various approaches to GT (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) use iterative coding as a core component (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The unifying purpose of the numerous forms of GT is to generate theory which is solely 'grounded' in the data (Cohen et al., 2013). This has positivistic implications, inferring that theories 'emerge' from the data (Charmaz, 2006). This is epistemologically problematic. Critics of GT have noted that research does not take place in a vacuum (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is questionable whether theory can emerge from the data because it must be interpreted by a researcher who has bias, influences and preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As a result, Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that researchers who often ascribe to using GT are often using GT 'lite' and it is debatable whether the theory is grounded in the data at all. Consequently, despite sharing methodological elements with GT, thematic analysis is not bounded by theory development.

TA's elasticity should not be confused with a lack of methodological rigour (Boyatzis, 1998). A number of key texts have established guides for researchers of limited experience and diverse epistemological standpoints (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke,

2006; Guest et al., 2011) . Researchers can approach thematic analysis from two different angles, depending on their aims.

Data driven approach – Explores content - inductive – *in vivo*

Theory driven approach – Confirms hypothesis - deductive – *a priori*

(Barbour, 2008; Boyatzis, 1998; Guest et al., 2011)

As the initial intention of the focus groups was to explore the research topic, an inductive approach was chosen. In TA, an inductive approach means that themes are identified in the data (*in vivo*). This is opposed to themes being consciously taken from previous research theories (*a priori*) and applied to the data in a deductive manner in order to test hypotheses. Induction allows the researcher a degree of freedom to consciously and subconsciously engage with and explore the data (Boyatzis, 1998). The focus groups in this project were seen as exploratory in a number of senses. They would enable the researcher to explore the views of the participants in the new context and also generate potentially original avenues for exploration of the research field. Therefore, epistemologically, the approach acknowledges the reflexivity of the researcher in the iterative thematic analysis process. As Merriam (Merriam, 2009, p. 70) explains, the “analysis and interpretation [...] will reflect the constructs, concepts, language, models and theories that structured the study in the first place”. The initial inductive approach allows the researcher to examine the data to the extent that his or her objectivity allows, while recognising that the data alone will not produce an original theory (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As the data is consciously and subconsciously processed in the form of transcription, memos, codes and themes, the researcher interprets the data through his or her unique perspective.

4.8 Transcription and Initial Analysis

Transcript analysis is the most rigorous option available to the focus group researcher (Krueger & Casey, 2001). While it is possible to perform tape-based, note-based or memory-based analysis, these do not allow the researcher to immerse themselves in the data in the same way nor are they as thorough (Krueger & Casey, 2001). If the researcher chooses to transcribe the data themselves, the process of transcription is “a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (Bird, 2005, p. 227). In this project I played the role of researcher, focus group moderator and transcriber, each role adding different perspectives to the interpretive process. For the novice researcher, transcription may seem an unnecessary expenditure of time, patience and effort (Riessman, 1993), however, it is vital to experience the process at least once. Transcription allows the researcher to reflect on the dissonance between what is remembered from the data collection, heard on the tape and produced in the final transcript. It is therefore an active process of familiarisation with the data (Krueger & Casey, 2001). Outsourcing this work is possible and in certain cases recommended, however, experiencing full re-engagement with the focus groups recordings is an important step in the interpretive process and helps develop theoretical sensitivity (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis of focus group transcripts does not require a forensic approach to transcription, such as the Jeffersonian system for conversation analysis (Wooffitt, 2005). A simple orthographic transcription, with small indicators for laughing or overlapping responses, was necessary to capture the data for thematic analysis. The codes and themes are selected from the body of data as a whole, rather than isolated sections of interaction, as with conversation analysis or discourse analysis (Wooffitt, 2005). The majority of the recordings were transcribed, with the exception of irrelevant sections, such as discussing British drinking culture or mobile phone contracts. Each focus group

recording amounted to approximately two hours resulting in a lengthy transcription process with the average length of transcript being over 10,000 words.

4.8.1 Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis: Nvivo

Nvivo is a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) programme developed by QSR international. After a short trial comparison with Atlas ti, a competing CAQDAS, Nvivo was selected for use. This was mainly due to the university holding a full license to download the software for use on my personal computer. The competing software packages did not exhibit any major advantages over each other, especially to an uninitiated user. After choosing Nvivo and attending a QSR International online training tutorial, I attempted to upload and link my audio files to the transcriptions (MS Word docx). This process proved more complicated than expected due to the reformatting of the transcripts and sound files to compatible formats. After finally achieving this, the Nvivo software crashed and the files, even in the back up format would no longer open through the software. Due to the loss of time experienced, I opted to simply upload the transcripts and began analysis. Rather than attempt to fully use all the analysis features of the Nvivo, it was opted to manually analyse the data. Saldana (2012) warns that combining the use of a new method, such as TA with the use of unfamiliar software can overwhelm the researcher leading to problems with the analytic process. While not using all the features of Nvivo, the software certainly offered many advantages over outdated approaches to focus group data analysis such as long tables, scissors and coloured marking pens (Krueger & Casey, 2001). This is not a criticism of those methods. Nvivo is in fact performing the same tasks as these original approaches, just with more efficiency and flexibility (Saldaña, 2012).

4.8.2 Codes and Categories

The collection and transcription of the data was not simply a mechanical process but part of the interpretation of the data. After reviewing the memos recorded during the collection

and transcription phase, I printed the transcripts and began the explicit process of coding. This in-depth scrutiny of the data is necessary to move beyond simple face-value analysis which may result in simple 'anecdotalism', a common critique of qualitative analysis (Bryman, 1988). I utilized a traditional paper and pencil approach to the transcripts in order to remove myself from the internet. I wished to interpret the data without the distraction of searching for information to back up my embryonic hypotheses. I began reading the documents and coding; marking individual words or short phrases which represented "a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute" of the data (Saldaña, 2012, p. 3). For example:

FGUK2: P2: *Similar, very important **reason** is the high quality of education in the UK and also one year is a very short time and the short time and get a high quality diploma. And it also can save the cost of the students.*

This short section contains three clear codes for the reasons Chinese students choose to study in the UK. Therefore 3 codes: quality, cost and time have been identified. Saldana (2012) recommends that in-depth coding of all the data is necessary for researchers who are not familiar with the coding process. As a result, the initial coding of the transcripts revealed hundreds of codes which were at first overwhelming. I collated the codes in a table to see if I could identify patterns in the data and relationships between the codes. In the example above, it is clear that these codes represented reasons for studying in the UK constituting a category of codes³⁵. I noted that certain patterns which I identified in the data were, in fact, dictated by the focus group schedule.

³⁵ Initially, I had conflated these categories, of related codes, with themes. However, through the process of coding interview transcripts, then organizing into related groups, and then returning to the methodological literature, this misunderstanding was corrected. Themes are discussed in the next sub-section.

The question which had initiated the above response was “Why do Chinese students choose to study in the UK?” and hence received the response to this question. Therefore, this was a pattern I had imposed upon the data. Further analysis revealed patterns across different sections, indicating more significance than simple answers to the questions.

Initially, patterns were identified as categories based upon the codes. The categories related to academic integrity and development. At first, notes were made using paper and pen identifying 15 categories through repeated reading of the transcripts. This was reduced to 6 key categories by combining and reassessing the codes. These 6 categories are listed below:

1. **Language** – Students refer to language as a specific academic problem, such as in lectures or reading and writing assignments.
2. **Culture, independence and integration** – Participants discussing cultural differences relating to their experience developing independence and integration in the academic context
3. **Critical thinking and logic** – Participants discuss the issue of critical thinking and particular differences in logic between the UK and China.
4. **Research and writing** – This relates to issues of finding and reading resources and transforming the information into written assessments.
5. **Assessment and teaching** – How essays are graded, difficulty with feedback, understanding assignment criteria and dealing with teaching styles.
6. **Failure, Fairness and Misconduct** – Referring to issues of plagiarism, failure of assessments, *Turnitin* use and the fairness of strict enforcement of rules in the UK compared with China.

These categories were then created in Nvivo. The software uses the term 'nodes' referring to containers for codes, categories and/or themes (Bazeley & Richards, 2000). Having already coded the hard copy transcripts, categories were highlighted under different coloured nodes. The software allows fragments of text to be stored under a heading in an easily manageable and navigable format in the nodes.

4.8.3 From Categories to Themes

These data-driven categories however proved problematic when attempting to come to any explicit theoretical conclusions. There were descriptions of deficits in language, research and writing skills which could be related to academic integrity issues. The comparisons of Chinese and UK educational culture were also illuminating. The participants were describing issues with research, writing and understanding assessment criteria. This was combined with issues with logic and also a fear of plagiarism or failure. Despite this, these categories did not present a coherent picture having reached the limit of the inductive process and, as noted by Merriam (2009) required a return to the "constructs, concepts, language, models and theories that structured the study in the first place" (p.70). The categories did overlap and, in certain cases, and individual codes appeared in multiple categories. For example, one problem with teaching may be the inability to understand the lecturer's language. These categories were the result of semantic analysis of the data which identified surface descriptions. Having successfully coded and categorized the focus group data, Saldana's (2012) schematic also helped me identify the absence of themes at this juncture of the research process,

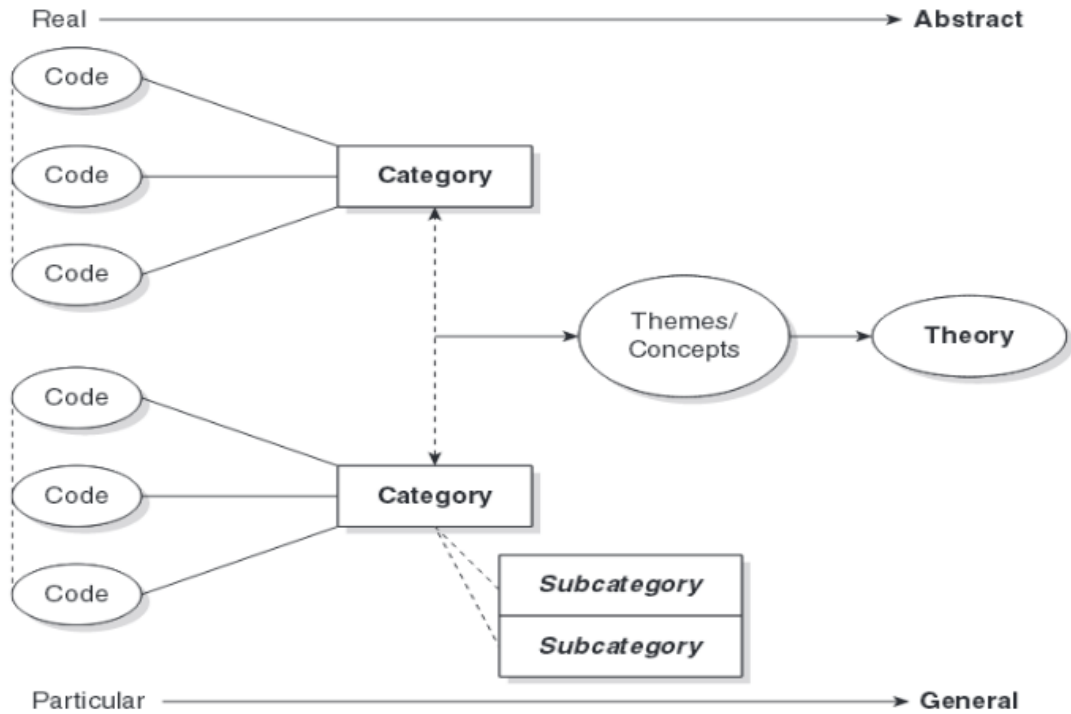


Figure 6 Saldana's (2012) codes-to-theory model for qualitative inquiry

The next stage of analysis moved deeper into the data, beneath the words and phrases, to the latent meanings of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Returning to the transcribed data, and moving beyond the semantic analysis of coding and categorisation, it was apparent that participants highlighted critical thinking as a key issue. This led to further exploration and revisiting of the literature on critical thinking, specifically Jenny Moon's (2005) article identifying Baxter-Magolda's *Epistemological Reflection Model* (ERM - discussed in Chapter 4). This led to the identification of the *epistemological understanding of research* theme. This was a breakthrough; the students had not mentioned epistemology, however, this concept made explicit the process the students were describing. This breakthrough facilitated two lines of thematic inquiry and analysis, the epistemological obstacles and practical obstacles encountered by MCMS evident throughout the transcribed, coded and categorized focus group dataset. This research approach is detailed in the schematic below:

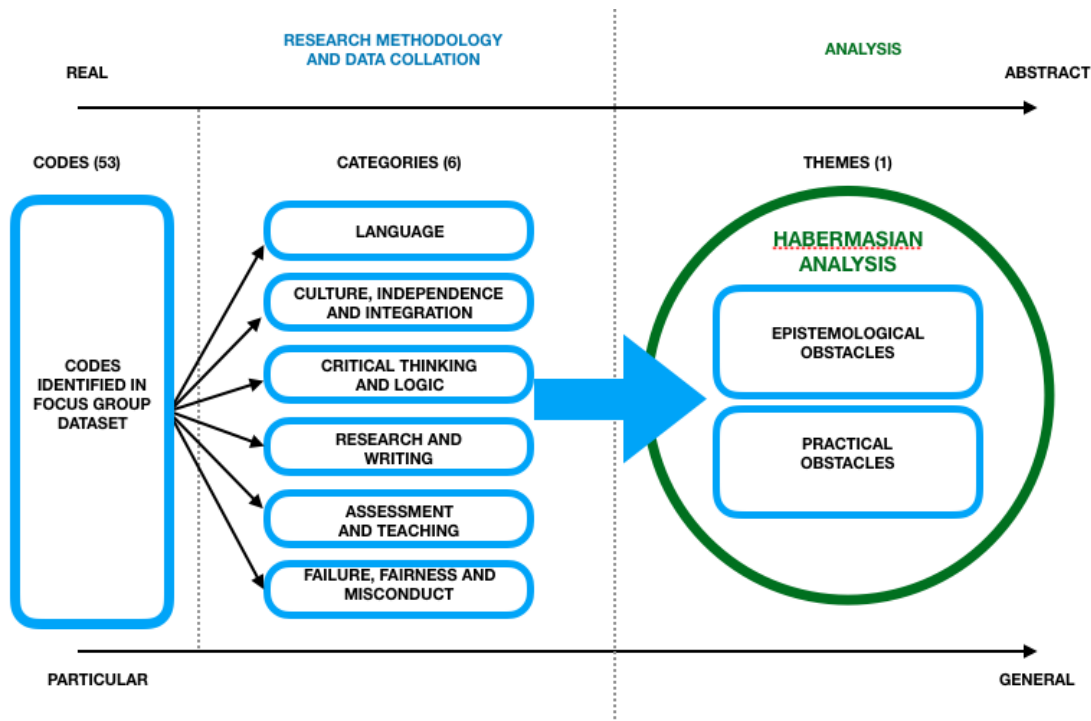


Figure 7 Research Project Data Analysis Methods

4.8.4 From Themes to Theory

Following the identification of epistemological and practical obstacles as the dual themes for analysis, the issue of navigating the dataset presented a final methodological issue to resolve. As discussed earlier, grounded theory, whereby a new theory “grounded” in the data could be developed, was initially considered. In addition to this, discussions with peers, colleagues and fellow researchers pointed towards the use of existing theoretical and conceptual frameworks to help navigate the data.

A period of exploring theorists such as Bourdieu, Foucault, followed, reading theoretical works extensively both directly and through the work of other scholars utilizing such theoretical frameworks. However, it was through reading Ruth Hayhoe’s (2004) work on post-Tianamen higher education reform in China and her application of Habermas’s TCA in the Chinese context that the suitability of Habermas’s concepts of lifeworld and system emerged. After extensive reading of Habermas’s body of work, it was decided to adopt

this theory as the overarching framework for the project, helping not only to navigate the dataset, but also to revisit existing literature on academic integrity through a Habermasian lens. The work of McLean (2006), discovered after reading Habermas more extensively, served to reinforce and justify the selection of Habermas to explore academic integrity in relation to Chinese students enrolled on UK Masters degree programmes more generally, and, more specifically the epistemological and practical obstacles documented in the dataset. Through the next three chapters the focus group data is presented and analysed through the Habermasian lens.

Chapter 5. Motivations, expectations and reality of studying abroad

Over the next three chapters the experiences and perceptions of the participants are thematically displayed. In this first chapter the richness of the data gathered in the process of research is clear. Each of the interactions with the participants began with a rapport building exercise to discuss the motivations of Chinese students for studying in the UK and of their impressions of living and studying there. These interactions were candid and combined their own personal experiences with reflections on general reasons why Chinese students study in the UK. These short discussions were successful in generating a rapport. In addition, the motivations and experiences proved to be highly significant to the study as whole, particularly as the theoretical framework of the study developed.

Table 4 Focus Group Transcription Key

FGUK/C	Focus Group UK/China	M	Moderator
Pn	Participant (number)	MP	Multiple Participants

5.1 Why study in the UK?

In the early interactions with the focus group participants, an obvious ice breaker was to ask the students why they chose to study in the UK. In addition to building rapport with and between the participants, this questions provided insight into their motivations for studying abroad. The reasons the participants gave for choosing to study in the UK fell into 3 categories relating to the quality of UK higher education, the experiences to be gained studying abroad and, most significantly, the practical rewards of doing so.

5.1.1 Considering quality of study and experience in the UK

FGUK5

P1 ...I think, maybe some people recognise the UK education is very

P2 High quality.

P1 Yes, high quality.

There was unanimous agreement within and across the groups on the reputation of UK universities for high quality education and experience. British institutions use rankings and various awards extensively in their marketing while using China based recruitment agents to attract Chinese students, and their parents, highlighting quality as a significant incentive (Yen, Yang, & Cappellini, 2012). The view of the quality of British Universities was also in comparison to institutions in China, as evidenced by this participant (FGUK6 P2) who was looking for "...a better degree than my Bachelors degree." Although Chinese institutions are rising up the world rankings every year, the sample of participants in this study were able to gain access to higher ranking universities in the UK than they would be able to in China, the reasons for which are explored below. The image of quality higher education in the UK came from personal recommendations from friends and through the official ranking systems, for example one student noting why they chose their institution "and, it's also got very high rank in the list of the academic assessment" (FGUK2 P2). The quality of UK institutions was therefore a key incentive in attracting the participants of the study to the UK, and also for choosing specific institutions based on their ranking. Quality, however, was not the only consideration the participants made in choosing to study abroad.

While the quality of institutions and degrees was important, this was usually mentioned in relation to the different experience the participants were seeking abroad:

FGUK6

P2 Experience, different experience from China and a better degree than my Bachelors degree.

P1 And also I want to experience a different culture, because one of my friends he recommended me, he said you may want to go to a foreign culture and experience differently and you may be considered more openly...

Quality was a consistent consideration for the participants, as are recommendations from friends, however in this case it is the experience of a different culture which is highly valued. The participants are seeking to 'broaden their horizons' by travelling, while this may be a cliché, there was an element of truth to this. As this participant explains, he is especially looking for change from living in China:

FGUK6

P4 For me besides all the things of course, culture interest me very much, you know it's like sometimes I see myself as very tired of the Chinese culture, you know it's like every day for us just living in a big city like Shanghai is so predictable just do everything according to the plan...so I was to enjoy something more that's why I came here, I want to broaden my horizon, I want to live like a European male, I want to go to the pub and have fun, I want to try everything new you know, so I think this is the reason why I came here.

For many of the participants the opportunity to study abroad provided the opportunity to travel. The issue of agency in the decision to study abroad is important, as the students'

parents are paying for the students' experience and have a significant influence on the decision, particularly focusing on the education benefits and qualifications (Bodycott, 2009). There was a suggestion that the parents wanted the students to study but the students themselves were more focused on the experience abroad:

FGUK5

P3 Personally, it's more about the international experience for me. That means more, for me it's like, the experience means a lot more than the piece of paper, I don't really care if I can get the degree or not, to be honest, I enjoy a lot more about the whole process I went through, yeah.

This is not to say that Chinese students are different from other nationalities in their desire to travel and have the experience of studying abroad, however it is not insignificant either. This desire for experience in combination with the time pressure and transition difficulties the students go on to describe creates a tension in their priorities. The UK, of course, is not the only choice for Chinese students to study abroad and the students also took into account the alternatives. In terms of choosing the UK over America, the main concerns were safety and the opportunity for European travel. Whether true or not, the perception of the participants was that the UK would offer a better environment for them to study. Recommendations from friends and perception of place also play a significant role in the choice of particular city or institution. While travel is a high priority, the participants also demonstrate their preferences for the type of environment they would like to live in their year abroad. Therefore, these perceptions of culture and environment, particularly choosing the ideal place to maximise their English language usage, overlap with the more practical reasons for studying abroad.

5.1.2 Practical considerations for studying in the UK

FGUK2

P3 Well, the first thing that come to my mind is the language is English, yeah, I choose to the UK for study English education. I have the chance to talk about with native speakers, so that improve our, my, oral English ability.

The study of English language is a key aim for the students. While individual students may have specific interests in British English and culture, for the most part the incentive to study English is seen as a practical concern. This is connected to the influence of Global English and English as a *lingua franca* (Jenkins, 2014). As China's global influence and international business connections grow, the advantage of learning English was certainly seen to have practical advantages for the participants:

FGUK6

P1 For me I think there are two main reasons, the first reason is I think English is a really important because the work and China becomes more global, so if you can speak English frequently then it is a big advantage in the future when you want to find a better job, so the first reason is I want to enhance and practice my English, I want to communicate with others with English easily...and I think the second reason is I want to have more chance to find a better job in the future, you know I study tourism (at undergraduate) but I think tourism, this industry you don't need too much knowledge, you may just need a degree at bachelor, may be fine, I think what I learn I do little or don't do too much for helping me find a good job so I want to go to the UK

to learn something different. And I think marketing may be easy way to find a job.

Although this participant claims there are two reasons, English language and career development, it seems apparent that their interest in improving their English is related to the primary reason of getting a better job. This participant makes a similar point:

FGUK1

P2 Yeah for me, I think overseas experience will make you more competitive when you are hunting for a job, so, because English so important in China nowadays.

This is not by any means solely an issue for students studying abroad as the following exchange on Masters' students in China indicates:

FGUK 6

P1the purpose of studying the Master mainly because they want to find a good job, most of my classmates, when they study a Masters degree (in China) they want to find a job in the university or a college, or they want to take part in the national exam they want to be a *gongyuan*, civil servant, they want to have an easy job, not to hurt. I know most of my classmate, most of my friends, if they study hard, the main reason is they want to find a better job. Maybe a more respectable job, very little of them choose to study a Masters because they are interested in the subject.

P2 Yes of the motivation, yes, I think if you are really interested in your course, you don't feel pain.

M Do you agree?

P1 Yes, I do not think it is too painful, there is not a chance to practice my writing. And I can always choose different topic because I am interested in marketing, so I feel my study here, but in my domestic masters study, I don't like that study and I just chose my Masters study because I'm not well prepared for my study and I just think maybe I'll study as Master, maybe it will be good for my future. First I just think like that but then I changed my mind.

M So you think motivation (for studying abroad is)?

P2 Have good motivation for Masters degree, they choose to study a Masters just because they want to find a job in the future, a better job.

The previous example seem to establish an instrumental approach for students to seek a Masters degree, whether in China or the UK. These are the perceptions of the participants, rather than empirical facts, however this was the general consensus across the focus groups. If the general motivation for gaining a Masters degree is for purposes of employability, this raises the question, why study abroad if there is the option to gain a Masters in China? The issue seems to be related to the relative ease of gaining access to a Masters degree in the UK to those who students who can afford the fees:

FGUK 1

P4 For me I think it's very difficult for you to be a postgraduate in China because the examinations is relatively quite complicated and quite difficult, so I think choosing to study abroad is a good choice. Because you just take IELTS examination, that's all. But we have to

take four very, four main subjects to have a graduate degree in China

M Ok, so can you expand on that the, what exams do you have to take to get a postgraduate?

P4 For me my major is English in China, so I have to take French, I should learn French and take French examination and one of them is about general knowledge about America and England and the other is how do you say....

P1 Politics?

P4 Oh yeah, politics

M So like Marxist approaches to things?

P4 And one in oral English, oral test, so four very difficult ones.

M Oh wow, ok, I didn't know that

In order to gain access to a Masters degree in China students must complete the Postgraduate Admission Test also known as the National Postgraduate Entrance Examination (NPEE), or *Kaoyan* (考研). As the participants explain above, this would include studying a language in addition to English and also an advanced political theory course. For access to their UK course, on the other hand, they merely needed to gain a specific level in the IELTS examination³⁶:

FGUK 2

P3 Another reason is, maybe, sorry, maybe, yeah many good schools, good universities in the UK in the world and when I came to the UK

³⁶ Usually IELTS band 6-7 for direct entry to a course.

just to pass the IELTS exam maybe not pass anymore examination,
so probably these reasons.

The participants perceived the IELTS to be an easier option than the *Kaoyan* and also the alternatives for going to study in the US. In addition to the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), students who wished to study in America would need to pass another admission test, such as the GRE (Graduate Record Examination), LSAT (Legal School Admission Test) or GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test). While there have been speculation of widespread cheating on such tests (Pomfret, 2017), participants in one of the groups explicitly talked of the problems they had with these tests:

FGUK 3

M Why do Chinese students come to the UK?

P3 Because I have no else, I have no somewhere else to go.

M Oh, really?

P3 Yes

M Ok

P3 I want to study English, so, the choice may be limited.

M You could go to America.

P3 That will be longer.

P4 Well, if you have to do a master's degree in America you need to
get like

MP Two years

P4 GRE, you need to pass an examination

M And you didn't want to do the GRE?

P4 It's really much more difficult than the (IELTS)

P3 I failed, I failed. I did it, I failed (GRE). [embarrassed laugh]

P4 Huh, I failed....

This does by no means suggest that all the participants in the study had failed the GRE examination. Two participants described the event in a matter of fact way, however, this was not considered to be an unusual occurrence. The one issue which did seem to be unanimous was that the IELTS test was the easiest option in gaining access to a Masters programme, regardless of the country.

The final factor which seemed to be the primary incentive for the participants to study in the UK was the time it would take to complete the Masters degree:

FGUK 3

P1 If you do your Master's here (UK), you only need one year to finish the degree.

MP Yes

P1 If you choose Australia or America you probably need two years.

P2 Even longer in mainland China, you will spend 2 or 2 years and a half or three years.

The attraction of gaining a Masters in one year was a significant incentive for the participants in this study. As highlighted above, the equivalent qualification in China would take 2 to 3 years³⁷ and equivalents in other Anglophone and European countries

³⁷ For a summary of Chinese Higher Education qualifications see:
<http://www.chsi.com.cn/en/news/201312/20131202/663878204.html>

would be 2 years. This was perceived to be particularly attractive to female students due to social conventions and external pressures to marry:

FGUK 1

P1 ...it's time saving and especially in China for a lot of girls, they want to graduate earlier, so this main reason we choose to come here.

FGUK 7

P2 For me, I study in the UK because it's short. It's just one year before I get a Masters.

P1 Yes, it's not a long time.

P2 And for a girl, my mother always said "ah you are getting married."
Yeah, yeah, you have to get your degree as fast as you can.

Against the influence of parents, and despite the short time to gain a Masters degree, the UK still provides a quality education summed up by one participant as "time saving, good education quality" (FGUK 1 P2). In addition to the quality of the degrees in the UK, the length of time is also related to finding a job:

FGUK 7

P2 Yeah, three years is too long, so that, as you said, we, especially for girls, I think, time is money, I don't want to waste, I would like to spend one year to find a job that I really like, not, to find a job that will support my life. I want to find a job I like.

5.2 Studying and living abroad

In addition to the motivations for studying abroad, the participants were asked to consider how their expectations of the experience matched with the reality of living and studying in the UK. The focus of the groups revolved around the cultural and linguistic adjustment to living in the UK before moving into more detail about the specifics of studying in the following section. Of particular relevance are two factors: the extent to which language or culture was significant and the issue of increasing independence and the sense of loneliness which accompanies increasing autonomy.

5.2.1 Language vs Culture

FGUK3

P1 ...language is something you can improve upon but culture is hard for you, in a very short time to get to know the culture...

One of the keys debates around the Chinese learner in international education is whether language or culture is the greater obstacle or a cause of the perceived problem with academic integrity. Within the focus groups this was also a contentious issue. There was no unanimous decision about whether language or culture was more difficult to adapt to when studying abroad, other than to say that both were very important. While certain participants certainly struggled with the English language, others felt the culture, in both living and studying, were the most difficult to adapt to. In relation to the previous quote, another participant in the same group perceived the interconnection between language and culture:

FGUK3

P5 Yeah, language is part of the culture...Through learning a language you get a better understanding of this culture.

Language, therefore, provides better access to culture through the ability to communicate and reach mutual understanding.

Many of the participants arrived reasonably confident in their language ability, particularly as they had completed the IELTS test and studied English for many years:

FGUK7

P1 We were so confident at the time when we were taking the IELTS test...

Despite their initial confidence in their language ability, the first obstacle was to find opportunities to use their language. The participants described going to different lengths in order to engineer interactions with local people. Interactions were sought through university societies, part-time work, voluntary opportunities and even, despite the participants having no religious intentions, attendance of church groups which proved to be a particularly fruitful way of speaking to older British people. When opportunities did arise for communication, it was not as easy as the participants expected. On the one hand there seems to be the cultural barrier:

FGUK 4

P2 ...I don't know who to take part in, or get how to play with the local people, I want to communicate with them but I can't find the door to communicate with them.

On the other hand, as this participant humorously exemplified for their group, the accent and speed of spoken English in a real environment was difficult to adjust to:

FGUK1

P4 We should do that, but one big problem is when you talk to British people in daily life, you really cannot understand them... Yes, accent and they cannot understand us either, not like you, you know, when you are in the class, and the teacher will speak at a very pleasant speed and you can understand them and, in daily you talk fast and it's not easy to get across.

The problems of understanding in a social setting could also be magnified when it came to understanding lectures and other students, particularly in seminars or lectures:

FGUK 5

P3 ...in the lecture we have students who are from other nationalities, I can feel that sometimes those students come up with questions with the tutor and they discuss that, sometimes I can catch up with them but most of them I can't.

M What, because of the language?

P3 Because of the language, yeah, so and also I talk to other students like other Chinese students, they are doing undergraduate course, so the majority are English people, and then they were struggling too, because they couldn't catch up with them, the language is the one big problem.

P2 You mean catch up with the local students, or?

P3 Yes, especially what's going on in the class. If there's any discussion between the tutor and English student, then the Chinese they couldn't catch up.

P2 Yeah, they talk quite fast and I can't follow them and you try and get involved in the talking but you find it's difficult. I try to do that but I failed.

Despite the students having achieved the language requirements for their course, which would involve taking the IELTS test, the participants perceived that the test does not prepare them for the real environment:

FGUK 7

P2 I think the first I attend a lecture I can't even understand, I can't understand what the tutor is talking about even though I got IELTS 7.

The initial confidence in their language was therefore negatively affected. The majority of the participants felt their language would need to improve significantly in order to interact and adjust culturally to the social and academic life in the UK.

5.2.2 Living in Chinatown

What the participants had not counted on, however, was that despite being abroad the opportunities to use English would be limited:

FGUK1

P4 We live in the same flat, in my flat there is 6 students who all come from China, so except when I went to classes I feel like I am in China. I talk to them in Chinese, we cook together and we even go

shopping together, we travelling together, all of the time. Except that I can see a lot of foreigners walking on the road...

P3 Yeah, I was expecting that I could speak English all the time but it's quite a different case here.

P5 Yes, I have expected a lot of people are just British, no Chinese students around me.

With confidence in their language ability diminished, the students' expectations of having numerous opportunities to engage with British students did not materialise. The reality was that the participants remained surrounded by students from their own country, as one participant noted, "our flat is kind of a Chinatown" (FGUK 7 P1). This had perceived consequences for their cultural interactions and linguistic improvement:

FGUK 3

P6 First of all maybe, our improved spoken English, since we get more chance to practice our oral English here than those students in China because friends around us never speak English because here when we go shopping or travelling we often use, more often use the language.

P3 I agree with her, totally agree.

M Do you use more English here?

P4 Of course

P6 Eh, not very much

M You don't use English very much?

P3 Yeah because

P6 Not as much as we expected

P3 The friends around me, we are all Chinese, we communicate in Chinese, there are very few chance to speak English

- M Can you speak English to your Chinese friends?
- P4 We can't actually
- P6 A bit strange, maybe. A bit strange.
- P4 Be awkward or something.
- M Why?
- P4 There is a word, I don't how to translate it into English like *zhuangbi*
(装逼) yeah like a very bad...
- P6 To show off, show off.

Participant 6 in this group starts by highlighting the benefits of studying in the UK and using more English than in China, however later in the discussion admits this was “not as much as we expected.” With limited opportunity to speak with native speakers, the extract above illustrates the unusual situation that the participants found themselves in. Being surrounded by Chinese students creates an artificial environment for practising their language, as a result they felt uncomfortable using English with their Chinese classmates as it is perceived as showing off or even as ‘fake’, (假的, *jiade* in FGUK 4). While some students did attempt to use English with other Chinese students it was not deemed successful in the long run and they would revert to speaking Chinese. The fact that the students were surrounded by Chinese students was not limited to one focus group or even one institution, as these examples show:

FGUK1

- P3 Yeah, the time we speak Chinese is far more, more that the time we speak English, so sometimes we feel like you are living in China rather than in the UK...Yeah, I was expecting that I could speak English all the time but it's quite a different case here.

P5 Yes, I have expected a lot of people are just British, no Chinese students around me.

FGUK3

P3 The friends around me, we are all Chinese, we communicate in Chinese, there are very few chance to speak English

FGUK5

P3 It was a little bit different for the UK situation, not really mixed, also because the majority of the postgraduate students they are international students, not many from the locals. So, when I got here, I just realised the majority of my course are Chinese people. Sometimes I feel like I just study in China, the only difference is we have an English teacher.

FGUK 7

P3 Because there are so many Chinese, I don't even feel like I am abroad.

The participants, with a couple of notable exceptions, were therefore quite demoralised by the failure of the experience to meet their expectations. Some participants did try to see the benefits of being surrounded by Chinese students and also taking responsibility for making the most of their time abroad:

FGUK1

P1 I think living with Chinese students is not a bad thing because when you get into a different culture, you will miss home or you will have

a lot of something you will feel uncomfortable with but talking to Chinese people they will understand, so you feel, erm, get some friends there, at first. And also, I think it's yourself to be blamed if you don't go out and hang out with foreigners because you know, you should give it a chance by yourself, because it's not the circumstances that make you that way.

This participant makes a significant point regarding taking responsibility and asserting independence to “go out and hang out with foreigners”, in this particular instance foreigners referred to British students. The significance here of “going out” was discussed at great length in terms of British drinking culture. Some students did enjoy clubbing and visiting pubs or the social butterfly described as “attending more party than the class” (FGUK6 P4). The majority of the students were not open to the party culture, as one girl who was taken to a club by a Greek classmate notes:

FGUK4

P2 Yes, and I went there, I really want to know, what's the club like?

So I have been to three club I think, different club. And

M And what do you think about the clubs then?

P2 Yes, they are very young people there but maybe it didn't fit my character.

There were many discussions within the groups and questions to the moderator asking to explain the British students' obsession with alcohol. In addition to the lack of British classmates, this was viewed as an obstacle to engaging with British student culture.

5.2.3 Global English with international students

In terms of interacting with foreigners, an alternative was to speak with other international students, as illustrated by the example of clubbing with the Greek classmate. In this extract the participant highlights this in addition to the interesting phenomenon describing how the few native English speakers in the group would be marginalised:

FGUK5

P3 Yeah, exactly because, you know, probably at the same time that only one poor English guy, he feels lonely too, you know, it's like only one English. For me, it's like, just like you say. Something we can find in common, so international students, no matter where we are from are more open to each other, we can, I think most of us we can feel, however when it comes to the UK part it wasn't that open as I thought before, before I came here. So the integration is quite poor actually.

The overall perception of integration British culture is therefore limited, as one participant notes "I don't think I have already got into the English culture, I don't have any English friends." (FGUK3 P5). In the absence of British students on their courses, other international students were perceived as helpful, particularly in terms of shared experience studying in the UK and supporting the participants to adapting to British academic practices (discussed in the following chapter). Yet, students from other countries, particularly non-East Asian countries were in in short supply, meaning limited opportunities for the participants to speak English in authentic situations using English with native speakers or as a lingua franca. As a result, the impact of a lack of British students and few non-Chinese students meant the majority did not perceive that their language, particularly their speaking, improved:

FGUK3

P3 OK, so now, I'd just like to say all in all, it's language is the most important thing and the biggest challenge. My advice like, If you're not confident with your English language, don't come here, don't come and study, no, it's, it's a disaster.

M Some people improve quickly though, it depends when you're in a new situation though.

P1 But we haven't a lot of chance to improve your language. Because people around you a lot of Chinese and also like a lot of Indian people, they speak English is so different than with others.

The perception of non-British students' English not being as authentic is a common theme in discussion of global English, however it was not shared by all the participants. Certain participants realised that due to the lack of British students, the international students provided an opportunity to speak English, learn and broaden their horizons.

5.2.4 Speaking English and Writing English

When discussing the issue of language improvement, a significant comparison of written and spoken English arose in focus group 3, with English proficiency being judged primarily on your ability to speak English:

FGUK3

P5 But I think usually they pay more attention to your English speaking than your English writing...

P6 You present your English proficiency by speaking out not by writing out anytime.

Despite the initial perception that “writing will improve very slow but the speaking will very much” (FGUK3 P1), the participants found that in the UK it was there writing that was the focus of assessment, resulting in less and less formal focus on their speaking. Having little opportunity to speak and the expectation of a high volume of academic writing, participants would have to resort to explicit, active study, even though they were in a native speaking environment:

FGUK6.2

M So what about your language, do you think your language has improved?

P1 Yeah, I think at least my listening and reading ability is partly improving because before I come to the British I listened to the radio but I think I can catch just more than 50% of the content but when I came here, i think I gradually adapt to the language speed and I think I can catch all the content at least 80 to 90% and at first when I read all of the article I spent a lot of time because I had a lot of what I didn't know so I had to use a dictionary but now most of the words I can recognise it and I can just read the article very quickly and also I think the writing skill I think I've got some improvement but I think the oral language, I'm still not good at it.

M Why do you think that is?

P1 I think the main reason because of my social life is in the Chinese culture and I don't have too much chance to practice my oral English, if I am with my Chinese friends, we always use Chinese language.

- M Do you have the same experience?
- P2 Yes.
- P4 (No), Instead my Chinese is getting a lot more worse.
- M That's a sacrifice though.
- P3 Ok, so I think that even if you are in the UK you can't improve a lot if you don't push yourself to speak English to listen to English every day, you know I used to push myself to learn, for example when I was going to take another IELTS exam I think one year ago, when I came here for more than four months, I wanted to check whether I've got a development, then I practised my English every day, I listened to BBC every day and question time to listen to how these speak to each other and then after two months I took an IELTS test, my oral score is 8 but then I gave it up because I've got that score, so that's why I cannot speak very well.
- P3 Yeah, so you need to practice all the time.
- M OK, please ask each other questions as well.
- P2 I did improve but not as much as my expectation, you know before I'm going out I thought will have a lot of foreign friends but I have a lot Chinese classmates, quite a long time speaking, listening, writing but just not as much as my expectation.

The distinction between speaking and writing is significant, as the participants become more focused on their studies than their social life, the focus increasingly becomes how to improve their written English. One participant highlighted the anxiety of assessment of their English when it was written down compared to speaking English:

FGUK3

P6 Speaking can be more, like, at ease. We can, there is, there can be errors, and in writing, our tutor last term told us there should be no grammatical errors in the essay.

While it is difficult for the participants to assess their own language improvement at the time they are studying in the UK, these perceptions are important for their motivation and confidence. Their anxiety about language competency resulted in the focus on using proofreaders to help assure their essays are grammatically correct, particularly for the focus groups carried out later in the academic year. As one participant noted “yeah, I got some comment from my teacher that, he told me that if I had a proofreader then my assignment will be much better” (FGUK3 P5). In these terms, the language presented a significant obstacle to their academic performance and ability to experience the culture.

5.2.5 Instrumental language learning

The anxiety about language competence leads participants in numerous focus groups to speculate about whether they could reassess their language ability. As the participant mentioned in the extract above, the student reassessed their language ability using the IELTS test and achieved an 8 in speaking, which according to the IELTS bands indicates the user:

...has fully operational command of the language with only occasional unsystematic inaccuracies and inappropriacies. Misunderstandings may occur in unfamiliar situations. Handles complex detailed argumentation well. (IELTS, 2018)

Retaking the IELTS test to judge how the participants' language had improved emerged in a number of the groups. This indicates the participants' frustration of how their expectations matched with the reality of their experience in the UK:

FGUK 5

P3 Sometimes I just wonder if I go back to China now and take another IELTS test again in China, what would happen? I'm not that confident to be honest...

P1 My husband said if, when you come back China you must to take the IELTS again.

P3 Exam again!

P1 They, they want to know, he wants to know my English, how my English, how improve.

In addition to one participant expressing their lack of confidence in their English ability, this exchange introduces the external pressure from their family. Improving English therefore becomes reduced to the test score rather than the qualitative value of communicating in genuine interactions with students in the UK. Another participant had similar worries in regards to their parents' judgement of their English improvement.

FGUK3

P5 Yeah, I think so, because, yeah, my parents the way they say that, they told me that you must have improved your English a lot. But I feel that it's not much a lot.

Therefore the pressure of being in the environment and having a lack of opportunities to speak English is compounded by the added pressure, for some participants, of family members' expectations. Despite being thousands of miles from home, the pressures of China are not as distant as the participants expected. In terms of improving language

and engaging in culture, one participant summed up their experience abroad towards the end of her programme:

FGUK6.2

P3 I quite understand their (other Chinese students) situations, to what extent you understand the British culture depends which type of people you are living with, to what extent you would like to try to social with the local people and I think for most of the Chinese student, you know the social people is just with the Chinese students, peers, classmates or sometimes they even still watch Chinese drama work, everything is Chinese, they live in British [sic] but you actually still live in a very small Chinese world.

5.2.6 Independence & Loneliness

In contrast to “small Chinese world” the participants also perceived a growing independence when studying in the UK. In practical terms, this is due to the less communal and controlling environment at the British university compared with the participants’ experience of studying in China. The average Chinese university accommodation was described as not having kitchens for students to cook in and students would usually be expected to bunk with a number of other students, although this is changing as Chinese universities develop. Sharing a dormitory and the regimented atmosphere of the university, with wake up calls and announcements regularly sounding from the campus address system, fosters a collective sense of duty and comradeship to do simple things, such as waking up in the morning:

FGUK 3

P5 I think the most challenge for me is when I come here. I found that the individual space is much larger in here than in China because now I live

individually in one room but in China usually we have three or four or five other mates to live in one room. So, now I live in my room and usually in the morning it's hard for to get up because there's no one to wake me up.

Taking individual responsibility is symbolic of a more significant development of independence and autonomy, as Perry (1970) highlighted, this is the impact of the independent and heterogeneous environment fostered by a liberal university. The result of this increased independence is loneliness:

FGUK 7

M: Do you feel lonely sometimes?

P3 Yes, very lonely.

M That's terrible.

P3 No, no, no, even though there are loads of friends around me, when I feel some stressful, when I get some trouble, I don't know which one I want turn to chat about that. I don't know how to say, it's really lonely.

M It's homesickness?

P3 Kind of but in China, my university in China is really far from home, so, I'm not always, I'm not homesick when I'm in China but here...

M: So a little bit of culture shock as well maybe?

P3 Yeah, culture shock, yeah, or, everything is totally new. Totally new
f or me.

M So do you feel quite overwhelmed? Yeah, I felt the same studying in China [China anecdote] Do you feel lonely here sometimes?
[participants nod] Yes, why?

P2 Yes, I mean before I've come here I thought I'm different in Chinese people's eyes because I'm always independent. I mean Chinese people always stick together but I'm quite independent but after I came here I'm still different in Chinese people's eyes and different in Western people's eyes though I'm kind of isolated.

M Ok, so like a kind of individual.

P2 Yes.

This loneliness, in addition to culture shock and homesickness, is a result of the growing independence expected in the UK system. While the participants do not necessarily enjoy the experience, they do view this as a positive goal of studying abroad:

FGUK 7

P1: I kind of intend to regard being in the UK as a chance to be independent, learn to live all by myself, without my parents. To solve all my problems without my parents. Kind of test myself to see if I can live without others help and how to deal with the loneliness, all by myself without my friends around me.

M: Do you feel lonely then?

P1: Yeah, I kind of, I came here just myself, I think it's kind of frightening for me to get to know new people, native speakers especially with different backgrounds.

As we already have noted, the cultural and linguistic obstacles of making new friends, particularly outside the "small Chinese world" provide their own challenges. It is important to note that the challenge of living independently was not a significant challenge for all.

Participants who had worked in China after leaving university and before studying abroad did not find this different from entering the workforce in China:

FGUK 2

P2 I didn't find something quite difficult for me to live here because I have been very independent in China and I have worked for a short time and I can cook myself when I'm in China, so I can sort problems by myself. So, I think it's ok as my parents support me with finance, so as long as they support me I find it's ok for me to live here.

This participant makes an interesting distinction between being able to live independently in terms of being domestically capable as opposed to being financially independent of their parents. As noted earlier, the overwhelming majority of Chinese students who study abroad are privately funded by their parents, and as they are usually only children, this places significant pressure on them. The study abroad experience, therefore plays a complex role in students independent living, if they have not experienced it already, but also potentially providing them with the qualifications to enable to them to enter a job which will enable them become to financially independent. Another participant sums up the changing relationship they expect with their parents after studying abroad:

FGUK 6.2

P4: But still, I mean it's not because they care for you so it gives them rights to control your life or they push you so hard to do this type of thing, that's what I learn from here because I used, I never said no to my parents but now I can be like so confident I can say this is my life so I can take full control of my life. So, you don't have the right to mess with my life even though you are just my parents.

This participant in particular expressed the profound impact the study abroad experience had had on him. In particular, he was one of the few participants to make many British friends, study with international students on his course and also perform well on the course, his positive experience should be noted:

FGUK 6.2 P4: Before I come here I thought like life in the UK could be glamorous, because not a lot of Chinese people have the opportunity to come here and live for a year or even more but now I felt like an outlander here because basically you have the culture barrier, the language barrier, the way you think about stuff but it's so different, it's always like you can have a lot of friends, like British friends, all kinds of international friends you're going to have but still, as long as your identity is still Chinese you're still going to go back and it's always like a life, a one year life here, so just grab as much as you can. Learn about new things about your life, things like that.

5.3 Discussion: Through the Habermasian Lens

The motivations and experiences of Chinese learners living in the UK were not initially intended to form the analysis of the participants' approaches to academic integrity. As the research project progressed, however, the answers began to provide the broader context in which the participants are working; their lifeworld and interaction with the system, to use Habermas's terms. As noted in chapter 3, in simple terms the lifeworld refers to a person's culture, personality and integration into society which is reproduced through communication and discourse (McLean, 2006). In the focus groups, this was represented in the students' search for experience of culture and meaning in the UK. The system, on the other hand, formed by the economic and bureaucratic subsystems,

is maintained through instrumental action orientated towards success, in this case finding a job back in China. Rather than supporting their lifeworld experience, the motivations and experiences of the students represent the distortions of the lifeworld due to the colonizing impact of the transition between the education systems. The instrumental actions orientated to success overshadow the participants' integration into the academic lifeworld and UK higher education. In the following section the details of the data presented in this chapter will be analysed in respect to Habermas's TCA and the relevant literature explored in chapter 2.

5.3.1 The broader socio-economic context of internationalised education

The participants of this study are very much the product of the second phase of socio-economic development in China in response to the political turmoil and the Asian economic crisis of the late nineties (Postiglione, 2011). Due to significant socio-economic growth, massification of higher education combined with study abroad for the socio-economic elite provided new educational and travel opportunities for the growing middle class (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). This second iteration of Chinese educational reform aims at the reproduction of elements of the academic lifeworld, however with more control than before 1989. In order to assert this control, the bureaucracy (rankings/political control of universities) and economic systems (financial incentives) have been developed to support the academic lifeworld, however have ironically resulted in the colonisation of academic freedom and lead to the pathologies of instrumental and strategic action which can threaten academic integrity. This is the context in which the participants in this study are living.

The tension of the academic lifeworld and system are visible in the participants' motivation for studying abroad. For the educational elite, those students motivated by the subject and with a strong sense of purpose, the opportunity to study abroad, and

then ultimately return to China as haigui (sea-turtles), is part of the intended brain circulation (Saxenian, 2005). This brings knowledge and skills back to China and also graduates who have socialised into the lifeworld and therefore can help reproduce this back in China. For the socio-economic elite, however, the study abroad option serves as second chance at educational success (Brooks & Waters, 2009), fulfils the desire to travel, provides them with specialist skills and, removes them from the overheating job market in China (Postiglione, 2011).

5.3.2 Motivations to study in the UK

The key motivations for participants to go abroad related to language, gaining employment and having a unique experience. The complex relationship between lifeworld and system is apparent in these motivations. In terms of the lifeworld, the participants focus on language and experience would appear to relate to the communicative aspect and meaningful interaction when abroad contributing to a sense of identity. The investigation of language study as the key focus for Chinese students to study abroad, as identified by Counsell (2011), reveals elements of systemic distortions of the communicative aspect of the lifeworld. The tension between communicating with native students in genuine discourse and evaluating their language through systems of assessment (such as IELTS) clearly show this. Through the in depth discussions of the study of language with the participants it was apparent that the key motivation for doing was in order to study abroad and that was aimed at the instrumental purpose of gaining a job when returning to China. Under further discussion, however, finding a job also had implications for identity and gaining financial independence from parents. Study abroad was therefore implicitly indicated as a path to independence.

The UK is a popular destination for international and particularly Chinese students in a competitive market. Participants were variously attracted by particular courses, locations

of universities and the opportunity for domestic and European travel. The core motivation for choosing the UK revealed further instrumental purposes, with participants explaining the high ranking and therefore quality of the institutions they are able to study at combined with the ease of gaining entrance to the short 1 year Masters programmes. This is especially significant, as the minimal requirement of gaining the required IELTS level was deemed easy compared to more strict entrance criteria and longer period of studies in China and other Anglophone countries, with a minority of participants even admitting to failing to gain entrance elsewhere. The failure of a few participants in this study to gain entrance to Masters programmes in other countries should be no means taken as a generalisation to Chinese students in the UK, however, it does reveal the instrumental nature of their motivations in choosing their location to study.

Primarily, the question regarding *why Chinese students chose to study in the UK* was answered in instrumental terms; a Masters degree from the UK would provide them with an efficient and effective way to gain a quality job. Although this perception would be questioned by some, for example “I think most students say it will enable him or her to find a decent job back in China, but I don't think it's true” (FGUK7 P1), it seemed that this was at the centre of the rationale for pursuing a Masters in the UK.

In terms of the practical decision to study in the UK, although there seemed to be a number of different reasons, these all led to considerations of the participants' future jobs. English language study for example was listed as a primary factor for studying in the UK, particularly in search of a 'pure' form of English language and culture, in comparison with other Anglophone countries. The fact that the participants needed English at all was related to perceived improvements for their employment opportunities in the international job market in China. The same is true for the quality of the degree. The UK offered them the chance to gain a qualification from a more high ranking institution than they would be able to access in their home country. While this is also the case for studying in other

Anglophone countries, the participants perceived the UK as an easier option due to the entry requirements being simply gaining the desired IELTS level, compared to the entrance exams in addition to the English language requirement required in the US. A final incentive for studying in the UK is the short length of the Masters compared to China and other Anglophone countries. The participants noted their study in the UK would be at least half the time than in China or the alternatives available, and this would save them money on living costs and get them into the job market quicker.

The practical or instrumental reasons for studying abroad were also accompanied by the desire to have a different experience. The opportunity to travel and experience a different culture in the UK and Europe was considered a primary benefit of studying abroad, as one participant explained, “experience means a lot more than the piece of paper” (FGUK5 P3). The use of the word “means” is key here, as the experience seemed to have a value beyond the instrumental goal of finding a job: the opportunity to have experience outside China was perceived as meaningful. With a few exceptions, the majority of the participants were not seeking meaning in the academic programme which they were studying. In fact, of any of the factors, the choice of subject was mentioned the least by the participants and usually only to highlight that the choice of subject was not a significant factor. Another participant even went as far as to state “for me, to be honest, I’m not an academic person.” (FGUK6 P3). This lack of academic motivation will be explored later in relation to the impact on integrity and engagement in chapter 7.

This chapter has reviewed the two key motivations and considerations that the participants highlighted in choosing to study in the UK, the practical and experiential. These two elements are not unrelated. On the practical side, the students are instrumentally focused on finding a job, with a focus on returning to China. In terms of

the practical economics of the situation, the students must study abroad rather than simply travel as their parents are funding their studies:

FGUK3

P4 I think the main problem should be like, you've got the high expectation from your parents and they pay for your tuition fee for your living fee it is quite a huge amount when compared with China. So you need to finish your degree very successfully, like, you can go back to China then.

This could be related to the more traditional cultural Chinese values of filial piety and respect for education and the modern economic and social values of a fast moving economy. In a number of ways the experiential motivations of the students are akin to modern day Western students taking a Gap year (Söderman, Snead, et al. 2008). In terms of practical value, filial piety, or the less exoticised term of parental influence, plays a key role in terms of not only parents but also the state as students pursue subjects which are valued in terms of the domestic job market. A final point to consider is that the job in the end may not be completely instrumental and devoid of meaning. As one participant illustrated "I would like to spend one year to find a job that I really like... to find a job that will support my life." (FGUK7 P2), here the student is thinking in terms of the meaning of her career, it is not simply the case that any job will do. A further point hidden in this quote is related to the independence of the participants. The participant mentions "a job that will support my life", this indicates that finding a job using the Masters degree is the road to independence from the family, financial independence will mean a sense of agency. Therefore while the search for a job may be instrumental, the goal is to become autonomous and is not devoid of meaning.

5.3.3 Expectations versus the reality

The “very small Chinese world” the participants describe inhabiting is significant in terms of the linguistic and cultural obstacles the students face. This is, however, contrasted with the independence and loneliness the participants experience as a result of living both abroad and in a different kind of university environment. Although the students do perceive significant shortcomings in their language competency, this is seriously impacted by the lack of opportunity to use their language in authentic exchanges within the lifeworld. The participants describe being surrounded by other students from China, thus their interaction with British culture in general, let alone academic culture, was limited. Where opportunities did arise to interact with British student culture, the majority of participants were not interested in engaging in the drinking culture which accompanied partying. Other opportunities which did not involve alcohol, such as university societies or church groups did arise, however, as the year progressed the time became limited for these type of interactions due to the academic pressures.

The participants’ perceptions of the linguistic and cultural interactions were therefore negative in relation to their expectations. While some students did succeed in breaking out of the small Chinese world, several factors resulted in the participants finding it more difficult to immerse themselves in the language and culture. These included being surrounded by Chinese students; easy contact with relatives online, and the Chinese social media environment. Furthermore, when the participants lost confidence, they also start to feel pressure from family in China, which brings in the cultural issues of filial piety and also shame or loss of face (Gold, Gurthrie and Wank,2002). As a consequence, the discussion of retaking IELTS emerged as way student could find a way to quantify their English language improvement and also to motivate themselves to actively study the language. As the participant who retested her English discovered, her speaking had significantly improved to a level 8, far exceeding the entrance requirements for University

courses. This instrumental approach to IELTS, however, is evocative of Goodhart's law: "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure" (Oxford Reference, 2018). Students' documenting their success in the examination, yet still unable to break into the culture is indicative of deeper communicative problems. These are symptomatic of the pathologies, anomie and systemic distortions of the lifeworld.

These communicative issues are contrasted with the increasing independence the participants' experience as the year progresses and social life becomes less of a priority due to growing academic pressure. Independence is in a practical and domestic sense of having to learn to cook, however this also has a symbolism of growing autonomy from the authority of their parents and the university. In terms of the university environment in the UK, the students live more independently and have more time and space to choose when to wake up, when to eat and when and where to study. For the few of the participants who have worked in China, this is not a significant change, however for the majority, this is a significant practical obstacle exacerbated by the short timeframe of UK taught Masters programmes.

In addition to more freedom in terms of the university, study abroad marks a distinct separation from parents as the students move towards the financial independence they anticipate as a result of gaining the qualification and skills of living abroad. Independence means accepting responsibility and with this comes maturity and the confidence to focus on life beyond the study abroad experience. While independence and loneliness could just be a symptom of living abroad or travelling, as would be provided in the Gap year experience, there is significance of independence and accepting authority in terms of the academic experience and the epistemological development the students undergo in the UK. We will now turn to the specific national educational contexts and the participants' experiences of studying in China (chapter 6) and the UK (chapter 7).

6. Studying in China: A testing experience

Chinese culture, historically and in the modern context have placed There is significant focus on education and also a strong sense of respect for authority. The issue of a lack of integrity or the seeming acceptability of plagiarism is therefore the key paradox at the centre of this research. In this study, the participants' educational experience in the UK was framed in the focus group discussions within their overall educational background in China. This inevitably led the participants to compare and contrast their experiences of British and mainland Chinese education. In entering into the discussion of culture and education, it was important be aware of the dangers of crude dichotomisation of Chinese and Western culture (Pennycook, 1996).

Participants came from a variety of social and geographical backgrounds. Their educational experience was, however, to a large extent a shared one. A heavy emphasis on examinations, particularly with references to their *Gaokao* experience in high school, was apparent (as discussed in section 2.1.4). The participants' experience varied more at university level in China, yet the main contrast with the UK seemed to arise from a significant difference in assessment. In China the participants mainly had closed examinations, whereas in their Masters programmes in the UK, they were expected to write open essays. Although some participants described writing essays in China and doing exams in the UK, these were exceptions to the main forms of assessment rather than the rule. Furthermore, even where assessment forms were similar between the two contexts, the participants described a distinct contrast in the way these were approached by staff and students.

On the surface, the different assessment regime has practical implications for the participants. These ostensible contrasts could be dealt with through explicit instruction,

such as teaching students techniques for literature searching, note-taking, essay planning, referencing, paraphrasing and quoting. The form of assessment however represents more fundamental differences in the higher education systems that the participants were transitioning between. As these differences were probed within the focus groups, it became apparent that while certain elements could be made explicit, the different approaches to assessment were related, either by causality or effect, to structural differences in the study environment. Most significantly, the disparities in the study environment resulted in a different approach to knowledge. In the following section, the participants' experiences of Chinese higher education are reflected on from two perspectives, the first (FGUK) from participants studying in the UK and the second (FGC) from participants reflecting on their Chinese educational experience after having returned from the UK.

6.1 *The Gaokao* - University entrance examination

FGC1

P2 The first 18 years, *Gaokao* is like the only issue of my life...

The participants' recollections of the *Gaokao* (university entrance) examination casts a long shadow over their entire educational experience. As the quote above highlights, preparation for this test was the focus for most of their adolescent life, dominating students' lives from around aged 12:

FGC5

P3 ...in the *Gaokao* you attend the class from every day from morning to the evening, and you finish all your homework every day and you take tests every month.

M So you're being tested a lot then?

P3 A lot! Like every week, every month, every term.

M so you're being tested on reproducing answers.

P3 It's like, kind of because it's more test orientated teaching, in the class, in high school we are taught how to take exams. Not to the extreme but usually it's more about the test.

The *Gaokao* was a more significant theme for the participants who had returned to China, perhaps as they had further distance between themselves and their educational experience. Furthermore, as they were looking back on their study abroad experience in the context of their entire education, the *Gaokao* became more relevant in terms of the impact it has had on their lives. For those participants who took part in the research while they were in the process of studying, they seemed to be more preoccupied by the transition they were going through in the UK. Overall, comparison of the perceptions of the different participants revealed that the intense test focus experienced preparing for the *Gaokao* lay the foundations for the respondents' main approach to study prior to studying in the UK and also a highly competitive culture in searching for a job.

Though the *Gaokao* is usually discussed in a negative light, some of the participants could see the advantages of the experience, despite the hardships they suffered:

FGC3

P3 I want to add something, *Gaokao* is quite important for us but it's not the results, it's the experience, because, for me it's quite memorable to prepare for the *Gaokao* because I think it's the most knowledgeable [made me more knowledgeable], until now because I need to remember lots of things.

FGC5

P2 At that time I felt so pressured, not very enjoyable but after this year you feel that you have achieved a lot, actually.

It is important to note these positive reflections on the experience as they highlight a number of significant themes. As the extract suggest, the students certainly felt knowledgeable and had a sense of achievement after exam, which is a rite of passage for many Chinese people. The *Gaokao* receives a lot of criticism which is taken seriously by the government and has been met with reforms (You & Hu, 2013), yet it is easy to forget that the reinstatement of the exam after the Cultural Revolution was a significant milestone in the opening up and reforms of China. It provides a meritocratic and fair manner of finding the best students in the country, playing an active role in social mobility. It also provides students from the small towns the opportunity to get access to better resources in the bigger cities, as one student highlighted; “there are different educational resources in different areas and they are not fair, so you have to get a good grade in order to go to a big city to continue your study” (FGC5 P2). In this cases the fairness, respect and, to a certain degree, the trust society places in the exam could be seen in terms of the core themes of academic integrity.

6.1.1 Pressure and fairness of the *Gaokao*

These positive portrayals of the *Gaokao* were overshadowed, however, by the participants’ negative perceptions that correlated with the criticisms of the test which are well publicised (Zhao, 2014). Social pressure was a running theme, with the participants noting lack of agency in the decision to study, hence why Zhao (2014) refers to testing

in China as a prisoner's dilemma. The pressure seemed so great that the primary identity of the Chinese teenager in this social milieu was as a student:

FGUK6

P4 When I was in China, let's say everybody in our teenage years, all our relative says, you need to study hard need to get into a good university, without even knowing why I am going to a good university.

FGC2

P1 ...they only focus on this thing, like I said I like football but most parents, especially in my province they will ban you to play football. They will ban everything basically because you have to do this only thing, that's why this thing becomes so serious.

The pressure to a certain extent was relieved through completing the *Gaokao*, and there was a sense of achievement in doing so. For those students that succeed in the *Gaokao* and gain entrance to the top universities in China, the pressure continues (Bregnbæk, 2016). In contrast, as seen in the previous chapter the participants in this study did not perform well enough in the *Gaokao* to enter a top tier university, therefore viewing study abroad as a second chance (Brooks & Waters, 2009). While the participants agreed they felt relief and a sense of achievement in getting through the gruelling challenge, it was a traumatic experience and had a deep impact on their confidence:

FGC3

P2 *Gaokao* for me is not a good memory because I always know what my interest is. And I also think I have some ability, so *Gaokao* really just beat my confidence and I just didn't find the suitable way for my study, I mean the

learning method for myself and my dad always laughing me thinking I have a low IQ or because I always got not even scores on different modules.

Not only is there pressure to perform, the meritocratic nature of the system is not all at it seems. One participant who had returned to China and was working for a successful multinational tech firm, highlighted that the education system is skewed in favour of students in the urban centres. Hailing from Henan province, he highlighted the lack of 'good' university places available to accommodate students, meaning many students from provinces with less quality higher education resources miss out on top places despite scoring higher than students in other wealthier provinces. As a result, he noted the following:

FGC2

P1 Because the competition is unfair, you have some people, they have the advantage and some people who don't have the advantage and I happened to be one of those. Because every year between my high school years, every year we have people commit suicide. That's true, I don't think foreigners can understand this. Or even other people, so it's really hard. It's not only the education problem but everything combined.

The discussion of suicide is indicative of the pressure which the students face if they fail to attend a top tier university. As the participant of this study attests, it is the pressure of "everything combined" resting on their exam results. For adolescent Chinese students within the system their education may decide not only their fate but also the future of their parents and family.

The prevailing consequence of this pressure is alienation. The process of taking part in the examination acts to deny these young Chinese people of having an identity beyond being a student. The pressure to succeed is so great that it has the impact of colonising their life, all time must be dedicated to the exam at the expense of other activities. For the majority of the participants in this study, the impact of this pressure was compounded by their failure to achieve high enough scores to enter top tier institutions. While relieved to be finished, or even having *survived* the examination, many of the participants must then make a decision about whether to study at a less desirable university or to retake the examination:

FGC5

P3 Because we have to take that chance to go to university because if we failed, otherwise we can do it again, like take one more year to study in high school then take the *Gaokao* again. Otherwise we have to go to the school where we are able to.

M Why didn't you take it again, do many people take it again?

P1 Not many.

P2 I took it again.

P1 Really?

M Why was that?

P2 When I was in the third year of the senior school, I failed, there was no university to go to, so I have to try again. But I got a good grade that was not good enough to get a better university.

The participants therefore describe the compounded alienation of dedicating time and effort to the exam without success. One of the participants describes the profound impact this had on them:

FGC1

P2: The first 18 years, *Gaokao* is like the only issue of my life, after the *Gaokao* a lot of people start wondering who I really am, what I really want to do and when I was 18 I didn't know what I really like, I do know I wanted to study biology and ecology and stuff, so I went to [identifiable institution].

This raises a final point about the *Gaokao*, although the exam has two streams, for arts and sciences, students with specific interests must perform well across different subject areas to succeed. This does not benefit all students, as one pointed out “*Gaokao* for me is not a good memory because I always know what my interest is” (FGC3 P2). University, therefore offers students the opportunity to study a more specific interest, which will satisfy parental desire for an employable profession, furthermore it provides quite a contrast to the pressure of the *Gaokao*.

6.1.2 From Hell to Heaven: Transition from *Gaokao* to university in China

FGC5

M How did the undergraduate compare to the *Gaokao*? Just out of interest?

P3 Hell to heaven. After we graduate from high school the undergraduate is much less stressful because there is a more loose schedule for everyday and less courses and we don't have to finish assignments to the teachers. But in the *Gaokao* you attend the class from every day from morning to the evening, and you finish all your homework every day and you take tests every month.

As this extract highlights, the participants perceived university as being less pressured than high school. With an average of 4 years for an undergraduate programme, the students have time before entering the job market. The change of pressure was also accompanied by a different environment, similar to students around the world, many left their local context for the new environment of the university campus. In terms of assessment, university was not viewed as a new challenge for the participants but rather a continuation of the exam focus without the pressure. The shift from high school to university was not discussed in any depth during the focus groups, however the shift of study environment is significant. For many students, as in the UK for example, students move away from their home town for University and stay in campus dormitories. Unlike the UK however, the majority of students will stay in campus accommodation for the duration of their study at the institution. Moving away from the parents is a significant step in becoming more independent. The Chinese university, however, takes over the parental responsibility to a greater extent than the UK.

Decreased pressure and increased independence were perceived as positives for the participants as they could become involved in pursuits beyond studying. With a few exceptions, Chinese universities should not be understood as equivalents of the liberal institutions in the UK or US. Students are not free to attend classes as they choose, the participants describe having significant number of class hours, especially in comparison to the UK:

FGUK 7

M How many hours did you have in China?

P3 More than three hours one day.

P1 From 8am to 4 to 5pm.

M Really, so all day, and what was your, what classes were they? What classes did you have?

P2 We have lots of classes, some classes I thought were unnecessary, we had like mathematics for English major students. Yes, my school is crazy. I had writing sessions and speaking sessions and the listening sessions.

M Ok, and what were you saying?

P3 I think we just go to them, I don't think my university is every day, I think it depends on the day. I think not so free as here [UK], but not every day we just get some relevant subjects, like reading literature, something like that.

As participant 3 notes in the extract, “it’s not so free as here”, in reference to the UK. It must be noted that the difference between undergraduate and postgraduate study must be taken into account, and also the subject, with science subjects typically having more contact hours in UK universities than social sciences and especially the humanities. Contact time is a key factor in the transition of A-level students to British universities, particularly in the humanities where the ‘free’ time should be used for independent study and assignment completion (Snapper, 2009). For the Chinese participants in this study, there is a similar adjustment at university as the students have less hours than their *Gaokao* study, where classes would last from early morning to late evening.

In the previous extract, it is also important to note the comment that “some classes I thought were unnecessary” (FGUK7 P2). While it may be the case that students have preferences for particular courses and lecturers, the participants were not simply referring to preferences but a seeming lack of relevance to the course studied. As noted earlier, political education was a notable part of the curriculum which would be unusual in a UK course, especially on language programmes. In order to probe this subject, I asked the participants about political education when it arose:

FGUK7

M How about political classes, did you have political classes?

P3 No, that's just in high school.

M not in university?

P1 We also have them... (in university)

P3 Oh yeah.

M: What were they like? What did you do in them?

P1 Chairman Mao's thoughts.

M Really and what did you think about them?

P2 Boring, really boring. I would always try to listen to the teacher but I would always drift away. When we came to the examination, the teacher would get loads of important points for us to recite, ok. I will spend several days to recite those concepts and then I can pass the exam.

M Ok, alright, so it was more about the exam, just to pass the exam.

P2 Yeah, just to pass the exam.

M You didn't feel any connection with the ideology, with the politics of this type of thing?

P2 Actually, totally not that interested.

M In politics, yeah don't worry, don't worry. I just find it interesting that's all.

P1 I think it's impossible for teachers way of teaching, reading the textbooks and the syllabus to situate the thoughts as knowledge in textbooks, so it's kind of boring for us, so they change the teaching methodology (to help us pass).

While it is not directly relevant to their course, these political courses are important for their progress, particularly to Masters study (Zhang, 2017). The lack of engagement in this topic is clear from the participants' discussion, yet raises an interesting view on the

way these courses are taught. Indeed, Zhang (2017) has highlighted these courses as a hindrance to critical thinking in the Chinese curriculum. In the case of the political course it seems that, bearing in mind these participants were not from the same institution in China, the teachers taught this political course to test, to a greater extent than on their main programme of study.

6.1.3 Textbook and test centred rather than teacher centred

Turning to the forms of assessment the participants experienced at Chinese university brings is a key theme of this research. In China, the overwhelming consensus from the participants is that they were assessed in closed examinations with formative tests held in class to help prepare for those summative examinations. The following extract demonstrates a common exchange when asked about the form of assessment in China:

FGUK3

M Alright, ok, so, yeah, so in China how did they assess you ?

MP Exams

P3 Exams, and I, we got, we don't have feedback, we just got a mark.

MP (laugh)

P3 So, you have more than 60, you succeed and less than 60 you have to take the exam again until you get a score more than 60. And there's no feedback, just right, wrong, right, wrong. And at last you will got a score of this exam.

It is necessary to unpack this exchange as it is highly significant in terms of the findings of the research. Firstly, it seems that although the students have moved beyond the *Gaokao*, closed examinations were still the main form of assessment at undergraduate level. The mention of 'feedback', or lack of it, is said for effect and the significance of this is indicated by the laughter in response from the rest of the group. The only relevant

feedback necessary is the grade. Finally, the instrumental nature of the assessment is made plain, with no objections from the rest of the group, the participant describes the clear binary 'right and wrong' until the student is successful in passing the exam. In terms of the instrumental approach, the omission of feedback is significant as it implies there is no discussion of the rightness of the answers. One of the participants in the same group goes on to add more depth to this approach in terms of relationship this test taking approach has on the teaching:

FGUK 3

P6 In China they give us the scale, not the exact answers, they may cover several pages for example the teacher told you that we will have some questions from the book, from page 1 to maybe 100 or 200 and then you just look at these pages, but you also don't know what answer, what the questions would be, you just know the knowledge in these pages and apply it to answers the questions.

In reference to the political courses mentioned in the previous section, this participant clarifies that it is not exactly *teaching to test*, however there is a selection of pages which the students must prepare for each test, as noted by another participant:

FGUK1

P4 The teacher will not give us a reading list, we have a textbook, the reading is in the textbook, so do some preparation work, read chapter 1, then in the class we will, the teacher will explain chapter 1, then after class you look back to chapter 1 then next class chapter 2. So we don't have some extra reading.

This participant, speaking during their study in the UK, contrasts the reading list they are given in the UK with the textbook they use in China. While textbooks are used in UK higher education, for example for technical subjects such as research methods, they are not the sole focus of study. In the experience of the participants, the textbook was central to what they studied at university, as it has been during their *Gaokao*.

The issue of textbook use was probed further in the focus groups, the following exchanges highlight the use of a limited number of resources:

FGUK2

P2 Yeah, in China you have textbooks and normally a teacher will teach according to the textbook or he just uses the textbook and find his own handout to let students to prepare for the books, for the class but here (UK) you got a lot of lists reading, books to read, we don't normally have in China.

FGUK3

M Is it only one textbook or...?

P6 Maybe more.

P5 I think it depends on the subject. Because we are engineering so usually we just have one book, yeah, we just need to read that book and then maybe then we will borrow some books to enhance our knowledge on that part, we don't need to read that much.

M Ok, so you don't have to read as much but you need to really...

P5 Focus on...

M Memorise it?

P4 Yes.

This contrasts dramatically with the reading lists the students would be provided with in the UK. This will be of significance in terms of the participants' effective adjustment to their Masters programme in the following chapter. It is also significant in terms of the pedagogic approach, as the participants mention above, this test and textbook approach leads to instrumental action by both students, memorisation, and teachers, teaching to test.

6.1.4 Memorisation and instrumental action

Memorisation is a key theme in the literature regarding the stereotype of Chinese learners (Marton, 1996). Consequently it was an issue of significance which could be probed in the focus groups. The ability to memorise was obviously highly prized by the participants for their education in China and this was related to the nature of the tests they would take, especially as the information they needed to learn was confined to a limited number of sources, usually textbooks and teacher's notes. The issue of memorisation has been challenged by authors critical of the stereotype of Chinese learners. Liu (2005) in a study of plagiarism by ESL students, highlights that there are two types of memorisation in Chinese tradition, as clarified in the two phrases: *si ji yin bei* (死记硬背) ["dead and inflexible memorization"] & *huo xue huo yong* (活学活用) ["learning and using it creatively"]. The participants in this study, to greater degree, perceived the *dead and inflexible* knowledge approach being more suited to their educational experience. One student when asked about this replied that this sort of memorisation was necessary, stating "even though the reciting still very painful but you need to do that if you want to get a high mark...in China the atmosphere is people ask you to remember stuff" (FGUK6.1 P4).

The issue of getting a "high mark" brings us back to the earlier excerpt which referred to the feedback of "just right, wrong, right, wrong" for exams. Analysis of the perceptions of

the participants indicates a strong leaning towards an instrumental approach in their educational practice prior to studying in the UK. One participant, highlighting the positives of this approach in preparing for exams, noted “there are many ways to get the right result but you need to find the shortest way to get there.” (FGUK3 P5). The *right result* and *getting there* again relate to success in the exam. From an instrumental perspective, the right answer is the means to the end of a high score in the exam, a quantitative transaction. As a result of this approach, memorisation becomes the “shortest way to get there.”

This instrumental approach is significant in terms of the overall pedagogical approach which the participants describe in China, at both secondary and tertiary level. This was a matter which came up in a discussion with the head of a department at a prestigious Beijing institution during data collection in 2016. The academic, who had a PhD from a British institution discussed the problems of trying to embed the approaches from UK and US universities in China. It was noted that the students are not interested in how the right answer was reached but just whether it was right or not, much to the frustration of the academic. The students discussed were the top students in the country at an institution where 90% of the students would go on to Masters study in China, via the *Kaoyan* national postgraduate entrance examination. The key point discussed was that these students were not concerned with the why and how of the knowledge. Viewing the right answer as the means to the end of passing the test does not require discussion or feedback about why an answer is right or wrong. The issues which arose in this conversation related to a number of different factors that were discussed in the focus groups.

For instance, in the in depth discussion of memorisation in one of the focus groups (FGUK3), it was suggested that the Chinese education system favoured a certain type of student. Sensing the group was leaning in this direction, I probed them on this thought:

FGUK 3

M Ok, so do you think that, yeah because I've often thought this as well, do you think that the Chinese education system favours certain types of students then?

MP Yes!

P5 Some students they are very good at...

MP Taking exams...

P5 Taking exams and getting good marks

M Ok, do you think they are always the smartest students or the most intelligent students?

P3 (unclear word) like they have...

P4 Some of them.

P2 To make good at memory of some things.

P5 Maybe they are very smart they can make the short road to get the correct answer.

This extract poses a several significant questions around the nature of intelligence and also the issue of comparing the participants in this study and their perceptions of the students from the top tier universities in China. The issue of intelligence is a controversial issue and not necessarily one which is restricted to Chinese education. Memory is often related to intelligence (Ackerman, Beier, & Boyle, 2005), even in the UK. Consider, for example, the dominance of Oxford and Cambridge on the popular TV programme *University Challenge*. This reinforces the image that they have the most intelligent

students in the country. In terms of the participants in this study, there was the sense that the system not only favoured those students with good memories but also denied creative students any place to question the education process:

FGC3

P2 I always like to figure things out, I want to know the process, I want to know why we are doing that but in *Gaokao*, they just tell you, you do that but not why or they don't even have the time to talk to you about why you want to do that.

This extract aligned with the conversation in Beijing, the implication being that in addition to having good memories, the students who succeeded in the system have an instrumental approach to succeed which is instilled in them in the pressurized environment of the *Gaokao*. As the academic in Beijing noted, however, the *Gaokao* then impacts the education system beyond secondary education as those students become so successful at the test taking that they are reluctant when faced with the uncertainty of open questions without a clear right and wrong answer.

Though there were differences between high school and university in China the participants also emphasise the similarities. Furthermore, they made the connection between the instrumental approach and the problems they would later face in the UK with critical thinking:

FGC5

M So you're being tested on reproducing answers.

- P3 It's like, kind of because it's more test orientated teaching, in the class, in high school we are taught how to take exams. Not to the extreme but usually it's more about the test.
- M So you've got the textbook, everything you need to know is there. So it's just a case of learning what's in the textbook?
- P1 And most of the time we spend memorising what is written in the textbooks in the examinations.
- P3 But in undergraduate it's quite different, like when I was studying English as my major, there are more like classes doing programmes, projects and there are more foreign teachers, there are different styles of teaching.
- M Why do you think there is this problem with critical thinking then?
- P3 We're not used to critical thinking, no matter in high school or undergraduate. We were educated to produce answers to the tests and there are usually standard answers, so the way we were taught are quite the opposite to critical thinking. It's not very usual think to challenge people's especially teacher's or some authority's ideas.

Critical thinking, more so than the concept of plagiarism, was an issue which students highlighted struggling with in their time in the UK and presented as the opposite to memorisation. In terms of memorisation, the participants are referring to the right answers of for the test, or as they state “the teacher’s or some authority’s ideas”, which should not be questioned. This raises the question about the role of the teacher in the process if the students are simply required to memorise the textbook.

6.1.5 A teacher’s dilemma

Teachers are highly regarded in Chinese society, and in terms of the core values of academic integrity, they carry a great deal of responsibility. The participants’ perceptions

of the role of the teacher in the Chinese university context is contrasted greatly with the lecturer or academic in the British context. Despite the respect the participants obviously had for their teachers in China, there was also the sense that they were in some way superfluous to the learning process other to act a conduit for the information from textbook to the test. This results in the common stereotype of the didactic teacher standing at the front of the class and reading from the book:

FGC1

P1 Normally in China we just have class in the classroom and our teacher is talking by PPT, and they will send you PPT and that will be our exams, blah, blah, that's it but we don't do very academic research or group research very often. I think you even have that problem because you do sciences [reference to other participant], but I do journalism so we have little time to go to outside of the university, so we have to listen to the teacher but most of the time we don't listen to the teacher just do what we do and the only thing that is important is the exam.

In another group, the view was similar:

FGUK 7

P2 We rely on points the teacher speak [MP laughter], and we try to say the certain answers and try to find the, you know, what's their focus and then complete.

In the previous two extracts, the teacher is viewed in the same instrumental terms as the textbook and the test. The teacher is another tool in the system, and as a result their interest is for the students to pass the test. This strategic approach to teaching can, in the worst case scenario, result in a lack of communication and also meaning in the

process. An example of this is the lack of feedback in the examination process, which we have already noted.

The lack of feedback which the participants describe is a lack of discursive or communicative feedback. The students do receive a grade, which is a sort of feedback, however as the answers are either right or wrong, as written in the textbook, there is little discussion to be had:

FGUK7

M So in China did you get any feedback on your exams? Did you get any comments or anything?

P1 No, just scores.

M Just scores, so the teacher wouldn't really give you any feedback after?

P2 No, so that's a difficult thing, you've got to think a lot of people find that difficult to deal with, it's criticism. When you get the paper back and you say these things, you might not be used to that.

P1 I would say in China the teachers don't like to criticise the students, so they don't like that.

The participant here highlights an important factor regarding the nature of any feedback in this situation. As there is nothing to discuss about the answers, any feedback would be interpreted as a criticism not of an argument or concept but of the student themselves. For example, in a situation where the student has not remembered the correct answer, the student can be criticised for either having a poor memory or not having studied hard enough. Hence, why this participant indicated the teachers are reluctant to do so.

In terms of the test, feedback is limited, however this is not to say that the teachers do not have a communicative relationship with their students. The relationship is more nuanced than a simple instrumental engagement. As alluded to in the conversation with the Professor in Beijing, the students have been so ingrained in test taking during their *Gaokao* preparation that they are reluctant to alternative pedagogic responses. As one student mentioned, this provides a dilemma for the teachers:

FGUK1

P1 I think most Chinese teachers are more focused on practical skills, as well, they will encourage you, the students to get internships, or do something practical by themselves. But maybe there are too many students there, so they, they can't care everyone to, to really get their practice. But there is a trend, that they are trying to do so.

P5 I think my teachers are quite in a dilemma, I think when I just entered the university, I think every teacher told us to just read more, write more and encourage us to do more work when finish our, finish in class things, to do more things outside class. "You can go to the library, you can read more books, we cannot help you to do everything" The purpose of the university is just taught, try to teach you how to learn by yourself. I think, I think they are just expecting to do more because they can do limited things. They hope us to do more but I think we just fail them.

M Where, here or in the UK?

P5 I think, I think in China, they hope us to be better, to learn by ourselves....

There is the perception, therefore, that university in China offers the opportunity for more independent learning or free time. This may be a further indication of what the earlier student had meant by comparing the shift from high school to university as the shift

between heaven and hell. The dilemma for the teacher is how to motivate students to take responsibility for their own learning. With the social pressure removed from the students and a reduction of hours of class time, the rigid scaffolding has been taken away from the students. The problem for the teachers is that they can provide little incentive for the students to then engage in their studies within a test-centered pedagogy. Indeed, even beyond the examination, the implication above is that the teacher advises them to read beyond their course, to take time to reflect. This brings the discussion back to an earlier point relating to the impact of the *Gaokao*: the issue of identity. As the participants had noted, during these years they had little identity beyond that of being a student. Beyond the instrumental relationship between teacher and student revolving around the test, the increased independence provided students with the space to find their identity. The teacher in the previous extract seems to be guiding students to take responsibility for this, as no-one else can do it for them.

Beyond advising the students to take responsibility for themselves, it seems that the teachers neither have the time nor the resources to offer alternatives for the students. In addition to compulsory hours offered to students, there is lab time where students can study and interact with their teachers. The issue comes back to the test and textbook being the dominant form of assessment with very few, if any, communicative forms of assessment. One participant noted that the teacher had tried to get the students to write for an English course, however had no time to provide feedback for the students. The participant, in this case, provides an example of where the teacher has encouraged the students to write reflectively and communicatively, however this had been fruitless without the feedback on the writing.

FGUK1

P4 And in China I take a course called English language teaching approach, and the teacher told us that she feels sorry for us, she want to change but you know, we have to pass the test. In daily life, sometimes we will write some journals about our personal feelings, just like some common words, but the teacher has no time to check these things. So, I think it's a big problem, when we write something we need someone to tell us where we should get a change and when they reach the problem we come back rewrite it the second time, then she read it twice, she come back, she gave us some comments but without such comments we cannot get improvement.

One resource which the universities and some better schools draw upon, as attested to by a number of participants, is the use of *foreign* teachers. These, usually university educated, native English speakers are employed to help students with their English language, and at university specifically support English for Academic Purposes (EAP). In some cases these interventions had a lasting impact on the students, strongly influencing their decision to study abroad, as one participant noted (FGUK1 P3). Another participant (now a teacher herself) commented that even these international teachers found it difficult to break the students out their instrumental approach:

FGC4

P1 Just one but my professor was from New Zealand and he found it so hard to teach us essay writing because we just had no idea, we just didn't want to do that. [Laughter]. We would rather take exams because that's easier. Like the multiple choice and some essay questions, that would be fine for us.

The teacher's dilemma, therefore is to shift the students into more independent and reflective forms of assessment, such as writing essays. Yet as these extracts

demonstrate, the test taking mentality of the students makes this difficult. Consequently, closed examinations dominate the assessments students face both in high school and at undergraduate level. The issue of academic integrity is overwhelmingly associated the concepts of plagiarism and collusion, which relate to the issue of authorship and open assessment. This raises the question of how much writing practice the students have engaged in prior to studying in the UK:

FGUK7

P2 Assignments? I mean in China we don't write assignments too often

MP Yeah

In the academic literature on the subject of Chinese learners in international education, the problems Chinese learners face are attributed to the differences in rhetorical approach. Often EAP teachers (and students) refer to the circular and inductive style of Chinese essay writing based upon Kaplan's study of the Chinese eight-legged essay compared with the direct and deductive western essay. As noted earlier however, numerous researchers of the modern Chinese educational context highlight the limited experience of writing Chinese students have, particularly in Chinese (Hu & Lei, 2012; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012; Li, 2012; Mohan & Lo, 1985). With a few exceptions, the participants had little experience of academic essay writing, or extended writing of any form in their previous educational experience in China. This has significant implications for their effective integration in the UK educational environment, arising from and attributable to the forms of assessment prevalent in China's post-compulsory education system. In addition to any practical impact on their study skills, this carries deeper implications for their approaches and dispositions with regards to knowledge.

6.1.6 Essay writing in exam conditions

FG1

P5 I think maybe we are just too focused on exams and if we, if we Chinese people, student I mean, are marked only on essays, I think we will make big progress because I think she is quite right, we are quite lack of practice. We, I think the biggest word extent we write, I think, is 250 to 300 words, I think the small essay. I think we are quite used to this pattern but when it comes to thousands of words of writing, we don't quite familiar with that. The small lens of writing can just prepare us to the patterns and structure of how to write. That's it, when it comes to longer part, we cannot handle it.

As was made clear in the previous section, the predominant form of assessment was closed examinations. What was not clear, however, was where essay writing would fall within this Chinese assessment regime. Correspondingly, analysis of the focus groups discussions reveal that the majority of the academic writing, with the significant exception of the dissertation, would take place within the timed, closed examination. As a result, the participants' experience of writing was limited to short 250-300 word tasks, dependent on the participants' major, with a significant number having majored in English language. In cases where the participants had studied a scientific subject, it was less likely they would have any academic writing at all, as noted by this participant: "I'm not English major when I was a graduate, undergraduate. So I major in public finance, so the exams are slightly different from theirs. We don't have to write, we just like have to fill in some [multiple] choice" (FGUK1 P1)

In the broader scheme of their educational experience prior to arriving in the UK the participants' exposure to academic writing is highly limited. While the participants did complete a dissertation as a requirement of their undergraduate degree at Chinese

universities, this is seen as a symbolic process and has been observed by other researchers (Carroll, 2008). Prior to the dissertation however, the students in China write short essays in timed conditions. This pattern of essay writing in China is, again, a continuation of the *Gaokao* approach. During the exam the students must write short essays in Chinese and also English, depending on what format of the examination they are taking. Then, in their university, they continue to produce these short texts under timed examination conditions. This trend is continued, particularly for English majors who have to complete the CET (College English Test) and again have to complete another English, usually the IELTS (International English Language Testing System), which includes a short writing task.

In several of the focus groups the experience of writing for these examinations would be discussed, however the first group had a particularly rich discussion of the topic. In the following exchange, the CET was discussed in terms of English writing in China:

FGUK1

M OK, ok, and so, were essays important in China then?

P2 It's not that important...

P4 I think that it's kind of blank, writing education in China. We are all English major students, so we will learn English speaking, listening and reading class. But writing, you know in China we have two very important exams for English majors is test for English majors in our, we have four years in China, in second year we have take the exam term 4.

Writing was therefore placed in the context of the examination, resulting in the instrumentalisation of the act of writing. As the participants note, writing was "not that important". In exploring why this was the case, they described writing as being difficult

to teach and assess due to resources, particularly time. In terms of time, the participants found listening and reading exams easier to prepare for, whereas speaking and writing were more difficult to improve upon in a short time:

FGUK1

P2 We didn't pay enough attention on writing, that is indeed right, because, as he mentioned, we had a term eight examination, especially, specified for English majors. That, in that examination you have to pass a 60 scores in order to pass the examination and gain the certificate, but in order to improve the four skills, listening, speaking and... reading, it's quite easy to prepare in a relatively short time. For example if you spend about three months in listening, you can improve greatly, I think, you have a very big progress but...

M Do you mean improve on the test?

P2 Yes, but, you know, if you insist on writing and after three months working, it's very hard for you to get a very satisfactory marks. And that's why we don't think that writing is that important than the other three skills. So maybe that's why we lack the ability of writing.

In the previous extract the participant is highlighting the difficulty of assessing writing. As one of the participants had mentioned in relation to getting feedback on writing assessments, "the teacher has no time to check these things" (FGUK1 P4). The same participant went on to provide further insight into why writing is neglected:

FGUK1

P4 Yes, and we don't write normally. Like we have five days a week and we have only two hours of writing class, and the other class are reading,

listening and...we are trying to be just and equal, and considering we have 60 students in one class, but in college it, the circumstance is quite different, we have 40 or 20 students in a class, and if I think organising a test like speaking or writing, the teacher needs a lot of time to give some feedback, but ever since you give tasks like have some grammar, vocabulary test and there will be a very clear standard to tick like, right or wrong.

This brings the analysis back to the issue of the monologic approach of examinations. If teachers are to help students with their writing, the students must have more time to write and the teachers must have more time to provide feedback. The result of the limited time dedicated to writing and the examination focus is that feedback not provided on the content of the writing but more to highlight spelling and grammar issues and on correct structure:

FGUK2

P2 They [the teacher], they, your idea, your idea about the title, your outlines or your structure. In China I think, they are not quite focused on your idea, they are focused on your structure a lot, they even, the supervisor in China and here also don't see so much too much details. They, I think because they are supervisor they don't enough much time.

FGUK2

P1 I think in China the essay is easier for me to write because in China the teacher is not normally quite focused on the content that you write, they normally focus on the structure or something like that.

While this participant does make a comparison in this case of teachers in China and the UK being limited for time, they highlight that in China, the structure was an important element of the marking criteria. The focus of the teacher is on the more quantitative elements of the writing, rather than the qualitative content in the essay such as the evaluation of the ideas presented or the argument presented.

In terms of these qualitative elements of the writing assessments, the texts students were asked to produce were short, particularly in comparison to those they would be expected to write in the UK:

FGUK1

P4 Because you know in China, we, it's exam centered, yeah, one of my teacher said we will go as the exam lead. Like the term 4 exam, we have writing test, the writing test is like two sections, first section is about writing an email or letter, 100 words. The second part is about writing some, ehh, they will give you some guidelines talking about experience, 200 words. And, so in the daily life we will write 100 letter or email then the teacher will help us to correct the style and for the fourth year, I think, we have the writing test 250 words, 60 minutes it's like a kind of argumentation.

This exam centred writing poses some interesting points of comparison to the extended open essays the participants would write in the UK. Firstly, the length is far shorter, with students being expected to write between 1500 and 5000 words for their Master's essay and over 10,000 for the dissertation. This has significant consequences. Within the short text there is little room for development of an argument and the feedback is limited. As referred to earlier, the participants had pointed out that in China, "teachers don't like to criticise the students", in reference to the lack of feedback they received. In the case of

their writing, the feedback students received would be related to the appropriate style, structure and accuracy of the English language. Furthermore, the students do not have to reference work in these tasks, nor are they, broadly speaking, academic writing tasks. The tasks actually seem more informal writing, such as writing a letter or about an experience.

In hearing the participants' recollections of these writing task, there was a similarity to the IELTS writing tasks they would have to complete in order to study in the UK. In the IELTS, participants would have to complete one short 150 description of a graph or diagram and one 250 word essay on an argument or problem (IELTS.org, 2017), both within 1 hour. On asking the participants whether the CET English test was similar to the IELTS writing section, came the following response:

FGUK1

P4 Not the IELTS type, it's quite different from the IELTS type because we have our own style, the teacher will tell us, "first, the first paragraph you should state out your main opinion, and then the main body part you will divide it into 3 or 4 paragraphs, in each paragraph the first sentence will be your topic sentence, then the second sentence, third sentence, you will develop your topic sentence."

Despite the claim that the test is different from the IELTS, they seemed to be similar in a number of ways. One key similarity is the set structure of 3-4 paragraphs and the close examination format. A difference is that the *Academic* version of the IELTS test would seemingly be focused on more 'academic' content, especially the interpretive and evaluative element of the Task 1 and the argument of the Task 2, which may result in a difference of tone, style and formality.

FGC1

P1 You know the *Gaokao*, the English of *Gaokao* is very easy, it's very easy, it's more about the linguistic rules, *yufa* (语法/grammar), than just, you choose questions for the right word for the blanks. That's the basic form of test, so it's really easy, and also CET 4 & 6 in graduate but IELTS is a little different because you do listening, speaking, writing and reading, and I got listening for 7.5 and I got writing for only 6, speaking I only got 6 and for reading I got 8.5, so that's the difference, you can see that I'm good at doing paper things...

P2 Actually I just spent 17 days for the exam because it was in a hurry, so in 17 days I just practised reading and listening, and by doing the previous tests and I got 8 for both of those, but because of 17 days, I don't have enough time to practice writing, so I only got 6.

Although this may be a surface comparison of the two tests there are two significant differences which will have an impact in terms of academic integrity. The first is the use of sources in the examination assignments. In such short and informal writing tasks, the participants are not expected to use sources and, therefore, they do not provide a reference list or citations. The second difference is that the students are writing under examination conditions, meaning they are under invigilation and should not communicate with others while writing. These two differences are highly relevant to the issues of independent learning and the evaluation of academic texts.

The majority of the writing the participants faced prior to their experience in the UK was therefore in closed exams. Between taking the CET and the IELTS, the majority of the participants would have to complete a dissertation, depending on their major. This piece of writing would bear the closest relation to the writing they would be asked to complete

in the UK. In the final section of this chapter, the participants' description of the dissertation process will be analysed.

6.2 The Dissertation for Chinese Undergraduate students

Chinese students describe writing a dissertation at the end of their undergraduate studies which requires many months of work and is often up to 15,000 words long, yet the work does not contribute to their final award. Instead, students say they do it because it is required and because they themselves and their teachers see as a way of deepening students' knowledge. (Carroll, 2008, p. 3)

FGC2

P1 For my UG I only write one serious essay for my graduation. Other [than that], I don't remember any, I had a lot of exam.

The final part of this section is to recount their dissertation, which for the majority of the participants was their only experience of writing in non-examination conditions prior to studying in the UK. As the opening quote by Jude Carroll makes clear, while the Chinese students do have to write a significant word count for their dissertation, similar to what is expected in the UK, this is more of a formative assignment which bears little consequences for their final result. In exploring this issue in the focus groups, the participants not only corroborated Carroll's finding but also provided insight into this process and the implications it has in terms of the issues they would face with academic integrity in the UK.

6.2.1 Valuing the dissertation

The consensus of the participants' was that the dissertation was not highly significant in terms of their overall grade and more of a symbolic exercise. The opportunity for students to engage in an extended piece of writing without the added pressure of worrying about the impact on their grades should enable the students to spend several months on the project in relative freedom. The intention seems to be that it is a formative learning process in which the students are intrinsically motivated to complete their own research project with support from their supervisor. Perhaps this is useful for teachers to identify the students who have academic potential. The reality the students are faced with is quite different as they have received little support in transitioning from examination based short writing tasks to extended research-based essays. Furthermore, as the work is not graded and the formative work has no follow-up task, it was the participants' perspective that the work is not taken seriously by the students nor their teachers.

As a consequence of the students' examination background, and their focus on grades, many of the students viewed the dissertation in instrumental terms, with the objective being to pass:

FGUK2

P2 I think my attitude towards essay, towards my assignment changed [in the UK] because in, when I was in undergraduate, when I was an undergraduate student [in China] I was just not serious about the essay because I thought anyway the teacher will just pass me.

Rather than being motivated to engage with the assessment, the students did not take the dissertation seriously. As the next extract highlights, this put the teachers in a difficult situation. While they could criticize the students for poor performance, they had little

power to fail the students if the students did not engage with the dissertation as it was merely symbolic:

FGUK6

P1 I know in China in my University if you just finish your dissertation and you do really not a good job, that you can pass your degree and maybe the teacher, the different teachers when you present your dissertation, maybe the teacher hold a fierce criticism of the work but finally you will pass.

This approach highlights several of the key problems which teachers face with student engagement in higher education and how this relates to academic integrity. In terms of transition, the students have had little experience of writing at length. Increasing from writing 250 words in an examination to writing a 15,000 word dissertation is significant in a number of ways. While it is a positive factor that students have freedom from the stress of grades to write the piece of work, this is heavily outweighed in the participants' perception by their lack of preparation or support for the task. Further probing of the topic revealed that the lack of preparation is related to the available resources, such as access to literature for research. The result is that they lack the appropriate academic literacy to engage in the task of writing when they arrive in the UK.

6.2.2 Research Resources and Academic Skills

Producing an extended piece of writing requires the students to carry out research using at least secondary resources, and preferably empirical findings or theoretical approaches. The participants perceived previous experience of studying had not prepared them for this as they had been restricted to using the text books which contained the content for the examinations. Few of the participants recollected having carried out primary research

for their dissertation as one participant recollected, “I didn't receive a lot of instruction on that, so actually there is no research when I wrote those thesis paper and that for my UG study” (FGC4 P1). As a result, their dissertations consisted mainly of secondary referenced material, with one participant noting “we are writing mostly like a literature review” (FGC5 P3). This required them to consult the library or search online databases for resources. On a practical level, the students did not have experience of searching for secondary literature and received little formal guidance on how to do this. Furthermore, the resources students had access to differed greatly, as one student noted:

FGUK1

P1 ...we do not have so many academic books in the library in China. We have some novels, some other readings rather than so many academic reading.

The access to resources was dependent upon the university and even department which the participants had studied in, with more reputable Chinese institutions having superior resources, comparable with British universities. The majority of the participants in the study however, had not attended top tier universities. Even so, students who had access to better resources, such as the CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure) database, still had little use for this prior to their dissertation and had little formal training on how to search for literature and assess the quality of resources. This has a number of practical consequences for their academic skills, particularly their referencing and source-use.

The consequence of the extreme transition from textbook and closed exam to writing a dissertation of in excess of 10,000 words is that the students are not equipped with the academic skills to handle the task. They perceive that they did not receive instruction on how to complete the task, and even if instruction was received, they did not complete

writing tasks of a lesser word count in order to incrementally build up to the dissertation. Length of the writing is not simply a quantitative question, but a qualitative one. The participants described how they either did not have access to quality resources, or if they do have access, they did not know how to identify quality resources. Resultantly, they paint a picture of the process of using a few resources to compose their whole dissertation:

FGUK1

P3 I remember when I was writing my dissertation, undergrad dissertation I just read some article downloaded from somewhere, I just read several...So, it's just several articles and then I can finish my dissertation. I didn't have to read so many papers or books.

FGC5

P3 I don't really read a lot of papers and I don't do research at all, we are writing mostly like a literature review. We combine a lot of literature review into one as our thesis because it's not like a research based, oriented dissertation.

A further consideration of the source-use of the students depends to a certain degree on the subject which the students were studying. In cases where students would be majoring in English language, the students would be completing their dissertation in English. The participants, however, would not always use English texts, instead opting to use Chinese sources:

FGUK2

P3 When I write essays in China, I read not much English editions of books, I just read Chinese books and then translate the Chinese into English.

The participants are therefore describing using a limited amount of sources, of varying quality, in some cases translating sources in order to compose a work in excess of 10,000 words without empirical research. This poses an interesting question in terms of the content of the dissertation and how the students contribute their own ideas to the text and also how they acknowledge the sources they use.

In terms of referencing, the students are asked to provide a reference list for the resources they used in the text, however with few in-text citations.

FGC5

P2 Yeah, well at that time we just searched online journals and then we put them in the paper and finally we just got references to put in.

M To put them at the end, so you put the references at the end but didn't reference in the paper?

P1 No in-text citation.

P3 I think I did but there is no uniform, we had some in-text citation but there is no, like, format.

FGUK1

P4 ...in China you can speak like this, "many researchers have done relevant research about what, what, what." It's ok, but in the UK, on my assignment the teacher will just line it and said, who is the researcher but it's ok, fine in China.

In one case a participant described having received guidance on a particular reference style, "in China we have MLA version" (FGUK1 P4). Yet, in most cases participants would

have had little guidance on referencing. Furthermore, there was the mixed impression of whether these references would be checked:

FGUK6

P2 We don't need to citation, we just give a reference list at the back.

M So, theoretically if you're writing an essay you can then just put things at the end.

P2 Just keep a reference list at the back. I don't think they really check whether we really read that.

Other participants noted that references would be checked for their dissertation however not for any other writing they produced. The overall consensus was therefore, that a reference list was expected yet there were mixed views about how seriously this would be checked. Referencing, therefore, was expected to a certain extent but not essential for the dissertation, as the following quotes make clear:

FGUK1

P5 Because when you write in Chinese you can, your article can be understood by others or it can be make some kind of sense, it's ok, it's fair and maybe you can get a very high mark without using kind of supporting ideas from other scholars or experts.

FGUK2

P3 ...cite other references to make a conclusion about what opinions you are supporting, you support and it is difficult because in China, for me I did not do such things in my essay writing.

FGUK4

P2 In China, when I was in China study in the university, I could write everything as I like, there no need, needn't for any references, it's needn't you can use a reference.

The participants therefore had limited experience of referencing in academic writing prior to studying in the UK. As referencing is deeply entwined with whether or not students have been deemed to plagiarise, this finding beared a distinct relationship to the participants' perspective on academic integrity in China.

6.2.3 Plagiarism and implications for Academic Integrity

The limited experience of academic writing and referencing has distinct implications in terms of the participants' experience of academic integrity and understanding of plagiarism. This is not to say that the Chinese universities lack integrity or that the concept of plagiarism does not exist in China. On the contrary, they were advised by teachers to avoid plagiarism. The students' lack of writing and referencing in practice combined with their previous experience of preparing for exams resulted in a lack of understanding of plagiarism or the necessary skills to avoid it. Furthermore, there was the perception that plagiarism would not be identified by staff for a number of reasons including the availability of software and the rigour of marking of the dissertation. These factors, combined with the students previous reliance on textbooks and translation of texts have significant consequences in terms of academic integrity.

While most participants said that they would be advised against plagiarism in general terms, they would receive little specific guidance on this. The following extract gives insight into the participants' perspective on the guidance they receive on plagiarism and referencing:

FGUK6

P1 In China my tutor pays attention to telling to not plagiarism, if I cite others, their opinions.

P2 If you reference it.

P1 Yeah, if I reference it I need to mark it up but how to correctly cite others' articles I really don't know it.

M You didn't learn it?

P1 My tutor told me not to plagiarism [sic], but he didn't tell me what is plagiarism. In China, I think my classmates also had such a problem, my tutor encouraged me to cite some foreign articles it reflects a wider opinion, wide reading. I know some of my classmates they find a good article, it's good, it's fine, it tells just what I want to say and they translate and cite a lot from the one article and they even don't tell others.

P2 I think it is a problem of the systematic settings, a teacher tells us, don't do that don't do this but they didn't tell us anything about how to conduct your work. For example most of us don't know how to organise different sources together with very clear structure of something and you know we just conduct it with ourselves and even though it may not be so clear, it's not critical but the teacher don't give us any feedback about that.

The sentiments of the participants are not significantly different to the findings of other studies in that the students are warned about plagiarism but unaware of the how to avoid it (Carroll, 2014). In China, however, on addition to not being taught academic writing and referencing practice, the perception was that only in extreme cases involving complete copying would be punished.

The issue of detection was probed in the course of the discussions, particularly in comparison to the use of detection software in the UK, most commonly Turnitin. The participants fell into two camps with their experience in China, with many having no recollection of any text-matching software in China and others who had heard about software but having no experience of using it themselves. As the following extract indicates, the students were warned that software would be used to check the dissertation, however there were doubts about whether this was the case:

FGUK1

P3 Yes, we have such kind of system but I [think] seldom it there, it will be used.

We were told our dissertation would be put in that system but I don't think that they put it in it.

M Alright, erm, why, why do think there is a difference then?

P5 I think in China maybe your work are put into that system, and if your similarity with a journal or what is higher than a number then you are plagiarism. So if the number is lower than that number so you are not.

This is reminiscent of the initial issues faced by institutions when using text-matching software in the UK, where staff would look to set a percentage benchmark (e.g. 25%) above which texts would either be considered to have plagiarised or above which would certainly be checked for plagiarism (Sutherland-Smith, 2016). It is plausible that this system is in place at Chinese institution, however, the participant could also be speculating here. Overwhelmingly, it was the case that they were not aware of sanctions on plagiarism being enforced. It seemed despite the threat of text-matching software being used, this seemed to the students to be an empty threat.

Software, however, is not the only way to detect plagiarism. In fact, text matching software merely supports teachers in identifying plagiarism as it down to the academic judgement of the teacher to declare the act of plagiarism. Therefore, even without the aid of software, it is still likely that teachers may be able to identify students work from the published sources they are using, if they were looking for it. It seems the case, according to the participants, that their teachers were not so concerned with identifying plagiarism. One participant speculated as to the reasons why:

FGUK2

P1 Because, you know there are good students in the school, some not so good students in school but the graduate rate of the Chinese university is very high, almost every people in the university major can graduate from this school, if you pay too much attention to plagiarism some of the, lots of the students may fail in their dissertations. Also, I think because in my experience I wrote my dissertation, I'm an English major, I wrote my dissertation in English, there is no, not such a tool like Turnitin, you see, in the Chinese university, to track the plagiarism to track the rate of English plagiarism but there is to track the Chinese.

Whether the software is available in China or not, the overwhelming consensus was that teachers would not actively look for plagiarism. This led to the question, if the teachers were not looking for plagiarism, what would they provide feedback on, what was the purpose of the dissertation?

The participants perceived that their teachers were not necessarily interested in the content of their dissertation. What they would provide feedback on would be the structure and the quality of language use, especially for those writing in English. As the students

had not experienced writing at length in the past, it is likely that structuring such a large piece of work would provide a significant challenge. Therefore, this would be something the teacher could address with the student. The same is true of the issue of clarity and accuracy of language. In the cases where students were writing in English, the teacher would pay attention to the accuracy of the language rather than the content:

FGUK2

P1 Yes, the supervisor just cannot give you some deeper advice about your topics here, because when I wrote my dissertation in China, the supervisor may proofread my dissertation.

The students therefore recalled receiving feedback on the structure, clarity and accuracy of their writing. In terms of the source use, the participants had mentioned it would not be uncommon for a student to “find a good article, it's good, it's fine, it tells just what I want to say and they translate and cite a lot from the one article and they even don't tell others” (FGUK6 P1). The comment implies translation of the text and also following the structure to produce their dissertation. One participant compared the dissertation experience to their Master's in the UK:

FGC5

P3 Compared to the thesis I wrote for my undergraduate degree, it's like, what did I do at that time, when I was writing the dissertation for my masters degree, I felt like, what did I do as an undergraduate! The thesis I wrote was rubbish.

M Really, have you read it, do you have it somewhere?

P3 I probably have a copy in my computer but I don't really read a lot of papers and I don't do research at all, we are writing mostly like a literature review.

We combine a lot of literature review into one as our thesis because it's not like a research based, oriented dissertation.

Another gave an indication of their engagement in the dissertation in China:

FGUK1

P1 No, no, even when I was writing in Chinese dissertation I think I'm not interested in that, it's so boring. And when I finish it, I'm not willing to read it, myself.

The consensus of the dissertation was therefore a piece of writing which was based upon a limited number of sources, including translation or paraphrases of the sources used, with no in-text citation and little or no empirical research. Additionally some participants would follow the structures of the resources they used. With little or no access to software or lack of imperative for staff to check the work for plagiarism, the consequences for the cumulative consequences of this established the academic norms for what the students were expected to produce, which would be at odds with norms they faced in the UK.

6.2.4 All essays under heaven are plagiarised 天下文章一大抄

FGUK7

P1 We didn't read a lot before writing our thesis, yeah, so not too hard because it was in our own language, but some parts are, I think the ideas are all the same. I want to apply an old Chinese saying, *Tianxiawenjiangyidachao*, *chao* means plagiarism.

M Ah so, everything is plagiarism. So everything under the sky is plagiarism?

P2 Every essay under the sky is chaoxi.

In this extract a participant brought up and clarified the meaning of the Chinese phrase “天下文章一大抄” (*tianxiawenzhangyidachao*), as defined in the exchange above. In terms of academic integrity, this phrase is highly problematic if taken in the literal sense as it implies that all essays are plagiarised. This phrase stood out in terms of the research findings and highlights a number of different issues regarding the concept of plagiarism in terms of textual plagiarism and the copying or usage of ideas.

The least problematic interpretation of this phrase would be to take an intertextual approach to authorship, as discussed in chapter 3. There are Chinese and Western phrases, such as “Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal” (Eliot, 1967), which acknowledge the intertextual nature of authorship and the tension between influence, imitation and originality in the artistic process. Further analysis of Eliot’s artistic approach reveals far more nuance than it simply being to plagiarise his predecessors work (Howard, 2007). It acknowledges the role of context on work and how the re-use of work is in fact the recontextualisation of the ideas of others. The flippant references to stealing or plagiarism, however, reflect a more explicit intention to use the work of others without their permission and reflects an instrumental approach to the gaining benefit rather than writing as an expressive act. In this way, Fishman’s (2009) definition of plagiarism makes clear that in the academic context, there is the clear legitimate expectation of original authorship and using others work without appropriate acknowledgement “In order to obtain some benefit, credit, or gain which need not be monetary” (Fishman, 2009, p. 5), is plagiarism rather than a simple intertextual act.

The focus group participants however gave the impression that rather than being an intertextual understanding of textual borrowing, the phrase had the more literal interpretation that plagiarism and copying are a problem in China:

FGUK6

P4 I think in China we just, I think nowadays plagiarism can be a problem in China, just translate the paper from English to Chinese and from Chinese to English, they also do that because you know it's not just plagiarism, but in fact still you just copy stuff.

As this participant acknowledges, one issue in China is translation plagiarism, which is particularly from international publications into Chinese publications for the Chinese market (Bloch, 2001; Blum, 2009). These will not be official translations but the translator or an academic using junior colleagues to translate the work, will assume authorship of the book. Another is the overall quality of the work produced and the pressure to publish in China:

FGUK7

P1 We are not serious about plagiarism.

M Not serious about it? What do you mean? Why is that?

P1 Because tianxiawenjiangyidachao (天下文章一大抄袭/essays under heaven are plagiarised).

P2 Because academic integrity in China is not as strict as in Britain. I mean even our tutors in China they copy others.

P3 It's kind of a scandal.

P1 When we were doing our project, for our thesis, and to be published, our tutor said, you know what you are doing is pseudoscience, you are all doing pseudoscience.

M So, pseudoscience, really, well that's interesting.

P2 What is that?

M So, who said that to you?

P1 My tutors. He's a professor, in China – (he said) *wenkexue* (问科学
/pseudoscience)

The result of these discussion is the complex interconnection between the concept of intertextuality and the way texts are constructed with the issue of plagiarism and quality of academic output and writing education in China. These are all of significance for academic integrity when Chinese students undertake their studies in the UK.

6.2.5 Significance of the Chinese study experience

The participants' previous educational experience is obviously highly significant to the issues they face in their adaptation to studying in the UK. The focus groups provided a rich context of the students' perceptions of their study experience in China, particularly the differences in assessment, which of are of considerable consequence for their understanding of plagiarism and expectations of academic integrity. Within this context the distinct themes of pressure and fairness in a highly competitive educational environment were made clear. The significant landmark in all of the participants' educational experience was the *Gaokao*, bringing together issues of assessment and pressure with distinct pedagogic implications. The participants' perceived that the *Gaokao* had colonised their time in adolescence and while there was a sense of achievement in completing the exam. The cost of failure to gain entrance to a high ranking institution was high, in many cases influencing a student's decision to seek study abroad. This highlights the distinct issues of equality of educational opportunity in China, with participants highlighting the regional inequalities in Chinese secondary education.

The transition from secondary education to higher education in China therefore represents a shift in pressure, from “hell to heaven” as noted by a participant. While the data is not sufficient to draw conclusions about causality, it appears that there is a relationship between the assessment approach and the pedagogical approach at university which are due to the influence of the *Gaokao* but also due to the practicalities of funding, such as quality of resources and large class sizes. In terms of pedagogy, as noted by the participants and corroborated by the professor from a prestigious university, the approach at university is still geared towards to test taking mentality and suited to those students with good memories and an instrumental approach to knowledge. The result is didactic teaching using a textbook and test approach for different subjects with clear right and wrong answers, whether for political courses or language learning. The implication for academic writing is that students have little experience of extended writing practice with most writing being completed in closed examinations under invigilation. Therefore when students come to complete their dissertation, for many participants the only long form writing they complete, the students have had little training or feedback on the content of their writing. Writing therefore is judged on grammar, accuracy and structure, in a similar manner to their test taking, with the monological approach to right and wrong answers.

In terms of academic integrity, the result is significant for the students’ transition to studying in the UK and also academic writing pedagogy in China. The monologic and didactic pedagogic approach to teaching faces practical and epistemological obstacles when students are expected to write their dissertation in China. As the participants emphasise, while their teachers may want to have a more communicative relationship, they face a dilemma in motivating the students beyond the test-taking instrumental approach. When the students come to complete their dissertation they have not incrementally built up to writing 15,000 words and so have not had experience of writing

at length. The students either have limited access to a wide range of resources for the task or, if resources are available, they have received little training on using them. In addition, their experience of and training using referencing is also limited. Finally, the nature of extended academic writing is that the students cannot be invigilated at all times during the process, as is the case for high stakes exams, the *Gaokao* in particular, as noted in the literature review. Therefore the dissertation, which is more of symbolic value, is not strictly assessed and both students and staff have little incentive to engage with the process or pay close attention to plagiarism, at least according to the participants' perceptions. The result is that the students' experiences of academic writing, expectations of academic integrity and their training in academic skills are minimal when arriving in the UK.

6.3 Discussion: Through the Habermasian Lens

The participants' previous educational experience is obviously highly significant to the issues they face in their adaptation to studying in the UK. The focus groups provided a rich context of the students' perceptions of their study experience in China, particularly the differences in assessment, which are of considerable consequence for their understanding of plagiarism and expectations of academic integrity. In this section the experiences of the students in the incredibly pressurised system of Chinese education, specifically the transition between secondary and tertiary education have been set out. The central theme within these accounts is of testing, particularly the substantial impact of the *Gaokao*. In the following sub-sections the implications of these findings will be analysed through the Habermasian lens. A strong argument is presented that the students' lifeworld becomes colonised by the system of testing leading to significant distortion of communication, anomie and the associated pathologies. Of particular interest are the ramifications for language study, pedagogy and the practical resource implications of higher education in an increasingly massified education system in China.

6.3.1 Habermasian summary of the participants' experiences

Within the context of this study the distinct themes of pressure and fairness in a highly competitive educational environment were made clear. The significant landmark in all of the participants' educational experience was the *Gaokao*, bringing together issues of assessment and pressure with distinct pedagogic implications. Interpreting the participants' perceptions through Habermas's framework, the *Gaokao* had colonised their time in adolescence, yet had resulted in a sense of achievement for those who were successful. The cost of failure to gain entrance to a top ranking institution was high, in many cases influencing a student's decision to seek study abroad. This highlights the distinct issues of equality of educational opportunity in China, with participants highlighting the regional inequalities in Chinese secondary education.

The transition from secondary education to higher education in China³⁸ therefore represents a shift in pressure, from "hell to heaven" as noted by a participant. While the data is not sufficient to draw conclusions about causality, it appears that there is a relationship between the assessment approach and the pedagogical approach at university which are due to the influence of the *Gaokao* but also due to the practicalities of funding, such as quality of resources and large class sizes. In terms of pedagogy, as noted by the participants and corroborated by the professor from a prestigious university, the approach at university is still geared towards to a test taking mentality. This is suited to those students with good memories and an instrumental approach to knowledge. The result is didactic teaching using a textbook and test approach for different subjects with clear right and wrong answers, whether for political courses or language learning. The

³⁸ There may be a distinction to draw between those entering top institutions and those who were less successful in the *Gaokao*. According to Bregnbæk (2016), the pressure for students at top institutions in China is significant.

implication for academic writing is that students have little experience of extended writing practice with most writing being completed in closed examinations under invigilation. Therefore when students come to complete their dissertation, for many participants the only long form writing they complete, the students have had little training or feedback on the content of their writing. Writing therefore is judged on grammar, accuracy and structure, in a similar manner to their test taking, with the monological approach to right and wrong answers.

In terms of academic integrity, the result is significant for the students' transition to studying in the UK and also academic writing pedagogy in China. The monologic and didactic pedagogic approach to teaching faces practical and epistemological obstacles when students are expected to write their dissertation in China. As the participants emphasise, while their teachers may want to have a more communicative relationship, they face a dilemma in motivating the students beyond the test-taking instrumental approach forcing them to be strategic. When the students come to complete their dissertation, they have not incrementally built up to writing 15,000 words and so have not had experience of writing at length. The students either have limited access to a wide range of resources for the task or, if resources are available, they have received little training on using them. In addition, their experience using referencing is also limited at best. Finally, the nature of extended academic writing is that the students cannot be invigilated at all times during the process, as is the case for high stakes exams, the *Gaokao* in particular, as noted in the literature review. Therefore the dissertation, which is more of symbolic value, is not strictly assessed. Both students and staff have little incentive to engage with the process or pay close attention to plagiarism, at least according to the participants' perceptions. The result is that the students' experiences of academic writing, expectations of academic integrity and their training in academic skills are minimal when arriving in the UK.

6.3.2 Pressure and fairness in high stakes testing

The participants presented a unanimous picture of their shared educational background and the pressure associated with it. In the eyes of the participants who had returned to China, the impact of this landmark examination became accentuated in comparison to the study abroad experience. Although regional differences were described in the *Gaokao* and the quality of educational experience at Chinese university, the core themes of pressure and fairness in the increasingly competitive environment were prominent. The extreme competition of high stakes testing is summed up in Zhao's (2014) comparison to a *prisoner's dilemma* for parents, students and, as noted by one of the participants (FGUK1 P5), even teachers. Particularly in terms of the *Gaokao*, it appears to be a clear case of colonisation of the student lifeworld by the system.

The participants described the alienation caused by the significant focus on the *Gaokao*. One participant in particular painting a vivid scene from his home-town of football being banned in the lead up to the exam and suicides occurring due to the pressure (FGC2 P1), an image supported by research (Bregnbæk, 2016). Reflecting on this experience, while some displayed a positive sense of achievement in completing the exam, the more common consensus indicated a colonisation of their identity, essentialising their existence to simply studying for the examination with parents and teachers supporting them to study as much as possible. Such competition leads to the common theme of cheating and government's strong reaction to prevent it through extreme surveillance measures for examinations (Li, 2013). Cheating in this case can be understood as instrumental action to achieve success in a seemingly unfair environment, with parents and students perceiving that everyone is cheating in order to neutralize their actions (as per section 2.3). The government's reaction to the cheating is to attempt to ensure fairness of the procedure, however this has the result of externalising ethical responsibility from the students for not cheating through surveillance.

Upon further reflection, the surveillance is not the only measure aimed at ensuring fairness in the competitive environment. The participants were consistent in their description of the monologic textbook and test approach used, particularly in the *Gaokao* but also at undergraduate level. Within this pedagogical approach, students are expected to learn the 'right' answer, which leads to memorisation as their key strategy. While it may be the case that Chinese students demonstrate "huo xue huo yong" (活学活用/learning and using it creatively) which Liu (2005) identifies and shares similarities to Marton's (1996) concept of deep memorisation, these approaches were not evident in this study. The students described a highly instrumental approach to memorisation, more in line with "si ji yin bei" (死记硬背/dead and inflexible memorization) described by Liu (2005). This approach was particularly acute in the students' description of the political courses which were compulsory at university level and the examination which formed a component of the Graduate School Entrance Examination (考研/*kǎoyán*) (He, 2010). The participants' description of these classes, provide an extreme example of the consequences of the examination approach in which the students, and seemingly the teachers, have little interest in the content of the course, and only the outcome. In order to pass the test the participants described an instrumental approach to the topic, leading to rote learners supported by strategic action of the teachers' assistance.

The political course provide an extreme example of this systematic distortion of communication between teacher and student. Zhang (2017) has posed this political curriculum content as the reason for Chinese students' lack of critical thinking. In this case, however, it appears that the combination of the lack of interest, or motivation to study the subject, with the pedagogic approach leads to rote learning. The subject

content alone could not be enough to stifle critical thinking as subjects, such as the political thought of Chairman Mao could be the topic of complex debate, if not for the pedagogical and ideological approach. Furthermore, as noted by the Professor in Beijing, even at one of the best institutions in China, the legacy of the instrumental approach ingrained in the students causes problems in their epistemological approach. This is particularly as many of the students continue on to Master's degrees and enter the civil service, resulting in a focus on future examinations. The participants in this study who, for the most part, had been less successful in the *Gaokao* or the victim of regional variations in educational opportunities, differ in that they focus on studying English for the IELTS test in order to study abroad, however the instrumental approach to the test remains.

6.3.3 Testing culture and talent selection

The textbook and testing approach therefore fosters an instrumental approach to learning. In terms of the epistemological models explored in chapter 4, this seems to fit the following approaches:

- Surface approach - A quantitative increase in knowledge, memorising and acquisition for subsequent utilisation, of facts, methods, etc. (Marton & Säljö, 1976; Säljö, 1979)
- Absolute knowing- Knowledge should be acquired. It is quantifiable, inflexible, and unquestionable and comes from higher authorities (Baxter Magolda, 1992)

The debates around the implications of these approaches for knowledge have been covered in section 2.5. To recap, a key distinction in this approach is Chinn and Malhorta's (2002) observation of the lack of epistemological authenticity of textbooks and

testing which acts to restrict students understanding of the nature of knowledge and the search for truth. This is not just the case in China, as the various epistemological theorists attest (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Marton & Säljö, 1976; Perry, 1970), outside university, formal education is usually restricted to these lower level approaches. What is unusual in the Chinese context which the participants describe is their university undergraduate experience was a continuation of the testing approach. The question is, why is this the case?

The answer to this seems to be in reflecting upon the purpose of education. Firstly, the pedagogical approach has a practical advantage, as it is highly scalable and also attempts to be a fair and meritocratic process in spite of the rising inequality (Liu, 2016). As noted by the participants, the opportunity to study in the UK provides access to better educational resources. As China is expanding its higher education system, the inequality of opportunity and Government's focus on elite institutions results in a gulf in quality of teaching and resources (Zhao, 2014). The competition which emerges from resources is the result of the economic influence of the system. Therefore, the socio-economic elite are using their financial resources to gain access to study abroad, thus gaining a competitive advantage, subverting the system. Secondly, the pedagogical approach is due to political power, relating to the second key steering media in Habermas's concept of *system*. While students want the best resources, the government uses education aims to select the best talent from the country. This goal is at the root of the fifth great invention of high stakes testing in China (Imperial Examination/*kējǔ*/科举), which was copied around the world (Bodde, 1948). With the best performing students going to elite Chinese universities, study abroad has become a method of outsourcing education while the Chinese system catches up with demand, in addition to sending elite students abroad for knowledge exchange.

6.3.4 Writing, plagiarism and epistemological obstacles

The *Keju* and its modern successors (*Gaokao* or the *Guokao*) therefore share the key goal, talent selection. The methods of assessment and content of these examinations, however differ significantly. The *Keju* was a written examination, using a variety of writing techniques throughout the centuries, before becoming dominated by the eight legged essay (*Bagu*) up until its abolition in the early 20th century. The examination was based on the canon of Confucian texts and therefore orientated towards orthodoxy of knowledge in preparation for the bureaucracy (Suen & Yu, 2006). While memorisation played a significant role in the test, rhetorical style was also key to success in the examination. As noted in chapter 6, the combination of the two led to the *Keju* and *Bagu* in particular being blamed for the talent obliteration of the imperial exam as students dedicated their lives to memorising and practicing the rhetorical form (Zhu, 1934 as cited in Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012, p. 77). As De Saeger (2008) proposed, the examination therefore posed an “epistemological obstacle” to China’s engagement in modern scientific discourse therefore contributing to *Needham’s Dilemma* and China failing to achieve scientific modernity.

The modern examinations, while sharing the colonising impact on the students’ lives, focuses on modern subjects which are assessed through multiple choice questions and short writing tests (Liu, 2016). While memorisation and logic are tested, there is little rhetorical or epistemological significance to the exams, furthermore, they also include an assessment of political ideology (Zhang, 2017). Thus, while the examinations have switched from Confucian ideology to modern knowledge, the rhetorical element of assessment has been reduced. The participants in this study therefore attest to the lack of training for and experience of writing in their studies prior to their symbolic undergraduate dissertation. In spite of this lack of writing training in the modern context, it appears that the ancient rhetorical and assessment approaches to writing are blamed

for the problems Chinese students have with writing in the context (Kaplan, 1966; Matalene, 1985). For example, the influence of the *Bagu* is evident in Kaplan's model of Chinese rhetorical styles (see section 2.1.4), in which the Chinese model is depicted as "turning in a widening gyre" (Kaplan, 1966, p. 17). Furthermore, the image of plagiarism as being acceptable in Chinese writing is premised on the *Keju* in which works would be memorised and reproduced without the need for citation due to the limited canon of works and learned audience (You, 2010). As Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) and Bloch and Chi (1995) make clear, there is a great of difference between modern academic Chinese writing, rhetoric and citation practices and these historic forms. As Mohan and Lo (1985) suggest, the problems Chinese students have with writing may be little more than a lack of extended compositional practice.

With the lack of assessment of extended writing, the concentration on multiple choice and short form writing results in the reliance on the surface or absolute approach to knowledge of textbooks. The classroom environment that the participants describe is therefore based on instrumental, information reproducing (Hirvela & Du, 2013). While the participants reported good relationships from their supportive teachers, the teacher's dilemma of helping the student succeed in the test lead to strategic action on their part. This is evident in the participants' description of feedback to their short writing tasks due to the limited time available for the teachers to read their writing (FGUK1 P4). In terms of the scalability of writing as an assessment, the resource needed to engage with and provide feedback on writing was limited for practical purposes with large class sizes. This was most evident in terms of the symbolic undergraduate dissertation, which the participants did not perceive with any seriousness and their teachers would simply provide feedback on structure, grammar and spelling. In addition to the practical obstacles to writing, the political power of writing is also significant, especially in social

science subjects, a point raised by Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012), noting it's "currently impossible for civic-minded Chinese to engage in constructive public debate..." (p.206).

Extended writing from multiple sources in academic writing enters into discourse on the subject, this moves beyond the epistemological bounds of the absolute approach to knowledge (Baxter Magolda, 1992). In Habermas's terms, entering the discourse means removing power relations in order to come to an intersubjective consensus on truth free from the systems interference (Finlayson, 2005). As the participants discussed, discourse on the validity of knowledge puts both teacher and student in a difficult position within their hierarchical relationship. Within the monologic test and textbook approach, the roles of student and teacher are clearly defined, as are the correct answers. In relation to this, the core values of educational integrity in this context are obedience, respect for the teacher and duty. Opening up discourse changes the relationship and the purpose of education, with the student moving from information reproducing to knowledge transformation (Hirvela & Du, 2013). This is highly significant in terms of critical thinking, silence in the seminar, plagiarism and academic integrity when the students move to the UK context.

6.3.5 Language and the reproduction of the academic lifeworld

As regards the Chinese learner, Watkins and Biggs (1996) identified the three constituent parts as language, testing and culture. Bringing these three parts under the Habermasian lens, there is a correspondence to TCA in terms of language and culture representing the communicative elements of the lifeworld and testing representing the system. In terms of the Chinese educational context, the issue of English language study is complex. With 'English Fever' in China (Wang & Li, 2014), the majority of students study English throughout their schooling, yet still many do not achieve proficiency (Luo & Garner, 2017). The students in this study had completed English language studies at

university, or had completed a dissertation in English or had taken the College English Test (CET) before achieving the IELTS level necessary to study abroad. Furthermore, as Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) point out these students “are now given more instruction on how to write in English than in how to write in Chinese.” (p.205). It was not the consensus amongst participants that language deficit was their main problem with communicating in the UK.

Though the English fever is retreating in China, with reforms of *Gaokao* language assessment (Wang & Li, 2014) and anti-Westernisation drives of the current administration (Du, 2018), language is still significant to the process of development in China. You (2010) highlights the growth of language teaching in China as the process of colonisation to decolonisation as Global English emerges around the world as the *lingua franca*. English therefore acts as the “barometer of modernization” (Ross, 1992, p. 239), providing a conduit for China to access the advances in science and technology. This is in line with Government’s goals since opening-up and reform, resulting in a translation culture in Chinese academia as described by Bloch’s research (2001, 2012). Further research into the spectrum of practices in this environment to support English language publication, such as of Luo and Hyland (2016/9) ‘literacy brokers’ through to the grey area of Li’s (2012) ‘textual borrowing’ by graduate writers and the more illegitimate ghostwriting and fraudulent practices (Hvistendahl, 2013; Xia, 2017; Zhao, 2014).

This is where Habermas’s concepts can be highly insightful into the processes at work, delineating between legitimate practices aimed at genuine discourse and instrumental actions aimed towards success regardless of the ethical consequences. Through the concentration on English language since reform and opening up (1978), China is entering the scientific discourse, in essence reproduce the lifeworld of modern science, albeit with Chinese characteristics. In her work on Chinese academia, Hayhoe

documented this process in the late 1980's, using Habermas's TCA. The participants in this study, however present a different form of this process in terms of the Chinese higher education system's interactions with internationalised, massified and marketised higher education through their students. It appears that the instrumental approach to language learning through testing has a significant impact on the system's ability to assist the reproduction of the academic lifeworld in China. As we shall see in the following chapter, one of the most ways that this problem of integration into and reproduction of the academic lifeworld in China is the transitional issues Chinese learners face when attempting to adapt to education in international and transnational contexts.

7 Studying in the UK: Becoming critical

While a significant focus of the research on Chinese learners concerns their study abroad, the period which many of the students study abroad is actually only very brief, with many studying a one year Masters. The following chapter details the challenges the students faced in studying in the UK, with a focus on academic writing. The discussion of their troubles with academic writing uncovered deeper issues beyond writing, leading to discussion of plagiarism, academic skills and, in particular, critical thinking. In combination with their motivation to study abroad and their Chinese study experience, the transition to studying in the UK posed both practical and linguistic obstacles to the learners in order to succeed and adapt to the norms and standards of academic integrity.

7.1 Practical obstacles - Academic writing and skills

As part of the focus group schedule, the participants were asked to address the question, “what are the biggest challenges you face studying here so far?”. While language was a challenge, invariably the students would find academic writing as the biggest challenge. Although the students had been asked to attend the focus group to discuss academic writing, which may have skewed their answers to a certain extent, the participants’ experience of academic writing in China was highly limited, as established in the previous chapter. The focus on research based essays on their UK Masters programme, was therefore a significant obstacle:

FGUK3

M How about the first essay (in the UK) you wrote then, was this, what was this experience like?

P3 It feels like s**t.

MP (Shocked laughter)

M Yeah

P3 Every day you sit in front of the table and in front of the computer, I don't know.

P6 Two nights.

P3 I don't know what to write, I don't know what's the point in this essay, things going for many days but, you know, there is a deadline, you have to work out something. In that situation I have to write, I don't care about the quality.

M You just write something.

P3 Just write something. In this case, I finished my first essay.

This response is an extreme perspective which drew shocked laughter from the other participants. There was, however, the sense that the student was being honest and sincere about his struggles with writing. There are three points which we can draw from this extract which highlight the practical differences between the academic writing the students would experience in the UK and their previous assessment experience in China. Firstly, as opposed to completing short writing tasks in exam conditions, the open nature of the assessments in the UK provides a different challenge in which they have a deadline to work to. Secondly, the student in this case is unclear of the point of the essay or how to address the task. This results in the final issue, the lack of a clear understanding of the task leads the student to sacrifice considerations of quality in order to complete the essay. The student's goal becomes to *just write something* in order to reach the word count. These three issues will be addressed in the following paragraphs with reference to further extracts.

Working to a deadline in an open assignment provides quite a different challenge to completing an exam in a closed, invigilated setting. Another participant reflected upon this issue:

FGUK2

M What are the biggest challenges Chinese students face while studying?

P1 I think it's the essay, I think it's the essay because the last semester I, you know, takes, I think, very, just a few days to prepare my examinations, I think I can pass it and get not bad, you know, scores but my essay get quite low one, even though that I spent at least two weeks on it.

In agreement with the earlier extract, the student suggests that the cramming approach to examinations used in China was not a successful strategy for the essays in the UK. Indeed, even taking two weeks to prepare the essay did not guarantee good grades.

7.1.2 Grade Expectations

The participants' focus on grades is significant in terms of their approach to their assessments and how they could improve. In China, as already noted, there was no feedback other than the grade, as the reason for the rightness of an answer was not up for discussion. The students resultantly approach the assignments in instrumental terms of a quantitative approach to the grades. This is problematic for their approach to the qualitative nature of the writing task. Furthermore, one impact of the different approach is that the grades students would achieve in China would be significantly higher than it is possible to achieve in the UK where grades above 80 out of 100 are reserved only for a relatively few students, particularly in social sciences and humanities. This means, even before taking into account any transition obstacles faced, the students are likely to receive quantitatively lower grades than they would expect from China. In spite of warnings that this may happen, this is still an adjustment students make which can impact their confidence and is especially noteworthy when students inform their parents of their academic progress.

The result is that students must adjust their expectations of the grades they will achieve. As one student noted: “I mean it's different from when I'm in China because when I'm in China I'm the top student of my class and in my department but here I'm not because the marks are high but not distinction” (FGUK6.2 P2). In the interests of improving their grades, the students looked for the guidance from teaching staff or the written handbooks available however would find the advice increasingly abstract:

FGUK1

P5 Yes, but when I referred to the handbooks, it seems that there are quite clear criterias but actually I still think it's very abstract. For example maybe you can get 60 if you have a clear structure, you have a, a proper words, you have clear stand or what. But this is also very obscure to me and actually I failed the assignment, so I just lose confidence in writing assignment.

Unfortunately, this student was not the only one to fail their first assignment, this was a recurring theme. Students would fail for a number of reasons and non-native speaker status was often blamed. A number of students also had issues with plagiarism and the concept of critical thinking leading to failure, which will be explored later. As illustrated above, outright failure had a significant impact on the student's confidence leading to them to a poor start with their academic writing in the UK. The negative impact on the student would be compounded in cases of plagiarism, where students would not only fail the assignment but also have their integrity questioned.

7.1.3 Structuring Writing

In spite of the obstacles they face, the participants could make progress in understanding the task, albeit slowly. Having re-calibrated their grade expectations, many of the

participants described making improvements in their writing despite their initial inexperience:

FGUK6.2

P1 But that's something when I first had a look at writing my module assignment, I had no clear idea about how to write it better but after I finished all the module assignment, I think my writing skills got some improvement, and I think it's important to first have an idea to solve the problem and then I need to have a clear structure and different part of the structures have different functions and they comprise the whole article.

This student successfully identified two key areas: solving the problem (or answering the question) and using a suitable structure. This is quite generic advice, however as the student notes, they had no clear idea where to begin when they started their assignments, the tacit process had to be experienced to make sense.

In terms of structure, as the students are writing longer essays than in China, structure becomes more important for the clarity of their writing. In order to structure effectively the students noted the importance of outlining their essays:

FGUK2

P3 I think one of the challenges for me is to pay attention to the outline before I starting with my essay before. In China actually, I didn't pay more attention to the outline of the thesis, previously I think it's not important in essay, I can just download the many previous works and imitate the structure of them. But in here when you starting with an essay, the outline is very important.

While structuring and outlining their writing played a significant role writing, structure is merely an aid to clarity of communication. The central focus of the assignment was the answer to the question and communicate the student's research, thinking and understanding of the topic.

7.1.4 Understanding the task

The participants' were probed on what they understood to be the point of writing the assignments, to which one participant replied:

FGUK2

M So, what do you think, when you're writing an essay, what do you think the supervisor wants you to do?

P3 I just think he might check the understanding, my own understanding of this title, so this is the main purpose of he or she. And, writing the essays is related to the writing ability, and so the lecturer or the tutor does also checks our writing ability.

As this student notes, the writing ability is important but only so far as it allows the reader to follow the student's understanding, as this student notes "my own understanding". This is qualitatively distinct from what has been expected of the students in China, as one student reflected "in China we don't have questions, we just listen to the teacher, your [the teacher's] ideas, we try to understand your [the teacher's] ideas and we will take in whatever you [the teacher] says..." (FGUK1 P4). Here we see a fundamental difference in the approach of the two systems. In China the students have a single or monological approach to knowledge in which there is one right answer. Whereas in the UK the students are being judged on their individual understanding of knowledge rather than adherence to one absolute right answer.

The implications of assessing the individual understanding of students are fundamental to appreciating the problems which these they face in the transition to studying in the UK. While the participants initially perceived the key challenges of studying in the UK as a problem with writing, when probed the obstacle of academic writing became more abstract. The focus group discussions allowed this abstract problem to be discussed in detail to uncover more concrete, identifiable issues beneath the surface.

7.2 Epistemological Obstacles: Multiple perspectives

For want of a better analogy, the act of writing represents the tip of the iceberg, with many of the issues which the students face lying beneath the surface. As the challenges of academic writing were probed in the focus groups, what became apparent was that the different form of assessment in the UK was the result of the distinct study environment the students found themselves in. This leads the students to approach their studies in a different way from they had in China:

FGUK5

P2 I think the key thing in China is that we have our own textbook, so we don't need to borrow books from the library.

P3 Yeah, that's a good point.

P2 Yeah, yeah, yeah, and in here, in the UK you don't have a textbook and mostly you borrow from the library so the library research is much better than the Chinese [institutions].

M Ok, so do you think, do you think that affects the way you study then? Does it change the way you study?

P3 Yeah, I love it, no textbook.

M Really?

P3 More freedom

This exchange captures the positive reaction of the students to their new study environment. The key factor the students noted is the shift from using a single authoritative textbook to accessing resources in the library. This distinction is highly significant as it provides quite fundamental difference in studying: in China students are limited to one or a few sources of information, whereas in the UK they are free to use multiple sources. Consequently, not only are the assessments different but the entire approach to studying shifts from the monological to the dialogical approach, with multiple perspectives on knowledge encountered in the UK. As one participant, noted, the university and particularly the library provides a hospitable atmosphere for research in order to explore different perspectives (FGUK6 P4).

One of the participants, who was in the process of completing a PhD with a US institution while teaching in China, but had completed their Masters in the UK summed up this difference in one of the interviews (phrases in bold highlighted to emphasise key differences):

FGC4

P1 Well at the very beginning it's quite difficult [to adjust to studying in the UK].

But I think it's just a natural process if you want to catch up all the things in the UK, so I **went to the library** and **talked with my tutors** and they gave me a lot of help. Also, for some of the teachers, professors, they like to show us how to do that and then I began to **read journal articles** and began to **understand articles** and then I had to **take notes** because in China we seldom read journal articles. It's **only textbooks** and as a foreign language learner even just very short journal articles I've got to **take notes** and I've got

to write **my reflections on it**. I really **had a lot of questions** about those articles, I think that's the biggest thing I learned, I just can't finish reading that article and then just put it away. Because even for a native speaker it's a little bit difficult. So I need to **analyse that** and then, for the teaching style, I love the teaching style at [institution] because we have more discussions, I found the most different thing is in China students usually they didn't have that idea that before I come to the class I should prepare for it, usually we just finish the homework. But in the UK, I learned that before I went to the class I should prepare for everything, I got to **finish reading all the articles**, and I got to **have my question** first and then I went to the class and then we can **have discussion together** and I **have my own perspective** and my **professor has his or her own perspective**, then I can make a comparison, I think that's very important and that helped me to get a lot of things from the class. So I tried to find a gap between me and the professor, **why we have different perspectives**, why we have different opinions. Even we read the same article. So and then I can also have a discussion with my classmates. I try to compare all the different opinions. I think that's the biggest progress I made.

Unpacking this extract helps to summarise the key differences in studying between China and the UK. It is important to note that this extract is not about writing as such but it is about the research process which leads to writing. The participant hits upon several key themes related to the communicative aspect of research, such as the importance of reading, understanding journal articles and of discussing these issues with classmates and staff. Essentially the student is describing entering into the multiple perspectives of academic discourse rather than of writing as an instrumental form of assessment.

Within this academic discourse, each individual student is on their own journey through the field of knowledge. In China as there are only a limited number of resources, mostly preparing for a closed examination, there is no need for discourse in the form of writing, verbal discussion or even feedback on the exams. As the participants noted, just the grade is necessary as there is only one right answer. In the UK, in contrast, it is expected that the students will develop individual perspectives dependent upon the sources of information they engage with. It is therefore understandable why the student felt they had “more freedom” in the UK.

7.2.1 Quantity & Quality of sources

More freedom to explore the different perspectives on knowledge requires the students to engage with different sources of information. The participants noted the quantity and also quality of reading expected of them in the UK was different to China. The first difference is that the students are provided with a reading list rather than textbook, however there is also the requirement the students to go beyond the structure provided and carry-out further research:

FGUK2

P1 I think there are many kinds of books in the reading list. Sometimes the teacher just wants you to know the general knowledge about some topics. So, many, maybe many books introduce the same thing, some mostly say the same thing sometimes teachers want you to know opinions from different schools, different authors, that you may, you can, you may, you need to read many books to get familiar with this knowledge. And sometimes the teachers want you to go more deeper to get some knowledge about some topics, it may, this knowledge may not be played in the PPT, in the slides in the class but you need to know, to learn by yourself.

Reading beyond the key texts set for the reading list requires the further development of their approach to studying. In contrast to the wealth of resources in the UK, the consensus of the participants was that the libraries at their universities in China had limited resources:

FGUK1

P3 It's impossible to do the academic reading all the time, you mean, we do not have so many academic books in the library in China. We have some novels, some other readings rather than so many academic reading.

The expectation was that all the necessary information would be contained in the textbooks. At certain Chinese institutions with superior access to resources, such as the CNKI online database, the students would not have any real need or, significantly, any training to use the resources. While some would do a limited search for their thesis, the students perceived that the quality of the content of resources would not be recognised by staff reading their work, as one participant noted "in China the teacher is not normally quite focused on the content that you write..." (FGUK2 P1). On the contrary, in the UK, the content is key:

FGUK3

P6 They [marker/supervisor] always say that in your essay you cover some good points but you don't have enough evidence to support your ideas.

Finding the necessary evidence requires the students to make yet a further adjustments in order to succeed in the new study environment. Not only do the students have access to more resources than they are accustomed to but there is the expectation that the

students use the resources available. The participants highlighted the difference between their teachers in China and the lecturers in the UK in respect to finding resources, with the latter having told them “it’s your responsibility to find the books” (FGUK3 P1), whereas in China the teachers would do their best to help the students with their questions. Finding the resources requires new practical skills in order to navigate the physical and online resources but also more tacit knowledge necessary to judge the quality and appropriacy of the texts.

Navigating the available databases is the first step to finding appropriate resources. The participants variously described getting to grips with academic databases available at their institutions and more general academic resources such as Google Scholar. In many cases the students received a library training workshop, usually early in the academic year, which was deemed useful. Despite the practical advice on how to use the databases, the process of finding quality resources was timely and challenging, as illustrated here:

FGUK 6.2

P1 I think it's not easy to find enough useful materials, academic materials and also I need to spend a lot of time to read the materials to find the really useful and I can use it as a citation and it is not easy to form my research idea and at first I need to write a literature review, and I have a general idea and what are the specific objectives and aims, I still need to try to find it. So when I read different materials, I gradually come up with my research questions but I still need to find enough academic materials to support my view.

This student is referring to finding materials for her dissertation and by this late stage of her Masters seems aware of the difficulties but also confident of the task at hand. Indeed, this extract would not be unfamiliar to hear from any student writing a dissertation, not just those from a Chinese background. By this stage the student is adapting well to the dialogical approach using multiple perspectives.

Multiple perspectives are not a solely a case of quantity however, the participants noted the importance of the quality of the perspectives. Referring to the concepts of validity and reliability, the students learn valuable lessons about evaluating knowledge:

FGUK6.2

P3 Newspaper is not professional, sometimes they are not so reliable, one thing I learned from the Masters study is that every point of your point of view needs data to support it, reliable data. I think the newspapers and the views in the newspaper are just from the writer's personal perspective and personal analysis, compared with academic journals it's not so reliable and not so convincing.

FGUK3

P4 And before (reading an article) that we need to check the authority of the organisation or something, otherwise if it is a blog or something, even though the contents or related to the topic we cannot read it, it is not academic.

For these participants in the process of completing their Masters, there may be elements of response bias, with the participants hoping to please the moderator. Yet, the value of

this ability to judge sources was noted as a key benefit which the participants took back to China:

FGC1

P1 I have learned how to do research seriously and strictly, so it helped me to treat my sources. When I read articles, when I read journals, I have the habit to find first hand data because I trust the first hand data, first hand sources more than second hand data.

M Do you think that's a direct impact of studying abroad then? Similar to you reading more international news and things, just exposing yourself to more sources of information? Finding more sources of information? To help inform your own opinions?

P1 Yeah, that's one side, that I have learned what our approach is to information, the attitude to treat the information sources, that makes you, because you have mentioned in Chinese journalism that there may be fake news every day.

There was a clear consensus in the focus groups that the participants were transitioning from the monological to a dialogic approach to knowledge using multiple perspectives. Within this transition the participants developed sensitivity to the validity and reliability of sources. They began to question the value of newspapers or Wikipedia as academic sources information: "I use it just for some background information but it's not for reference" (FGUK3 P3). The participants also pay attention to the context of research, using such factors as date, "each area of research are updating all the time" (FGUK3 P6) and also the author the context in which they are working in.

7.2.2 Changing study strategies

Navigating these multiple perspectives on knowledge requires strategic changes from their previous monological experience. Although the participants had growing sensitivity to the quantity and quality of sources necessary for their courses and assignments, there were still further obstacles to overcome:

FGUK7

M Ok, so how are you changing at the moment? How are you overcoming these challenges? So you said it takes you a long time to read, how are you getting through this challenge?

P3 I just talk to myself, slow down, slow down, you can't read much more, maybe tomorrow you can read two more papers, I always do that, when I come home I feel a little upset because so many things to read but the speed is too slow, I guess maybe you can have same feeling, that the papers the words, even though you type it in google translate, is still not that easy to...[P2 interrupts]

P2 Yes, even if you understand the all words, you still don't understand the sentence. Yes, and in the research methods, you know in the pre-class reading, it's a about 8 pages of 15 pages and the one I read it, read it, read it, and after that I thought, I hope that there is a Chinese version of this book because you know, we read, when you struggle about hour to read several pages and then you discover that I really know the knowledge, why is he spending so much time to explain it to me?

P3 Maybe I think the reading skill is not... [it] need to improve. Because every time I read a research paper from the first sentence, in the middle my mind

will totally drift away, so when I finish the reading I will, I just can't remember what the author is talking about in the first part. I always forget so I will turn back to what, so I ask my friends, what are they doing with their reading, they told me, you only need to read the introduction and the conclusion, and the body part, the research part, you just skim but I tried that, you know, I only read, it's not enough..

P1 I think we don't understand the essay structures here, and now every time I read now, when I read, first time I read it three times, I say first time, now I understand what he's talking about, the second time I try to understand, I try to pick out the points, I mean they are connected, how to do that, and then the third part is the way I know how the sentence structure, I mean is a part where I develop my own writing from his writing.

There is much to unpack within this exchange, each student highlights a different nuance of the challenges they face. The essence of this extended extract is the students' struggle to understand the texts and the strategies they hope will help achieve that end. As the students are studying in a second language, translating words was necessary and participants even searched for full translations of texts in Chinese. Beyond the linguistic barrier, taking time to read a text multiple times to get an in-depth understanding was balanced with skimming the introduction and conclusion to get the main points. Finally, one participant observes how the understanding of the text and its structure can lead to valuable influence on their own writing. These various strategies are unpacked below.

7.2.3 Translation

A compelling argument for the struggles which Chinese students have in the UK would be the claim that their language is insufficient to understand academic texts. This angle was discussed in the focus groups, producing much discussion in order to assess the

extent of the difficulty the students faced. What was apparent was that the students did not have sufficient fluency in English to read the texts without having to resort to translating texts to aid understanding. The approach to translation fell in to two distinct categories, translating individual words or phrases when reading or writing, versus finding complete translations of texts in Chinese to aid understanding.

Reading numerous quality academic texts in a second language is a challenge for the students, as illustrated here:

FGUK2

M Do you like reading lots of books?

P1 I don't think so, I may get tired of reading so many books because it is not written in my mother tongue and I may find it difficult, difficulty in understanding some points, some sentences, like this.

The impact that this had on the confidence of the participants' and also the efficiency of their reading and writing was in certainly evident. As noted earlier, one of the participants could only manage two articles per day when attempting to read them in detail. Most of the students admitted needing to use a dictionary, however this could slow them down:

FGUK3

P5 When I write my assignments, usually, when I need to use a word, I'm not quite sure if I use it correctly so I usually check the dictionary and it costs me quite a lot of time to do it.

In addition to being inefficient, the students found that the electronic dictionaries they had relied upon in China or even Google translate would not contain the academic vocabulary necessary to decipher the texts they were reading. This highlights an important distinction between the students general English and their understanding of English for Academic purposes. In the former, the general purpose dictionaries would be more useful, however for academic purposes, the terminology would be defined in the context of the discourse. While not all students found it easy, many of the students found that over time their reading comprehension and writing ability in English started to improve:

FGUK6

P1 At first when I read all of the article I spent a lot of time because I had a lot of what I didn't know so I had to use a dictionary but now most of the words I can recognise it and I can just read the article very quickly.

Engaging in the texts in English would lead to improved understanding but also the necessary specialist terminology which might not be available via the dictionaries. The participants, however, were also short of time and confidence and so would look for strategies to speed along their reading.

Despite the improvement of comprehension over time, a number of other translation strategies were discussed. One option was to find either a translated version of a paper or a similar article in Chinese on the same topic. Participants were divided about whether this would be beneficial and had different degrees of success in accessing suitable sources:

FGUK7

M Ok, You said I hope this is written in Chinese, do you read Chinese research papers?

P2 No, I can't find them, if I could find Chinese papers, I would definitely read them.

M Really, why?

P2 Because I think research methods would not be so hard because I know I could understand it, if it was written in Chinese but English is the language, your structure, is confusing. As you know the special terms, like some descriptive, transcriptive. I'm sure I have learned it from Chinese schools, but it is totally different (in English).

As this participant highlights, it was not always possible to locate the relevant sources. However, even with a Chinese translation or Chinese text, the specialist terms may not be the same and could lead to further confusion. A similar exchange took place in another focus group:

FGUK6.1

M What's the difference between reading when you are studying here and reading when you are studying in China? Is it the same?

P2 Not the same because I can read Chinese quickly, I cannot read English so fast so most of my time I don't read the whole passage I just read the content first and read the paragraph at the beginning because most topic sentence are at the beginning or the end of the paragraph.

P1 Yeah, sometimes, some theory I don't [understand] clearly I will first use baidu to find what it refers to, then I will try to reread my slides, sometimes if I can understand the theory or the knowledge I will try some Chinese words to understand it.

M So that's a common thing, you need to translate sometimes.

P1 But if I can't understand it in English I will try to read it in Chinese, it is helpful.

P2 I don't read too much Chinese materials when I am doing my assignment, I just do it the way my teacher teaches me, my article starts as google scholar and I will read an article related to my topic and things I think useful for my assignment.

P3 I think so, sometimes it's much easier to explain something in English. It's quite interesting when I learned philosophy modules, some philosophy tonology is quite easy to understand, information, paradigm, something like this.

M Yeah, so there isn't the vocabulary in Chinese for these types of things.

P3 It may confuse me if I really understand something in Chinese because they are so similar but English is totally different things.

Here we see many different perspectives on the issue of translation with each student having a slightly different approach, one opting only to read English texts, and another finding Chinese versions useful. The final participant reflects on how translations of the text could be confusing as the specialist vocabulary would be explained in the English versions. As previously highlighted, the students may not have specialist knowledge of

the subject area in Chinese, therefore, the struggle may not be with the language itself but with the specialist academic concepts.

A further problem the students would face with the Chinese sources would be the perceived quality of the texts they had access to. While certain participants could gain access to quality Chinese sources via CERNET or CNKI databases, or at least English abstracts of the Chinese articles, they would still have trouble identifying quality academic texts which matched the subject matter they were being assessed on. As this participant points out, the Chinese dictionary and reading selected Chinese sources may initially help understanding however finding quality sources which they could use for the essays was difficult for a number of reasons:

FGC1

P1 We have to read a lot, we have to read books and read materials, and I don't know about the social science but the language is really just, I think they can put a very simple thing, very difficult, very complex. Yeah, you study social science (laughter). So that at the early time I really hate reading because I just don't understand why they put this blah, blah, blah, and I was just not accustomed to the language and I really have to have a Chinese dictionary and after that I was ok.

M When you said Chinese dictionary, what do you mean?

P1 I mean the computer, and sometimes about the topic I will search that in *Baidu*, in Chinese and I will find out what it was presented in Chinese books or by Chinese scholars and then that will help me to understand that. That is really different because British scholars, or at least my teachers are really, they will show us their own studies and that maybe different from what you

understand, all you understand from Chinese is just basic definitions and basic rules and if you want to think about the topic, we have to read what they listed.

M So did you find it any difference between the way Chinese scholars write and the way Chinese scholars write in English? Any difference in the style or anything?

P1 Yeah, I think they do, because you know in social sciences Chinese scholars learn quite a lot from Western scholars, foreign scholars, so sometimes they are similar but as I have found, Chinese scholars in social sciences, they will falling behind. They fall behind in the fields of social sciences, so when we talk about this questions, perhaps in China, it is only raised in scholars, as I have learned Chinese scholars don't put methodology very clearly, that is the problem for Chinese scholars. They don't treat methodology very clear and sometimes I am just confused because half of the methodology may be waste of words.

This extract brings together a number of different themes which have already been discussed. The significant point here is the issue of the quality and equivalence of texts available in Chinese and in English. The students in the UK have little experience of navigating the Chinese resources online and, furthermore, may have restricted access. Additionally, the domestic Chinese academic papers, particularly in the same subject, may have a distinct style, or even, as the participant suggests, be of lower quality. It is important to bear in mind that the English language texts which the students have access to in the UK and learn to evaluate are not solely written by British academics but are Internationally published papers from scholars around the globe where English is used as the *lingua franca*.

To conclude on the issue of translation, it is useful to bear in mind Pierre Bourdieu's remark that "Academic language...is no one's mother tongue." (Bourdieu, 1994, p.8) Although reading and then writing in a second language was challenging for participants, learning English was one of three central goals for being in the UK and although at times lost confidence, they were highly motivated to learn. While certain participants reported language as the main obstacle to efficiently and effectively understanding the texts, it seems that there was a consensus that there were further obstacles to overcome. Even with access to translated texts and dictionaries to aid understanding, the participants still found the academic texts complex. Relevant academic language would not be clearly defined in the available dictionaries or Chinese texts. As one participant noted: "even if you understand the all words, you still don't understand the sentence" (FGUK6 P7). Returning to Bourdieu's quote, it appears that entering the discourse of academic language rather than simply improving English proficiency was the challenge. As we shall in the next section, entering the academic discourse provides a unique obstacle regardless of whether in English or the participants native Chinese.

7.2.4 Reading

There are many international students studying in the UK, many of whom are studying in a second language and are subject to the same language requirements as Chinese students. While it is tempting to conclude that the problems the Chinese students face are simply a language issue, there is a far more compelling deduction which became apparent in the course of the focus group discussions. In negotiating the multiple perspectives on knowledge, the students were not only expected to find different types of academic sources but they must read and understand these in a degree of detail. In one noteworthy exchange, two participants reflected on the act of reading and made a rather disconcerting admission:

FGUK1

P4 I think this is the problem, we don't need to read in China.

P5 Yes, I cannot remember whether I have read something.

Although this is a rather unusual and extreme claim to make, the students are reflecting on the different way in which they read texts in the UK. This claim agrees with the points made in earlier extracts that in China the reading was limited to the textbook and that teachers would emphasise the content for the examinations. In the UK, dealing with multiple texts required in-depth and analysis. Later in the same focus group (FGUK1) as the extract above, one of the students was asked to explain the sentiment that they did not “need to read in China”:

FGUK1

P4 Writing here inspires me to read more, it's beneficial, we read more books, although we feel sometimes we are struggling with the plagiarism, paraphrasing, but when we read we feel we can see others' ideas is a good thing. I feel that I'm learning something from the reading, it's quite different from in China, we're only read textbooks, here we search the information ourselves and get the information.

This extract not only brings this chapter back to the topic of writing but shows the deep connection of the research and reading to the final essay or report. This is quite a fundamental difference between China and the UK. One student reflected on this: “I think the writing process is intimately connecting [sic] with reading. You have to read a lot, a lot until you can get a bit to write.” (FGUK 7 P2).

Bearing in mind the obstacles and strategies the participants have already described, the fundamental difference in the approach to reading gives a new perspective on the challenge of academic writing as expressed at the beginning of this chapter in which the participant merely aimed to *write something*. Writing is the end product of the research process and while certain structures and academic norms must be adhered to, the problem of understanding the task is related to the research process and learning this through attention to academic texts. In the following extract the participant revisits a number of the key points which have already been explored, yet highlights a new significant factor:

FGUK 7

P3 You know I got a lecture on linguistics, wow the teacher, our assignment, the teacher gave us seven topics and I choose one topic because there were only three I can understand. Really, I can understand, and I go to the booking [reading] list the teacher gave us, I read it on the computer and I don't understand and I print them all out and I have been reading them for a week, wow it's not that efficient. I have to spend several hours, maybe a whole morning to read one paper. And even though I read them, I don't understand what are they talking about because the words are too professional, and I, the teacher asks us to give her the outline of her assignment, and I thought oh my god, outline? (Laughter) I don't know how to do that, first it's the reading and then it's the writing, but i think much more than in the many papers then I can get the idea and then I can deal with the writing.

This participant makes a similar observation to an earlier quote, noting that reading will lead to writing. A new ingredient which the participant introduces is that engaging in multiple perspectives requires thinking, and as the participant says “I **think** much more than in the many papers then I can get the **idea** and then I can deal with the writing.” This brings to mind the sentiment expressed earlier, with the participant noting that “I have my own perspective and my professor has his or her own perspective...I tried to find a gap between me and the professor, why we have different perspectives” (FGUK4 P1).

7.2.5 Note taking

Reading, therefore, leads to thinking. Unlike dealing with the single monologic perspective of the textbook where there is one right answer, dealing with multiple perspectives opens up spaces between the different standpoints. The deeper implications of critical thinking, ideas and creativity will be dealt with in the following chapter. In terms of the practical obstacles the students face with the multiple perspectives, in addition to the need to read the texts in-depth, the students must take notes in a different manner, the following exchange makes clear the contrast between their experience in China and the UK:

FGUK6.1

P1 I don't make notes here [in the UK], if I find [a PDF] I will first download the article and if I will do the PDF style so if I want to make notes I just make notes in the article and through PDF it's quite easy, I when I finish the assignment, I just keep the article in my computer.

P3 For me my first assignment course [in UK] was note taking, which I have never done in China. Note taking can be a separate assignment, what do

you want to know, maybe make a mark, something like this but that is the first time for me to carefully organise my thinking, I think it's really effective as a good start for us to prepare for the course, when the note taking is well done we can see, oh it's very clear, then it's very helpful. So here for me that one is quite effective.

P2 I think note taking is quite important for students worldwide but for Chinese students I don't think we do too much note taking, as I said, they don't read too much, may be, for me, when I was doing my bachelor's degree my classmates we don't read too much because we have textbooks and our examination system just needs us to review the content or the answer from the textbook. So we don't need to read, note taking is teacher points out which part is important for the final exam.

Although the first participant does not believe they are taking notes, downloading PDFs of articles and using the annotate function does constitute a form of note-taking distinct from what they had done in China. This is confirmed by the other participants who clarify and expand upon the differences between the type of note-taking expected in China and in the UK. Participant 2 particularly highlights the implications of using the textbook in China. This brings further relevance to participant 1's comment on annotating on the PDF. Downloading multiple resources from the internet is distinct from using the textbook in that the student is dealing with multiple perspectives. Engaging with these multiple perspectives necessitates the attention to note-taking. For example, participant 3 provides insight into the importance of clear note-taking to organise their own thinking.

Further evidence of the significance of note-taking for study in the UK, is also apparent. While the participants had stressed the importance of memorisation in China, it was

apparent that rather than being a substitute for memory, note-taking was an aide for memory:

FGUK2

P2 Yeah, you just make a paper like this and you just write down what you think about which book in which page, which paragraph, this kind of thing. I didn't take notes, you know as she, before [in China], but right now I think it's quite difficult for me to read if I do not take notes because when you read something you might forget it. So, it's important that you take down something that you think is useful in your essay and it helps you to remember what you read, actually. So it helps you to facilitate your reading effectiveness. I think, yeah.

While memorisation had served the students well as a strategy for study in China, it was insufficient for their assignments in the UK. As the participant above makes clear, the new found in-depth engagement with texts required note-taking to aid the memory.

Memorisation and memory, however, are not exact equivalents. The former implies the recall of static facts or rigid structures. In terms of remembering the single right answer from a textbook in China, it is possible to memorise. When engaging with multiple perspectives in the UK, however, memory plays a role in the form of remembering numerous different elements. Note-taking not only helps to records the various facts, data, hypotheses from the numerous articles but also enables the students to remember their own thinking on the subject, as mentioned above. When asked how and why they make notes, two of the participants responded with the following exchange:

FGUK1

P5 Handwrite it [the notes]. I think it helps me to understand at that point but maybe after a few days I think I just couldn't understand what I had written down.

P3 Yeah, exactly, you might forget what you were understanding. At that time. And especially when you reading several books at the same time. It is easy to get confused. It is easy to mix them up.

Again, the issue of understanding the texts emerges as a key theme. Not only the issue of understanding the authors they are writing but also tracking their own thoughts, as the student says “you might forget what you were understanding”. As the students engage with the multiple perspectives, they become involved in the academic discourse. While the memory plays a role in navigating the perspectives, due to the volume and varied nature of the variables involved, note-taking helps to record and map the academic discourse. Moreover, as there is no single right answer, the students' understanding of their reading is not static but fluid. This fluidity is a result of the changing nature of their knowledge as they begin to understand the different perspectives.

Returning to the earlier comment that note-taking helps “me to carefully organise my thinking” (FGUK6.1 P3), we see the significance of the different approach to note-taking in the UK. While it can be used to record individual pieces of information, note-taking helps student understanding of the texts but also their own lines of thought. In relation to the earlier question posed by a participant “why we have different perspectives, why we have different opinions?”, note-taking helps to explore the gaps between the perspectives or even the contradictions between texts. This is tracking not only the landscape of the academic discourse but also the students own place in it.

7.3 Epistemological obstacles studying in the UK

The participants in the study therefore describe a number of difficult obstacles: studying in a foreign language, being assessed by a different method and adapting their study skills accordingly. It was expected that plagiarism would be a major concern of students in this process however, while it was discussed, a more complex concern was the issue of critical thinking. In this final section of analysis, the problems the participants experienced with critical thinking will be explored before making the link with plagiarism and academic integrity. It is argued that these concepts are the result of changes in the participants' approach to knowledge, or epistemological obstacles to their transition to studying in the UK.

7.3.1 Critical Thinking and Descriptive Writing

As discussed in chapters 2, critical thinking is an abstract term with a number of different interpretations and it is a distinct component of the Chinese learner stereotype. Critical thinking emerged consistently from the focus groups, it was hard to tell whether this is due to this being a prevalent critique in the discourse on Chinese learners, or whether it is a genuine common problem for the learners. In feedback on assignments in the UK, participants would often be asked to show more critical thinking:

FGUK3

P5 I think here we need to be more critical, yeah. I have read my assignments today and I have found that the most comment on my assignment is that most of my writing is too descriptive, so I need to be more critical. And I think it's also the hard part because when I read a book, I feel that there are, that they just serious, yeah, and I don't have practical, do some practical things so I don't know if that is feasible in practice, so, I don't have much opinions

about if it OK or it is bad, so, that part is very smaller in my assignment.

As this participant notes, it is difficult to be critical of the academic research without having practical experience of the field, be it management or teaching. The difficulty of defining this term was identified by one participant, who also noted the lack of the concept in their Chinese educational background:

FGUK1

P4 Mmm, once I did a presentation, we....used the word, critical thinking and then the teacher in the end asked me "what is critical thinking?" (MP & M laughs)...I got really got confused, so learning here [in the UK] I think the big difference is that the teacher will always ask us, "do you have any questions?" But in China we don't have questions, we just listen to the teacher, your ideas, we try to understand your ideas and we will take in whatever you say, what you have said. Here the teacher just want you to have some other voice, your opinions...they like to listen to your, some negative, other side comment, I don't agree with you, I think they'd love to hear you say, like this, but truth is, we totally agree with her or him.

The participant here poses quite a distinct comparative picture of the role of the teacher in the UK and China. The role of the teacher in China as knowledge-giver and the lecturer in the UK as questioner were common in the focus groups. The following reasoning provided by a participant teaching in China provides an insight in to the impact of the examination background of the Chinese students, posing this as a reason for the lack of critical thinking.

FGC5

P3 We're not used to critical thinking, no matter in high school or undergraduate.

We were educated to produce answers to the tests and there are usually standard answers, so the way we were taught are quite the opposite to critical thinking. It's not very usual thing to challenge people's especially teacher's or some authority's ideas.

Here the participant links the role of the teacher to the test, evoking the teacher's dilemma discussed earlier. It seems that the teacher's authority rests in their power as gatekeepers of the answers to the test, however they also have the responsibility for helping students to pass the test. The result is a monologic, absolute approach to knowledge. This was summed up in a description of the approach to teaching critical thinking which is currently being introduced according to a participant teaching in China:

FGC3

M So with critical thinking, do you think there might something wrong with the teacher and student relationship in China, the teacher might lose face if there isn't a right or wrong answer, or...

P1 Yeah, I mean even for teachers, even the teachers lack critical thinking because they are from Chinese university or Chinese college, they teach critical thinking based on the textbooks, so that's another problem...Yes, they teach the definition, they teach the methods, and they teach the way, like how to form critical thinking but there is no concrete things in it.

The poses the contrast of attempting to teach the theory of critical thinking versus providing the environment of multiple perspectives on knowledge and entering the discourse on these perspectives. This was discussed by another group as a key obstacle in studying in the UK:

FGC5

P2 Before I go to the UK I know the education system is different but you know the most challenging aspect is critical thinking, especially when you write the paper, because most Chinese students, we just read but not to think, critical thinking but another challenge may be, we learned a lot of theory but we don't know how to apply. So maybe it is not very connected to the reality. Just theories not practice.

M You can add to this?

P1 Another one of the most difficulties is the critical thinking when we are writing a paper. You know how to critically analyse what we have read is a big challenge.

M So, critical thinking...

P3 And I find the reason for the difficulty to be critical is because we read, we don't read enough things to evaluate the opinions for the paper we read. We have to do a huge amount of reading to support our thinking otherwise we feel uncertain to evaluate those ideas. So it's really hard to decide what to write, when I'm trying to evaluate the ideas from someone, I feel like he's right I think I'm wrong. It's because we don't read enough.

Relating to the earlier discussion of reading and multiple perspectives when studying in

the UK, it appears that critical thinking results from the process of engaging with a breadth of texts in addition to engaging in a deep approach to individual texts. This change in approach to knowledge would not only be reflected in writing but has implications for the stereotype of the silent or passive student, as one participant commented:

FGUK7

P3 I try [to discuss matters in my seminars with other Chinese students], but I find it's kind of weird because other people don't talk too much. Just like me and the tutor and like one to one. Yeah, it's kind of, even when they are asking the questions when they are responding to you, their voice is so low, I mean Chinese people is, because our system is kind of eager to see what is right and what is wrong, we are afraid of saying the wrong question, so we are afraid to respond.

While the silence could be attributed to language anxiety, the reluctance to speak could also be attributed to the expectation that there is a right or wrong answer, and so there is no need to discuss the answer if the teacher has already said it is correct. This recalls the lack of feedback for exams experienced by the students in China. While not immediately apparent, the issue of silence is relevant to the lack of critical thinking, or feedback for markers in the UK that the students writing was descriptive. The criticism that work is 'descriptive' implies that the student has merely reproduced someone else's ideas, without providing a critique or transforming the ideas through synthesis with other ideas. Thus, the criticism that a work is descriptive or lacks critical thinking, is not distant from accusations of plagiarism.

7.3.2 Plagiarism & Strictness

As discussed in the previous chapter, the students had limited writing practice in China and while their teachers may have warned against plagiarism, this was not strictly enforced. In the UK however, the focus on academic writing and strict approach to plagiarism caused students to carefully reflect on their writing practices to avoid it. The majority of the focus groups included references to examples of other students cheating, giving the impression that this was common:

FGUK2

P2 I think my attitude towards essay, towards my assignment changed because in, when I was in undergraduate, when I was an undergraduate student I was just not serious about the essay because I thought anyway the teacher will just pass me. But not here, because, although I have passed the essay in last semester, I heard that some of my classmates failed the essay, so it made me more serious about the essay in this essay.

FGUK5

P3 Yeah, it's a big difference right! Here you've got to be very, very careful about this, it's like one or two months ago and a Chinese girl, I just happened to meet her and then she just contacted me, I'm in trouble, I'm in trouble because her tutor suspected her about the plagiarism, because she forgot to put the resources in the reference list although it is in the text. But it's not, yeah

M Ok

P2 I got a friend, in our course, there is a girl she chaoxi [sic-copied] the whole article.

P3 Really, I don't know that, the whole article

P2 Yeah, the whole article, all the words, she changed a small part, I think a little part

P3 English article or Chinese?

P2 English article, and it's a journal article I thought. It's so stupid and the tutor found it out. The tutor found it and had a talk with her and asked her to explain and she just said she did do well on the paraphrasing.

P1 I just heard, two people, like she said, not do reference very well, so.

P3 So we didn't mean to do the plagiarism, the majority I mean, but some of it just happens when we forget about the reference.

The examples of other students having problems with plagiarism correspond to themes in the literature. The first example seems to be a lack of referencing rather than deliberate copying, however the second example is less defensible. The participants described copying a whole article as 'stupid' behaviour and were sceptical of the student's excuse that it was just poor paraphrasing, even enquiring whether it was a case of translation. However, there was a consensus that the majority of cases were unintentional plagiarism via lack of sufficient paraphrasing and lack of citation or referencing. In the following examples, the participants described their own problems with plagiarism:

FGUK 4

M And have you ever had any problems with Turnitin?

P2 Yeah, at the first time, the first assignment, I handed in, the similarity is 41(41% in a Turnitin originality report)...I failed, for that assignment I failed.

M How did you feel when you failed?

P2 Wow, yeah, maybe I copied too much, maybe, I don't know, even though I try my best to paraphrase the other document but I don't know.

M OK, don't worry, every group I've talked to, one or two people have failed their first assignment for the same reason.

P2 But now it's better, my assignment similarity is about 20 [%]

FGC5

P1 You know what happened because I wrote the paper and I forget to put my paper into Turnitin and then some lines have a high similarity, so I didn't realise, that's why I was considered to have conducted plagiarism...

In both cases the participants had problems with their first assignments and did not intend to plagiarise. For the first student, other than the impact on their confidence, the failure was not significant as it was on an early assignment on their pre-sessional programme. In the second case, however, the student has achieved a high IELTS score and did not attend a pre-sessional course. Their failure therefore had a significant impact as they endured full academic misconduct procedures causing acute stress.

In both cases the description of the problems with plagiarism highlight various aspects of criticality, intertextuality, authorship, academic skills and expectations of integrity in the UK. The first key point is the strictness with which plagiarism was viewed in the UK,

compared to China. This concentration on plagiarism came as a shock to the students, they reported having numerous classes or online tutorials to complete on plagiarism. While a harsh lesson for students accused of plagiarism, participants were in favour of the approach if it was used fairly:

FGUK6.2

P1 I receive lots of emails to tell you how to avoid plagiarism.

P2 It can tell you how to avoid plagiarism.

M How does it make you feel when you see all of this stuff about plagiarism?

P2 They think highly of this part.

M They think highly of plagiarism or they think highly of not plagiarising?

P2 Not.

P3 It's very serious.

M How does that make you feel?

P3 I think it should be like this.

P2 Because we are growing academically. We are not children anymore, we need to be more seriously.

P3 We should be responsible.

P2 Sometimes maybe if you read some essay in China, you don't think they are right because they just do copy and paste.

M So you don't know whether you can trust the information.

P2 Sometimes.

P4 You know think one of the problems is that it makes no difference, even though you use plagiarism in China, nobody cares and relatively thinking if you want to come up with your own thoughts, it takes a lot of time and it's much harder so people do not have a lot of time because people are so busy with their own stuff like entertaining themselves and taking a part time job and things like this, and also it's much harder to come up with something own, so now it's like if you use the Google or Baidu, if you use this, it's very easy to find something. You know it's right there and anytime you just need to copy something, to just translate or just to paraphrase, it's ok and nobody cares. So I just think we need to, it's just a very superficial thing, your lecturer asks you to give him that and you say ok, and then you just give him like a copied stuff to her/him and it's ok, so I think that's why we have all the plagiarism issue in China.

The contrast of standards of academic integrity in the UK and China is significant. While students had been warned against plagiarism in China, as one participant remarked, “our words will not be published, so it’s not such a big deal if you copy someone else’s work, whether you copy somebody else’s words or not” (FGUK1 P5). Furthermore, writing had not formed a major part of assessment. As academic writing was the key form of summative assessment in the UK, copying of text, which had not been detected in China, was suddenly being uncovered by Turnitin software, marking a change of norms and providing a harsh lesson for some.

As the participants accused of plagiarism noted, Turnitin played a key role in identifying their plagiarism but also their use of the software enabled them to check their own work. To a certain extent, the students externalise responsibility for detecting copied text to

this tool, which at least provides peace of mind if the students can check their own percentage of copied text before submitting their assignments. The noteworthy element of discussions of Turnitin in the groups was the connection to avoidance of textual plagiarism. This led to discussions of the mechanics of avoiding plagiarism, such as paraphrasing, quoting, citation and referencing, which were linked to careful note taking, as noted above. Indeed, these basic academic skills were the focus of the pre-sessional programmes, in addition to improving language level, which may explain why the student who did not attend the pre-sessional programme had problems with plagiarism. The focus on Turnitin and the mechanics of academic writing left the students feeling frustrated with their writing:

FGUK1

P1 I just think why did I write this bullshit, I think it's not that useful and it's also just like copying ideas from the famous scholars, and I was just rephrase a little bit, so I don't want to read my assignment, yeah.

FGUK5

P2 Yeah, your paraphrase and the, or they will think, they, she will say, "you use too much reference and where's your own opinion" it's quite confusing about that!

P3 Yeah, I feel the same way.

P2 It's like don't use your own opinion, you are not a professional. You are not a specialist.

P1 They always say the article say, the article have....

M Yeah, so you're always just reporting

P2 Yes, it's quite confusing about what should I do, should I use the reference or not, either too much or too less.

P3 For me it's like (laughs)

M Well, that's something

P3 What is the point you know? We were asked to do, you know, read the books and make the references and at the same time we're not allowed to give your own opinion. What we do, it's more like a research, right? It's not really a piece of essay where you can build up your own argument.

These comment raises complex questions about what it means to be an author and the intertextual nature of writing.

7.3.3 Authorship & Intertextuality

FGUK5

M Ok, so the authors, you're talking about, yeah but that is, this is why we are strong on it (plagiarism) here, because you are training to become authors so it's a strong attachment to it.

P3 Yeah exactly, that is the, you know, the kind of like the difference how it's, the first time I have some author and then plus my full name and I thought, wow, I'm the author. I never think that way before.

This extract was by the same student who had remarked about writing in the UK "...it's more like a research, right? It's not really a piece of essay where you can build up your own argument". The contradictions between the two statements display the complex

process which the students are going through in adapting to authorship in the UK. The strictness of expectations around textual re-use, citation and referencing seem to be necessary to cause the students to reflect on the intertextual nature of authorship. One of the students who had been accused of plagiarism described the difference to writing in China:

FGUK4

P2 The way of writing, or how do you say that, I think for the assignment, for the Masters they are more academic and professional when compared with Chinese. In China, when I was in China study in the university, I could write everything as I like, there no need, needn't for any references, it's needn't, you can use a reference, you cannot, it depends you, but in Britain if I want to say a sentence, write a sentence I need to find the reference, I need to find the evidence, it's reasonable, so, I think it's quite difficult. And, and, there's also critical analysis, but for me I think it's simple just to copy and just integrate them together, but critically thinking, or critically analysing, i think it's difficult.

Here the student makes a significant connection between the lack of referencing in China and the difficulty in adapting to critical thinking in the UK. As the student notes, "it's simple just to copy and integrate them together", however even if the student paraphrases, quotes where necessary and cites the information appropriately to avoid plagiarism, they will be accused of descriptive writing which lacks critical thinking, thus it is not just a simple case of copying and paraphrasing to produce an essay.

The experience of writing at length and becoming an author at university in the UK may

not simply be a linguistic or textual exercise, but involves a conscious reflection on evidence and the influence of ideas on how a student constructs their understanding of the subject.

FGUK6.1

P1 I think the two countries they have different approaches to the knowledge, when I first came here my tutor said you get the mark not because of your knowledge but because you're creative, the first time I heard this word, I think it is a new idea for me. I think the Chinese they tend to encourage you know more knowledge and even the positive traditional work means you know lots of knowledge but I think in British, your tutors or society encourage you to consider it dependently, not just follow what others say. You should have your own opinions, you should give your own criticism.

M Ok, so what do you guys think?

P3 I think now if I read a very different point of view related to my topic, I will be very excited because then, based on the same point I can find some debatable wheels [?] I can see why the author holds a different opinion. I can see why the deep problem. So it helps me to improve the essay.

M Exactly, that's critical thinking, you can by coming across an opinion which is against your opinion you can actually improve and strengthen your own idea.

P2 I have the same idea, I always expected something different, for example in my discussion I expect my group mate speak their own idea different from me, maybe in some case I may not agree with them, maybe they are wrong, I am wrong but they need some different voice, maybe that I can improve myself, check myself, whether I am wrong or right, but sometimes, you don't

have wrong or right, you can explore your horizon, you can learn something from others.

Again this extract emphasises the difference not simply in terms of academic writing but in terms of classroom interactions. As opposed to the monologic approach in China in which the answer was deemed correct by the authority, the multiple perspectives approach to knowledge develops the role of the self in the construction of new knowledge, as the student mentioned “it’s like research”. It is not possible to discover new knowledge without exploring what research has gone before. Furthermore, this process is honed via communication but ultimately assessed by writing:

FGUK3

P3 In the essay you don’t have to be right, you don’t have to be wrong, just like, you can convincing [sic] the marker, the supervisor, you can say it’s right, it’s wrong, but you have to prove it by yourself. In your... you have some reason, you have some idea to support your point. That will be ok but in my undergraduate study exams there is only one right answer. You have to answer this question like this then you can get your score and if it is different from this, it’s zero, just like this.

As this student notes, the distinction between the approach to knowledge in China and the UK is stark. While many of the participants described struggling with the transition, many appreciated the impact the approach to knowledge had on their return to China.

7.3.4 Fairness and Cheating

FGC5

P1 I know people who did the plagiarism should be punished but I think it should depend on what kind of plagiarism because some students may do the plagiarism deliberately, because they didn't want to write their papers so they found another guy to help them to buy a paper, that's plagiarism. Or some students delay writing the paper, at last they have no time but to copy, that's called plagiarism perhaps these kind of students should be punished seriously. But for some students who did plagiarism unconsciously, because they don't know what is plagiarism.

This student, who was quoted earlier, felt particularly strongly about the distinction between those students who had plagiarised deliberately and those who had committed the act unintentionally. Having achieved a high IELTS score and avoiding the need to attend a pre-session programme, the student had committed plagiarism on an assignment. This student learned a valuable lesson from the experience however questioned the fairness of being treated in the same way as a student who bought an essay. In actuality, offence they committed was treated more leniently than a student who would have bought an essay, however it raises similar questions about the use of the word plagiarism to describe students who have not acted according to the academic standards and norms, versus those who have copied large sections deliberately, or even bought an essay.

As contract cheating, the act of buying a whole or part of an assignment, was an emerging topic at the start of the research, it was opted to explore this in the focus groups. As this topic has grown in prominence in recent years, the findings are of interest in terms of academic integrity and relevant to the findings of the research. The process of research was book-ended with a description of one Chinese PhD student who would write assignments and dissertations for students on Masters programmes at an

institution. This came to light during the pilot and was also brought up by alumni of the institution in the final focus group in China, therefore bringing the topic full circle. Furthermore, in the pilot study, one of the participants who was a naturalised British citizen born in China, noted that they had been offered £30,000 pounds to complete a programme in place as another student, however had declined the offer. This was quite a shocking admission, however the other participant, from mainland China, questioned, quite seriously why they had not taken the opportunity and mentioned that they would have done it. This frank exchange was quite eye opening, in addition to their open admission that they knew another PhD from China was completing assignments for students.

Discussing the topic of buying essays did provide fruitful exchanges within the groups, however was at times tense and obviously made certain participants feel uncomfortable, leading to a change of subject. Despite this, all the focus groups admitted to the common practice of buying essays among the student population and the constant targeting of adverts to them on social media and via email:

P1 I receive lots of emails about they claim they will provide, they will write the dissertation for you. I receive lots of emails.

M So you read lots of emails that they will write your dissertation.

P1 Yeah, they say they are good master, good PhD they will write the assignment for you.

M You just laugh at it?

P1 Yeah.

M So you have heard about this as well? How do you say *daixie*? So have you heard about these services? Don't worry it was one of my questions.

P1 I receive lots of *daixie* emails.

P2 When I am trying to get some information for my topic I will find websites that advertise *daixie*.

M So this is just essay writing services? How about you, have you heard of these?

P4 Yeah, of course.

M What do you think about it then?

P4 In fact I have roommate, she wants me to do for her, she's little a bit like a pub queen, she spend a lot of time in the party and she has limited time to finish her assignment but I don't see any connection between me and proofreading, so.

The translation of *daixie* (代写) is ghostwriter and was the common term used by the participants to describe contract essay writers. This exchange reflects the heightened awareness of these services amongst the Chinese student community. With one exception, the participants admitted to completely ignoring these advertisements. In one case a student admitted that their group had considered using a ghostwriter:

FGUK5

P2 Because last, in one module it's a group work, and I work hard for my own part when we do the last part it's do a report for 5000 words and our group leader said we can find a *daixie* and... We have 5 or 4 students in our group and they all agree with that, only me and (one other disagreed)... You know how much it was, it was 850 pounds. We didn't do it but, but...

The other participants admitted they were shocked at this admission. In other groups, there seemed to be first knowledge of the behaviour, for example:

FGUK3

P1 For me, I definitely will not choose it.

M Ok, so that's, that's good, I don't expect any of you to say yes I buy all my essays.

MP (laughs)

M No, no but that's different.

P6 But my friends have tried that

M Have tried it? Ok.

P6 And he just have nothing to worry about, his dissertation before.

M Ok, did he, did he pass?

P6 Yes.

The participants who had returned to China also reflected that the practice was common, with one participant who was teaching admitting it had become a "big problem" in recent years (FGC4 P1).

The fact that these services were being used naturally lead to questions of why students resorted to such obvious cheating, however the answer was not so clear cut. Discussions of these services often blurred the line between legitimate support, such as Proofreaders and illegitimate support, buying essays. The discussion also identified the distinction between students who used the services as acts of desperation and those students who were not interested or engaged in the course, such as the pub queen mentioned by the participant above. Participants described different types of students who may use these services:

FCG2

P1 I think there are two different kind of students, some people they really have trouble, they may seek for help. And other people they just don't want to do it on their own.

The students who needed support were variously described:

FGUK6.2

P2 And maybe one reason is about their ability, they just can't finish it, because of one of my friends she is not studying here, she told me she really don't know how to write that type of essay. So, she just buy an essay from the internet but the university found it, so...

As were those students for whom studying was not a key priority:

P2 First their English, maybe it's not good enough because in their daily life, they never speak English. They always plan to take a holiday or to shopping.

M To go shopping?

P2 To go shopping, yes.

M So do you think on your course, or on other courses you see Chinese students, are there different types of Chinese students then? Do you think there are ones that are studying harder and some that are not maybe studying as hard?

P2 Yeah, maybe different groups, different type.

M OK, so there's different groups in there. And what is the difference then with these people that buy the essays?

P2 Different reason you mean?

M What's different about them from the other group?

P2 They, I know some students they say they use more time to travelling or even they go to the casino or something like that?

It is important to stress the wide range of reasons posed and also emphasise the fact that the participants universally condemned using the services. While language ability is discussed as a factor here, it is important to bear in mind the language difficulties which the participants described when arriving in the UK despite achieving a sufficient IELTS score.

The reference in the previous extract to students going to casinos and travelling highlights that many of the students have significant financial resources. This was identified as one factor for students using the services:

FGUK3

P2 You pay the money to learn something, you pay the money for somebody to learn something for you.

This final quote brings the analysis of the data full-circle back to the issue of motivation to study in the UK. The student makes a salient point regarding the motivations of the students to perform a flagrant act of academic misconduct by purchasing an essay. If a student is motivated by learning, buying an essay is not an option, however if the ends is the qualification, then this provides the ultimate instrumental means to achieve this end.

7.4 Discussion: UK context through the Habermasian Lens

The experiences of the participants studying in UK described in this chapter build on the themes of their previous educational experience in China (as discuss in Chapter 6) and

also with their expectations and experience of UK life and study (as described in Chapter 5). From the accounts provided by the focus group participants, adapting to study in the UK was not simply a case of improving their English language and applying the same study techniques they had used in China at secondary school and university. The transition involved a change in their approach to study. The students faced both practical and epistemological obstacles which they had to overcome in order to succeed in the different context. Their discussion of these obstacles and also the different strategies of the students to overcome them are highly significant to an understanding of the problems learners, not only those from China, have with the concepts of plagiarism, critical thinking and academic integrity. For learners from mainland China, however this is an extreme transition exacerbated by language difficulties rather than caused solely by studying in a second language. In this section, the participants' perceptions and the thematic analysis of the findings will be discussed in relation to Habermas's TCA and the relevant literature set out in Chapter 2. In brief, the assessment context in of UK Masters programmes, despite certain systemic distortions, is geared to towards reproduction of the academic lifeworld and therefore students must enter into the discourse in order to succeed rather than simply adopting an instrumental approach.

7.4.1 Transitioning between systems of higher education

On the surface, the key difference between studying in China and the UK appears to be a difference in the form of assessment. As analysis of the participants' discussions indicates, while writing had formed a proportion of assessment in China, this had been quite distinct from that expected in the UK. As noted, the focus on writing was only the tip of the iceberg in terms of differences in the participants' approach to study and, correspondingly their approach to knowledge. The practical obstacles involved learning the appropriate explicit academic skills, which could be taught to a certain extent in class and through practice. Referencing, paraphrasing, quoting and summarising, aided by more explicit note-taking and reading practices would suffice to avoid plagiarism and

satisfy the strictly enforced academic norms and standards expected in the UK. Language ability would obviously impact on a students to engage in these practices. Yet, it is important to stress that in this theoretical framework language is seen as symptom of the epistemological problems and systemic distortions rather than a key cause of the problems these students face.

These changes in the approach to study, however, would not suffice to dispel the stereotypical view of the Chinese learner. Once the students had successfully avoided plagiarism in systemic sense, the participants would be accused of lacking critical thinking. Thus, while the explicit academic skills could be taught, to a certain extent, the more tacit approach to knowledge was more abstract in the view of the participants. Moving away from descriptive writing and displaying critical thinking required a more in depth and breadth reading of texts, which included access to a greater quantity and quality of academic texts than had been the case in China. In contrast with the monologic, textbook approach in China, the students had to adapt the multiple perspectives approach to knowledge, of the intersubjectivity of the lifeworld. It is within this approach to knowledge that the student can then develop their own identity as an author, contributing their perspective to the multiple perspectives on knowledge. The implications of this for academic integrity will be considered below.

In choosing to attend university students are placing themselves into a different cultural context in terms of living and approach to learning. For the participants in the study, a key aim is aim to improve their language ability and gain a qualification for employment back in China. In order to do so they must negotiate the challenges of the new environment. As noted in the previous section, the participants' educational experience in China was described as highly instrumentalised, focusing on examinations in which an absolute approach to knowledge was demonstrated. In the participants' perceptions,

the key challenge for them was adapting to academic writing. As detailed in chapter 5, adapting to living and studying in the UK, however was not as straightforward as merely improving their language and following the approach to study they had used in China.

As writing involves entering the academic discourse this involved both practical and epistemological obstacles. The participants described the change of assessment but a change of their approach to study and their role within the learning environment. This process not only exposed the pathologies and distortions of their Chinese educational background but also helps to identify the systemic distortions of the UK academic lifeworld, which may be manifest in threats to academic integrity from the economic and bureaucratic systems at play in the marketisation of higher education. Essentially the financial incentives of taking these students into the system causes institutions to overlook the challenge of accommodating them into the lifeworld resulting in systemic solutions leading to instrumental action students and strategic action by staff, which may result in academic misconduct and the lowering of standards.

7.4.2 Epistemological development through the lifeworld

The participants identified critical thinking as a key problem with their academic writing. While other issues, such as referencing could be learned, this issue appeared more abstract. In examining the literature on critical thinking, Moon's (2005) work identified epistemological development as playing a key role. While not initially apparent, these models are directly linked with Habermas's work. Habermas's TCA shares Piagetian roots with the models of epistemological development in which social coordination is the result of cooperation, rather than power and domination (Smith, 2002). In this view, people act ethically due to their desire to cooperate, rather than simply being coerced to follow the rules. In order to achieve this people must be socialised into the lifeworld through true, authentic and sincere communicate, hence the title of Habermas's theory. The system, represented as money and power, can support this process however may

also colonise it leading to instrumental action (Finlayson, 2005). The implications of this for Chinese academic development and UK HE were discussed by Hayhoe (1988) and McLean (2006) respectively. It is through the work of Mezirow and his transformative learning theory, however, that the connection with epistemological models becomes most apparent.

To recap, Mezirow (2008) stated that Habermas's TCA "has provided us with an epistemological foundation defining optimal conditions for adult learning and education" (p. 92). Mezirow (1997) explains that through exposure to the intersubjective discourse and self-reflection in the academic lifeworld, adult learners undergo a transformational experience as they realise the systems' influence on them. While it has been criticised for not being critical enough of power relations (Brookfield, 2001), Mezirow (2000) argues his theory is emancipatory without being revolutionary. Through the development of the thesis what became apparent is the significant similarities it shares with the staged models of epistemological development discussed in section 2.5. The transformational element of Mezirow's intersects with Perry's (1970) *relativism*, Marton's (1993) *changing as a person* and Baxter Magolda's (2004b) *contextual knowing and self-authorship*, the advanced stages of these respective theories. These similarities are also shared by the academic literacies model, with the division of academic skills, academic socialisation and academic literacy (Lea and Street, 2006). As Moon (2005) points out, this is a spectrum of development which students ostensibly transition through at university.

Understanding why university may act as a catalyst for this shift in students' epistemological approach is a case of reflecting on the reproduction of the academic lifeworld. Ultimately and idealistically, the academic lifeworld is geared towards the discourse on emerging knowledge from various academic pursuits in order to reach an intersubjective consensus on truth. As McLean (2006) lays out in her central thesis,

university pedagogy should be centered in this lifeworld as an aspect of cultural transmission in what Habermas termed “communicatively structured activity” or an “area specialized in cultural transmission” (Habermas, 1987, p. 330). Mezirow (2008) incorporates this into the holistic learning process of the university in which students are educated in the goal focused, hypothetical-deductive logic (testing hypotheses) and the analogic-abductive (questioning, exploring) logic of communicative learning (Mezirow, 2008). Through these learning processes, students are being introduced to the embryonic stages of these thinking and communication process, which are used by Nobel Prize winners albeit with higher levels of scientific intuition (Marton and Entwistle, 1994).

7.4.3 System support for socialisation into lifeworld

As Habermas theorises in TCA, the modern lifeworld has expanded as post-traditional societies became too complex resulting in the uncoupling of money and power from the lifeworld into bureaucratic and economic sub-systems. The university can therefore be understood as series of systems developed to support teaching and research, helping to reproduce the lifeworld. Academic publication is another system for the dissemination of information in various forms. For new members of the university community, such as the participants in this study, adapting to this academic lifeworld involves the communicative and epistemological process of socialisation. However it also requires integrating in to the system’s approach, which involves instrumental action. These systems include lectures, seminars, library, assessments and the qualifications themselves.

In the focus groups the participants therefore detailed two processes at work in their transition to study in the UK; their attempts to socialise into the lifeworld and their adaptation to “communicatively structured activity” (Habermas, 1987, p. 330). These were represented in the findings chapters as epistemological and practical obstacles. As the participants attest to, one of the biggest obstacles they face is academic writing, as

this constitutes the key form of assessment. Similar to China, assessment has instrumental purposes for talent selection. Authorship and referencing practices themselves are specific systems aimed at efficient communication and reward, either in the way of money or power within the field (recognition/respect). Authorship, references and citation, also serve an epistemological purpose in communicating the influences upon an individual, acknowledging the individual and contextual nature of knowledge (Neville, 2016). Furthermore, rather than ignoring the intertextual nature of communication, referencing practices recognize that individual authorship is built upon the collective, dialogic endeavour, or a remix (Lessig, 2008) of previous ideas reconstituted through perspective of the individual (or in some case collective) author(s) (Howard, 1995).

7.4.3 Systematic distortions of the lifeworld

The challenges that the participants described faced with academic writing were indicative of the broader epistemological obstacles the students faced transitioning from the Chinese context to the UK. As an assessment, writing acts to provide external incentive for students to engage in academic discourse. The participants noted the distinct contrast with their previous study experience in China, which was based on the absolute knowing or surface approach aimed at information reproducing (Hirvela & Du, 2013). As the consensus of the participants attested, being provided with a question and working to a deadline required a completely different approach to studying a text-book for the test. In addition, what little writing experience the participants had produced had not been rigorously checked for plagiarism nor had they received detailed feedback on the content or quality of sources used. Thus when faced with the strict warnings about and treatment of plagiarism, this was at odds with the norms and standards they had been used to in China.

Resultantly the phrase “all essays under heaven are plagiarised” was significant in the process of data collection. While the phrase could be empowering with the intertextual interpretation along the lines of Eliot’s (1967) “[i]mmature poets imitate; mature poets steal”, the students provided a more literal interpretation. Reflecting on the epistemological approach of their studies in China, their experiences of the symbolic dissertation and the public perception of academic integrity in China, this is not surprising. As Fishman’s (2009) definition of plagiarism asserts, it occurs “[i]n a situation in which there is a legitimate expectation of original authorship” (p.5). Within the information reproducing approach to absolute knowing, there is no expectation of original authorship, therefore there is a denial of self in the knowledge process and plagiarism does not apply to the context. Much similar to the translation culture in Chinese academia (Bloch, 2001), the purpose is the reproduction of knowledge rather than the transformation of knowledge (Hirvela & Du, 2013). The reproduction of knowledge is an instrumental action as it is not open to discourse and is geared towards success. For example, an answer in a test may be the right answer according to authority, however may be open to interpretation.

In engaging with the writing assessments, the participants detailed their socialisation into the academic lifeworld and supporting system of the university. The practical obstacles they faced could be addressed by changing their approach to study, such as a different approach to note-taking, learning how to navigate databases and paraphrase or quote effectively. These changes however are grounded in the epistemological differences in the approach to knowledge. Whereas the instrumental action of information reproducing had been effective in China, in the context of essay writing in the UK this becomes the plagiarism. Plagiarism is problematic in this context as it is an instrumental act which represents a denial of self in the knowledge transforming process. In the context of reproduction of the lifeworld, it is systematically distorted communication as it does not

contribute to intersubjective discourse. In this way the writing can be understood as a social practice rather than assessment, in which the identity of the writer is formed and certain cultural practices are embedded (Chandrasoma, Thompson, & Pennycook, 2004, p. 179; Ivanič, 1998).

The understanding of plagiarism as systematically distorted communication also leads clarity on other obstacles faced by the participants. In terms of contributing to seminars, while the participants admitted issues with understanding the language of the tutors, they also noted that in China there had been little to ask questions during class other than to clarify the right answer. Furthermore, a more significant finding is that there was a consensus that the participants engaged in reading texts in a different manner as two of the participants admitted:

FGUK1

P4 I think this is the problem, we don't need to read in China.

P5 Yes, I cannot remember whether I have read something.

Therefore, the four linguistic skills they had been instrumentally tested on in China and for the IELTS, reading, writing, speaking and listening, were used in a communicative manner in entering the academic discourse as students developed a more relative, deep or independent approach to knowledge.

In entering the academic discourse, the participants are therefore exposed to the dialogue of multiple perspectives on knowledge. Whereas multiple participants reported having initial problems with plagiarism, it was revealed that this could be remedied through more strict attention to the practical academic skills to avoid plagiarism. Once this was achieved, however, the participants were faced with the criticism that their work

was descriptive and lacked critical thinking. This criticism is epistemologically equivalent to the problem of plagiarism. While the participants had avoided textual plagiarism through adapting to the norms of academic discourse, the descriptive nature of their writing indicates that they are still participating in information reproducing, rather than knowledge transforming. In Habermasian terms, critical thinking is the validity testing nature of the discourse in which the knowledge presented is tested and transformed through the interaction with other knowledge, as described by this participant:

FGUK3 P3 In the essay you don't have to be right, you don't have to be wrong, just like, you can convincing [sic] the marker, the supervisor, you can say it's right, it's wrong, but you have to prove it by yourself. In your... you have some reason, you have some idea to support your point, that will be ok but in my undergraduate study exams there is only one right answer. You have to answer this question like this then you can get your score and if it is different from this, it's zero, just like this.

7.4.4 Obstacles to socialisation and reproduction of the lifeworld

The abstract concept of critical thinking highlights the key obstacle in participants' adaptation to studying in the UK context. Critical thinking represents a shift in the responsibility of the learner within the body of knowledge. Whereas in the Chinese system the participants described being expected to obediently reproduce knowledge, in the UK they were being asked to question authority. As detailed by the Baxter Magolda (1992), this epistemological process of shifting from absolute knowing to higher levels of epistemological reflection is isolating and stressful. The participants describe the uncertainty that this causes. This process represents the shift from the collective, absolute view of knowledge a more relative, individual approach, as represented in the act of authorship which causes students to reflect on their identity (Ivanič, 1998). As one participant noted, "wow, I'm the author. I never think that way before" (FGUK5 P3). The

participants' experiences indicate that while the practical obstacles to avoid textual plagiarism can be overcome through instrumental action, exhibiting critical thinking is a process of socialisation into the lifeworld. While academic writing can provide external motivation via assessment to do so, entering the academic discourse requires a degree of internal motivation, or define as the absence of threat and resulting anxiety (Marton & Säljö, 1984/2005).

Socialising into the academic context therefore requires a shift in the "paradoxical circular relation between approach to learning and motivation to learn" identified by Marton and Säljö (Marton & Säljö, 1984/2005, p. 55). Whereas in China the motivation for learning had been heavily externalised to the high stakes test, the shift to essay writing as the main form of assessment results in a degree of internalisation of motivation which is manifested as a shift in responsibility for knowledge. This change in responsibility for knowledge accounts for the difference in the quantity (reduced classroom hours compared to China) and quality (more active participation) of contact hours expected of the students in the UK. As one focus group agreed (FGUK5), this results in more freedom, which they appreciated and enjoyed after restricted curriculum and pedagogical approach in China.

In terms of academic integrity, the freedom the students describe is related to the students being responsible to complete the work without being watched (i.e. not in closed exam conditions), which requires trust on the side of the teachers. As the students noted, the academic work is also in addition to other changes in terms of responsibility as they must cook for themselves and also live in their own rooms (unlike their dormitories in China) which was a significant adjustment for some. The challenge for institutions is how to balance the socialisation of international students into the lifeworld with enough external incentive for students to engage in the work and follow the appropriate academic

standards. While the systemic distortions of the Chinese systems are apparent, the UK system also has systemic distortions of the lifeworld which are due the systems influence of the lifeworld.

7.4.5 Systemic Distortions of the Lifeworld

As discussed in chapter and illustrated in Lomer's (2018) graph illustrates (Figure 4), the reliance on Chinese students for UK institutions has been increasing steadily since the turn of the century. With Chinese students providing a significant portion of the £25 billion contributed to the British economy by international students (London Economics, 2018), the influence of this windfall on the participants' experience in the UK was stark. Analysis of the participants' perceptions of their transition to studying in the UK was significantly impacted by the number of Chinese students on their courses. As described in chapter 5, the participants variously described their experience of "living in a very small Chinese world" (FGUK6.2 P3) or in "Chinatown" (FGUK 7 P1). This seems to be evidence of the use of these students as "cash cows" as a consequence of the marketisation of higher education, as warned against by Tannock (2018), Thomassen (2010) and Mclean (2006).

The participants in the study painted the distinct image of a ghettoisation of Chinese students on specific courses and in specific campus accommodation. With students' confidence in their ability to communicate with local people low, the high number of Chinese students exacerbated this situation. The participants described being disappointed with the lack of opportunities to speak with local students. While certain participants were able to find local or international friends, for the majority this was a disappointment or too distracting considering their workload. The ghettoisation also had pedagogical implications such as dumbing down of the curriculum, as highlighted by McGowan and Potter (2008). In terms of plagiarism, the participants reported having

significant warnings and guidance on referencing and paraphrasing, which they found stressful. As Ursula McGowan (2005) argued, however, this approach was putting the cart before the horse. By this, the students are being taught instrumental measures to avoid plagiarism rather than being allowed to socialise into the academic lifeworld before receiving instruction on plagiarism.

Due to the high number of students, and their varying quality their socialisation into the lifeworld was inhibited. As one participant noted (FG6.1 P4), while working in a group with European students, he was able to learn far more than with his Chinese counterparts. In addition to having less opportunity to practice authentic English, in certain classes other Chinese students would react negatively to other students speaking English, which was seen as showing off (FGUK3/4). In combination with the motivations of Chinese students for choosing the UK as a place of study, such as the low entrance standards and short length of study, this raises particular questions about the quality assurance process in place for admission of these students and targets for the number of students on each course. It was apparent from the participants that they had varying degrees of interest and experience of the subject they were studying. Even for the participants who were interested in their subject, they had little academic knowledge of the subject and were therefore starting from a blank slate. The combination of the new subject and new pedagogical approach is particularly problematic on a one year Masters. There is the danger that the economic integrity of the institutions is in danger of overshadowing the academic integrity of the programmes.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

In my previous research I identified Chinese graduates of UK master's degrees working in transnational higher education in China as a *cultural bridge* for academic integrity (Gow, 2014). While this research was well received, the findings did not entirely answer the questions which I set out to answer at the start of my research journey, which was crudely: why do Chinese students cheat (or are perceived that way)? This question has been put to me by many people over the years and is an unfortunate yet prevalent stereotype. While the previous research had begun to shed light on the issues, I felt there were still unanswered questions. The research aims of this project were therefore to build on this previous research which explored the discourses on plagiarism, and to look more holistically at the Chinese learner stereotype and paradox through the perceptions of these learners. In order to do this, I have taken an in depth look at the educational contexts between which Chinese students are transitioning: their home country and the UK. This has identified a key focus on students' epistemological development and pedagogical approach in higher education and how this may be impacted by the broader socio-economic and political context surrounding them.

In order to gain a holistic view of these students in the transition to studying and living in the UK and returning to China, qualitative methods were used. The sample of Mainland Chinese students on 1-year Masters programmes was selected. The reason for this was the short timescale in a different context would extenuate the obstacles the students faced, thus making them visible for analysis. Although initially used as an exploratory method, the focus group approach acted to provide insight into collective views of Chinese students, generating a constructive and productive intersubjective discourse. The participants' in depth discussions, both in the UK and after returning to China, provided an understanding of the broader educational process which could then be

brought back into the context of academic integrity as recommended in the research literature, rather than simply investigating cheating (Bretag et al. 2014; McGowan 2005).

8.1 Contribution to knowledge

Viewing the problematic stereotype of Mainland Chinese learners and the concept of academic integrity in the context of massified, marketised and internationalised higher education has made a theoretical, practical and conceptual contribution to knowledge. Firstly, the project has reached the core aim of identifying Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (TCA) as insightful theoretical lens to view the case and the concept in the current context. Through Habermas's critique of systemic distortion and colonization of the lifeworld, the analysis of the perceptions presented in the focus groups by the Chinese learners provides a unique insight into their experience of transitioning to study in the UK, which has broader implications for the internationalisation of higher education.

This allows for a new depth of understanding the stereotype or paradox of the Chinese learner as identified in the literature. Rather than the simplistic accusation that plagiarism is allowed and critical thinking is not encouraged in Chinese or Confucian culture as the stereotype suggests, the findings of the thesis propose that plagiarism and critical thinking do not play a relevant role in the epistemology and pedagogy of the high stakes test-taking approach in Chinese education. This is exacerbated by the rapid and ambitious pace of socio-economic development in China, coupled with the ideological constraints of the authoritarian state.

When studying in the UK, the dominant relativist and contextual epistemological approach of research-led teaching in universities and having intersubjective discourse assessed through writing therefore provides Chinese students with obstacles in their

transition. These epistemological obstacles may result in plagiarism and other threats to academic integrity. These are exacerbated in the UK context by the dominant neo-liberal ideology of marketised higher education which distorts and colonises the genuine intra- and inter-student/staff communication necessary for students to understand and develop on the authorial and research roles of academics expected for assessment. Thus, academic integrity emerges as a concept in the system to try to support the reproduction of the academic lifeworld, but in itself represents the distortions and colonisation it hopes to eradicate.

8.2 Research aims and questions

8.2.1 Overarching research aims

The overarching research aim was to:

- identify an existing theoretical framework to help understand the problems faced by mainland Chinese students in transitioning to study in English universities.

Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* emerged as the theoretical framework used in this thesis. This theory was identified through analysis of the latent meanings of the participants' perceptions of their problems studying in the UK, such as the abstract nature of critical thinking and plagiarism combined with their instrumental motivations for studying abroad. As the literature on critical thinking detailed (Moon 2005), students' problems with this concept spring from their epistemological approach to knowledge, in this case detailed through Baxter Magolda's (1992) *Epistemological Reflection Model* (ERM). This model proved fruitful in the initial analysis to identify the key themes of practical and epistemological obstacles which the students were attempting to overcome. However it failed to address the issue of why this group of students in particular had a

reputation for problems with plagiarism, critical thinking and, resultantly, academic integrity.

The combination of the discourses on Chinese academic development with the debates around of the internationalisation, marketisation and massification of higher education led to the identification of Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984/1987). This context formed the socio-political and economic conditions under which Chinese learners are educated in the People's Republic of China and the UK. Habermas's TCA provided a powerful lens through which the participants' experiences could be viewed. The common Piagetian lineage shared with the models of epistemological development was a key breakthrough, especially apparent in the work of Jack Mezirow (2008). Furthermore, the intersubjective nature of the focus groups lent themselves to Habermas's approach (set out in detail in chapter 3). As noted by Allen (2013), Habermas' TCA is "extremely useful for thinking through how subordinated individuals can achieve critical and reflective distance on the power relations to which they are subject" (p.100). In this case the focus groups provided an intersubjective snapshot of the participants' lifeworld allowing for an analysis of the impact of systemic forces, distortions and pathologies in China and the UK. In simple terms, it helps to understand the reasons for plagiarism and other threats to academic integrity.

8.2.2 Research question 1: Challenges faced studying in the UK

Q1. What are mainland Chinese students' perceptions of the challenges they face in adapting to a UK Master's programme and how do they overcome these challenges?

The thematic analysis of the focus group discussions identified a number of problems faced by the students when studying in the UK. The answer to this question has been

exhaustively explored in chapter 7. Through the analysis of these codes the themes of practical and epistemological obstacles emerged.

1. **Practical obstacles:** In Habermasian terms, the practical obstacles relate to elements of the system of higher education which are set-up to support the academic lifeworld. These obstacles are explicit and can therefore be dealt with via an instrumental approach. Therefore, strategies to overcome practical obstacles are geared towards success rather than understanding, providing externalised motivation for action. These included, for example, writing as the form of assessment, the use of the library and database, the mechanics of referencing and citation. The practical differences manifest themselves in a change of approach to studying, with many of these study skills being explicitly taught on the programme. On the surface this included avoidance of plagiarism, in which students could avoid copying text through paraphrasing, summarising, quotation, the use of text-matching software, time management and application of referencing conventions. These practical obstacles mainly resulted from the shift from closed examinations involving multiple choice and short answer writing task in the Chinese context to assessment via academic writing using multiple sources of information in the UK context.
2. **Epistemological obstacles:** The practical obstacles, however, are systemic manifestations of deeper epistemological obstacles. These issues relate to socialisation into the academic lifeworld which revolve around discourse and the intersubjective consensus on truth, as laid out in Habermas's TCA. The systems exist to support the communicative lifeworld, for example seminars (speaking), lectures (listening), library (reading) and assessment (demonstrating key concepts and writing). The participants describe epistemological obstacles as

distinct from their Chinese educational experience, and, unlike practical obstacles, cannot be explicitly and instrumentally addressed. Overcoming epistemological obstacles requires time and a process of socialisation via genuine communication within the lifeworld. The participants' experiences show that this is inhibited due the large number of students from China being ghettoised onto particular programmes of study. Furthermore, the students' instrumental motivations to study in the UK and approach to education, instilled in them via their Chinese background, results in the systemic distortions of communication and associated pathologies which inhibit their language learning and communication in the academic and social sense.

Understanding the extent to which epistemological obstacles presented significant challenges to students was very much related to the second research question.

8.2.3 Research question 2: Chinese learner stereotype and paradox

Q2: How can analysing these perceptions and experiences through this framework help to deconstruct the stereotypical view of the mainland Chinese learner as a plagiarist?

Watkin and Biggs (1996) break down the Chinese learner paradox or stereotype into the three constituent parts of language, testing and culture. Through the Habermasian lens of communicative action, these three elements can be understood as relating to lifeworld and system. The development of high stakes testing seems to be central to understanding the stereotype. In the historic case of the *Keju* and the modern case of the *Gaokao*, the examinations act to colonise the lifeworld of students. Thus, all their time is dedicated to success in the examination and their identity is reduced to being a

student following the instruction of their teacher. As De Saeger (2008) pointed out with regards to the *Keju*, this presented epistemological obstacles to modern science by restricting the elite from the discourse and reproduction of the academic lifeworld necessary for scientific research. It appears that the *Gaokao* may be having a similar colonising impact on the lives of students today, albeit without providing students with complex rhetorical and compositional training which was characteristic of the *Keju* (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012).

As analysis of the participants' showed, the continued emphasis on performance in examinations within China's post-compulsory education sector serves to perpetuate approaches to knowledge which reward the reproduction of information. This was evidenced in chapter 6, particularly in the portrayal of the high stakes of the *Gaokao* contrasted with the symbolic dissertation produced for their Chinese undergraduate degree. In the former, students were focused on the memorisation of monological knowledge via textbooks for closed examinations under strict surveillance. For the dissertation, while students were told not to plagiarise, this was not strictly enforced by their teachers. Furthermore, students were not instructed in the use of referencing systems, literature searching nor the interpretation of research based literature. Students were therefore writing at length for the first time in an open assessment format in a completely different practical and epistemological format than they were used to. Resultantly, participants admitted to copying and pasting or translating large amounts of text without strict attention to referencing or quotation. As the dissertation would not form part of the degree, the teaching staff would not check the work for plagiarism other than in very extreme cases. Therefore, the degree was awarded on the basis of examination results and the absolute approach to knowledge which encouraged a surface approach to learning. When the students transition to a higher education system more connected and supportive of the academic lifeworld in the UK, they face problems. The students'

epistemological approach is limited and their expectations of the norms of academic integrity (particularly plagiarism) are set within this approach.

This study has shown that in transitioning to the new context, the systemic distortions of communication inherent in the Chinese education system cause Mainland Chinese students significant issues with adapting to the academic expectations in the UK. As noted in chapter 7, the assessment context of UK Masters programmes, is geared towards reproduction of the academic lifeworld and therefore students must enter into the discourse via academic writing in order to succeed, as opposed to adopting an instrumental approach. Rather than being caused by language problems, this is exacerbated by the instrumental approach to language learning. This results in the accusations of plagiarism and lack of critical thinking aimed at Chinese students. As the perceptions of the students in this study prove, however, despite the difficulties they face, students are capable of acting with integrity, adapting and even flourishing in this new context. It is important to point out that all students, not just those from China, go through this epistemological shift in their approach to knowledge as they rise through the levels of academia. In this way the participants in this study are no different from British students. The process, however, is in a highly truncated time frame, the size of the gap in epistemological approach is large due to years of test taking and is also occurring in a second language.

8.2.4 Research Question 3: Implications for academic integrity

Q3: What implications do these findings have for the concept of academic integrity in the context of internationalised of higher education?

As discussed in section 2.3, the term academic integrity has emerged in response to the changing dynamic of internationalised higher education in the age of the internet.

Reflecting on this term through the Habermasian lens, it appears that the term academic integrity itself may be an artefact of the system attempting to address the systemic distortions and colonization of the academic lifeworld. As the term endeavours to make the *Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity* (ICAI, 2014) explicit, the system of education is attempting to ensure that students (and academics) act with *honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage*. The fact that they might not act with academic integrity, indicates that the system may be struggling to support the lifeworld to reproduce academic culture. As stated in section 3.4, any colonization of the lifeworld would be the result of the two steering media of the system, economy and bureaucracy. In the studies of the students' perceptions of their educational experience presented in this thesis, the systems' influence in the two countries has clear implications related to the profoundly different epistemological perspectives which characterize both the systems of UK and Chinese higher education.

While the UK system values and rewards critique of knowledge necessary for the production of new knowledge, the Chinese system strongly emphasizes uncritical reproduction of content to pass exams and obey authority, in this manner duty is valued over the more individual interpretations of integrity and responsibility valued in the UK context. As the systems of high stakes assessment colonize the lifeworld of students in China, they also provide epistemological obstacles to scientific knowledge and the academic discourse which surrounds it. Although the attention to obedience and duty to the state certainly have integrity in military or other authority bound structures, in an academic context they may hinder not only academic integrity but also academic freedom. The implications of this are quite profound.

As China grows in global stature, the focus on higher education is key to its scientific aims. What is apparent from the literature reviewed is that Chinese higher education is

making significant gains and has focused on strategic aims to make Chinese universities the best in the world. It is, however, struggling to rapidly produce academics, or scholars, capable of matching up to the lofty aims. As noted, academics require the legitimate support of literacy brokers (Luo and Hyland, 2016) or overworked supervisors (Flowerdew and Li, 2012) to help students to publish. They may also resort to illegitimate support, plagiarism and fraud to help them find a shortcut to individual success however this is at the expense of overall academic integrity (Hu, Yang and Tang, 2018). This is not to say that cheating or plagiarism are engrained in Chinese culture, but rather emerge through the highly instrumentalised approach to knowledge engrained in the test taking education system which does not socialise scholars in to the academic lifeworld. This has been exacerbated by highly strategic government efforts to reproduce academic culture at a rapid rate with a huge influx of capital into the system, while at the same time placing significant ideological constraints on universities. The participants' describe this extreme pressure in their account of Chinese education and it is also reflected in their motivations to study in the UK.

In the UK system problems with academic integrity persist due to systemic distortions of communication caused by increasing instrumental and strategic action in the UK system resulting from the influence of marketisation. This has arguably began to colonise the aims of massification and internationalisation. While the system of higher education can support students' transition into the academic lifeworld and independent learning, this becomes increasingly difficult when the system is looking to maximise profit from the students. This results in an unscalable number of Chinese students on a programme where the only entrance requirements are a seemingly inadequate language qualification and sufficient economic means. The end result is that many of these students struggle and are perceived as cash cows, which further effects their reputation and integration on campuses. They are surrounded by students from the same shared background with

little opportunity for genuine intersubjective discourse with members of the academic lifeworld (i.e. staff) or students from other backgrounds. This leads to further instrumental action by students and strategic action by staff to help them pass the course and avoid plagiarism rather than to reach an intersubjective consensus on truth. In this sense academic integrity is then reduced to the quality assurance of degrees in a higher education system chiefly aimed at employability and credentialism rather than supporting students' socialisation into the academic lifeworld.

The Mainland Chinese learners participating in the study are caught between the systems of education in the respective countries and the colonising forces of money and power which steer them. While the Chinese system has benefits for equality of opportunity, meritocracy and fairness, as China's economy grows, competition increases and the state tightens control on political views, the system has increasingly colonised education to success rather than communication. In terms of academic integrity and specifically the question of plagiarism, students therefore have little space to develop an individual identity and authorship as genuine intersubjective communication is squeezed out by the system. Within this, plagiarism is posed not only as mere individual manipulation but also as systematically distorted communication, or denial of self in and responsibility for the knowledge process. The end result is students have the simplistic interpretation that *all essays under heaven are plagiarised*. While this may have the more nuanced definition relating to post-modern notions of intertextuality, the students end-up plagiarising at first due to the Homeric interpretation of copying, which actually places the copier as a slave to the power of those they copy, rather than the Martialian view of a plagiarist as a thief.

The UK system, on the other hand should provide the students with the opportunity to socialise into the academic lifeworld and internationalise it by adding their perspective to

the intersubjective consensus. Instead the financial incentives of taking these students into the system causes institutions to overlook the challenge of accommodating them leading to further causes of plagiarism as students look for ways to avoid plagiarism and succeed in their aims of getting their degree in order to find a job. At one end of the spectrum, students may patchwrite to put together an essay of copied text fragments due to their inability to fully understand the texts. At the other end of the spectrum, contract essay writing represents an extreme example of the externalisation of responsibility in the marketised environment where the breakdown in communication has become so severe that teachers cannot be sure their students have written the work. This is the ultimate evidence of the insidious nature of competition and the accompanying anomie, pathologies and alienation of these young people in a lifeworld colonised by the system. The danger in addressing these issues through systemic means, such as through surveillance and a rigid content-based curriculum, is that without trusting students with the responsibility, time and freedom to socialise into the lifeworld, colonization will result from the instrumental and strategic approach of the system, as Habermas notes:

Socialization in schools is broken up into a mosaic of legally contestable administrative acts...This has to endanger the pedagogical freedom and initiative of the teacher. The compulsion toward litigation-proof certainty of grades and the over-regulation of the curriculum lead to such phenomena as depersonalization, inhibition of innovation, breakdown of responsibility, immobility and, so forth.

(Habermas, 1987, pp. 371–372)

The self-selecting sample of participants in this study, however, do offer hope despite the anomie they experience and pressure they are under. Even if starting from a highly

instrumental approach to education, the participants, particularly after returning to China, perceived deep meaning in the experience of studying in the UK. The impact of their exposure to the intersubjective approach to knowledge in that context, and the integrity necessary to maintain and be part of that lifeworld, are valuable in their lives both in and beyond academia.

8.3 Recommendations for policy and practice.

As Habermas's long term translator and colleague, Thomas McCarthy (1993) notes, TCA is highly valuable in that "we may at least recognise when we are compromising [the Lifeworld] and why" (p.172). It has become very apparent in the course of research that the academic lifeworld is being compromised by the systems' attempt to integrate large numbers of Chinese students onto programmes. The identification of this lifeworld/system distinction does not entail removing the system but identifying ways it can support integration into the lifeworld and where there is the danger of distorted communication and colonisation. The very fact that the students and staff express resistance to this colonisation is evidence of hope in rescuing the lifeworld from the instrumental approach. There is, however, no simple way to do this. Due to the critical theory at the foundation of Habermas's theory and also the idealistic nature of academic integrity, it is necessary to consider the ideal solutions in addition to more realistic measures for UK and Chinese higher education.

8.3.1 UK Context

In the UK it appears that egalitarian and democratic ideals behind the massification and internationalisation of higher education have been colonised by the instrumental logic of marketization, placing Chinese students in the role of cash cows. The honest recommendation, in the idealistic interest of academic integrity, is to advocate for a sector wide reflection upon the short termism of financial reliance on this group of

students under the guise of internationalisation. Is the exploitation of Chinese students' desire to come to the UK worth the long term reputational risk without a robust educational model to support the students or a sustainable economic plan if this income stream suddenly dries up (as recently happened with Indian students)? Bearing in mind the problem of the scalability of programmes to accommodate such a large number of students from a dependent learning environment, a reduction in the number of Chinese students on particular courses would not only be beneficial for the staff teaching them but also for the students who study on these courses. Universities could achieve this through reviewing entrance requirements beyond simply having an IELTS test and sufficient funds to study in the UK. This would entail more selective entrance requirements, creating competition for quality places, rather than accepting all students which agents send their way and then pushing them through once they have been accepted.

A second consideration would be to review the length of the UK Masters programmes for international students. If the internationalisation of curriculum is valued, as opposed to deficit or accommodation models (Ryan and Louie, 2007), taking into account the educational background and epistemological starting point of students would provide more time for adjustment. In addition to one-year Masters, an eighteen month or two-year International Masters with integrated English language and cultural integration support, and with time for non-assessed integration, regional travel or work built-in would provide students with a better transition and also match their motivations for studying abroad. As the one-year Masters degree is a key marketing point for UK programmes, lengthening the programmes would lead to a natural decrease in numbers. As the experience with Chinese learners from US and Australian higher education shows, a two-year Masters programme, however, may not solve all the problems this population of students has with academic integrity, so further measures would be necessary.

For many staff and students, however, the larger socio-economic and political contexts of higher education are out of their sphere of influence. Unfortunately, the staff most affected by teaching Chinese students are the ones most reliant upon them. They are therefore in a catch 22 situation in that if many of these students do not come to the UK, the staff do not have a job. When faced with a homogenous cohort of students who are used to the monologic approach dependent on the teachers' guidance and with limited motivation to study or experience of studying the subject, supporting their transition is a delicate balance. In terms of their own academic integrity, the staff must reflect on their own exploitation if they are understaffed and unable to support their students and act accordingly. They have a choice either to leave or insist on the enforcement of academic standards through continuing to identify academic misconduct and supporting students to remedy their problems with a pedagogic rather than punitive approach, or by ultimately failing the students. In this way, the system can support the lifeworld, help maintain standards and have a voice in the increase in the size of courses, rather than simply being dictated to by the whims of the profit/debt financial whims of their institution.

Whether or not Masters programmes are 1 or 2 years, the findings of the research indicate that transitioning Chinese students into UK universities requires careful scaffolding of the programmes and genuine opportunities for meaningful communication with staff and fellow students from all backgrounds. There is the tendency of the systems approach to academic integrity with a focus on the strategic avoidance of plagiarism, how to cite and reference appropriately and other associated study skills. This is coupled with a content heavy curriculum which, if these students are not appropriately transitioned, leads students to be overwhelmed by the amount of information. An alternative or complementary approach may be to scaffold in more informal formative non-academic work which makes explicit the epistemological process which students go

through in university. Asking students to reflect on their educational background and future aspirations would be educational for staff and students as they would investigate and make explicit the epistemological challenges behind the practical obstacles they face. It is only within this context that students may understand why plagiarism is wrong and why referencing is necessary, at the same time supporting staff to understand the process students are going through. It would also concentrate on what students should be doing rather than what they should not be doing, as recommended by Bretag et al. (2014). This would also concentrate on a more communicative approach to socialisation into the academic lifeworld rather than a simply systemic approach. By addressing academic integrity in this way higher education would be of benefit to all students and provide opportunities for intercultural communication.

8.3.2 Chinese Context

Top Chinese universities are experiencing success and moving up the world rankings, yet their success is in large part due to attracting returnee scholars to China rather than home grown academic talent (Yang, 2016). Academic integrity in China still, however, remains problematic (Hu and Sun, 2017). As I pointed out in my previous work (Gow, 2014), which was highlighted as highly significant by Hu and Sun (2017) in their review of academic misconduct policies at 8 Chinese universities:

“plagiarism and the Chinese equivalents are dependent on the approach to knowledge, dominant forms of assessment and enforcement of academic integrity within the different educational contexts” (Gow 2014, p.80).

It appears that, rather than returnee scholars acting as a cultural bridge for academic integrity or plagiarism as a lone concept, Chinese students and scholars abroad returning home should act to reproduce of the academic lifeworld in China with the associated systems of authorship and citation. This involves this relativist, contextual

and intersubjective epistemological approach. This approach is embedded in the intersubjective discourse which manifests itself in the use of academic writing as a key form of assessment.

The key recommendation for Chinese education is that the system must support meaningful communication between students and staff through discourse and, particularly, through writing. This intersubjective communication need not be in English, China should endeavour to develop academic discourse and rhetoric in their native language, thus uncoupling the complex processes of epistemological and linguistic development. The development and integration of Chinese rhetoric into the international academic discourse would be beneficial in terms of internationalisation. As Hayhoe's (1988) accounts of pre-Tiananmen incident Chinese academia evidence, the academic lifeworld can be reproduced in China, however requires academic freedom and integrity to do so. In this way, Chinese education faces a similar problem to the international institutions accommodating Chinese students, albeit on a monumental scale and with significant risks. The question is how to address the "paradoxical circular relation between approach to learning and motivation to learn" (Marton and Säljö, 2005, p.55) and transitioning students and teaching staff in to this approach to knowledge.

Decolonisation of the academic lifeworld would need to involve reigning in the systemic influences of authoritarian ideology and also the focus on rampant economic growth. This echoes Zhao's (2014) critique of the *prisoner's dilemma* of competitive high stakes testing in China. It was obvious from the participants' perceptions of their Chinese educational experience that this prisoner's dilemma was highly alienating and the cause of their communicative issues. Indeed, this is part of the broader dilemma of modernity in the People's Republic of China, whether cultural change can keep pace with rapid economic development. The question for Chinese universities is whether there is the desire or even need to do reform education. On the one hand China may be developing

a successful model of state lead, technocratic, authoritarian capitalism which has no need for individual democracy, autonomy of their citizens and the associated form of higher education, particularly in the with plurality of views in the social sciences and humanities. Historical precedence, on the other hand, shows that the nature of the epistemological approach to knowledge necessary for modern development requires academic freedom and integrity, or the resulting colonisation of the lifeworld results in the collapse of the system as it becomes uncoupled from truth. Furthermore, in order to be a global hegemonic power, there will come a point when China catches-up with the Western science and then must lead rather than follow. A Habermasian analysis of this issue indicates that in order to do this, China would need to reproduce the academic lifeworld, albeit this could be supported by the particular characteristics of the Chinese system.

APPENDIX 1 - FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

Research Project: Mainland Chinese students' epistemological adaptation to studying in the UK within the context of academic integrity

April/May 2016

Stephen Gow, *University of York*

Focus Group/Interview Schedule – (adapted from Kreuger, 2002)

Introduction – *Explaining to the participants who I am, my research interest and experience in China. Aims to build a rapport with the students.*

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening

My name is Stephen Gow, I am a PhD candidate from the Department of Education at the University of York. I am interested in the experiences of Chinese students in the British University System and I hope you can help me with my research. It will hopefully be interesting for you to reflect on your time studying in the UK and the impact it has had on your life and career. Ultimately my research aims to help universities around the world to support Chinese students studying there and for Chinese universities to learn from the experiences of Chinese students when studying abroad.

I'd like to first to tell you a little bit about myself. I'm from Sheffield and have a Masters by research from the Institute of Education, University of London. I lived in China for 5 years, studying Chinese at Fudan University and then teaching English at Shanghai University and Tsinghua University. During my time there I got to know a bit about Chinese culture and had a great time teaching Chinese students and exploring the country. My parents used to live in Shanghai and Ningbo, and my brother, Mike and his Chinese wife, Penny, live in Suzhou with their son, Ezra. I am very interested in China and especially China's educational development, particularly the *Gaokao* and also the *keju*, and Chinese learning styles.

Our general topic is the adaptation of mainland Chinese students to UK universities, however we may discuss more specific topics along the way. You were selected for this group as you are all mainland Chinese people who have graduated for universities in the UK and as a result will have similar social and cultural backgrounds and also similar concerns and experiences.

Guidelines

There are no right or wrong answers, only differing points of view. I shall be recording the group discussion and making notes, so please try to speak one at a time. You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.

My role as a moderator will be to guide the discussion, please talk to each other and you may ask each other questions too, to help with the process.

The main language of the group is English. You may speak Chinese to each other if you wish and then translate what you have said, or if you cannot translate at the time, we can return to this issue by email when you have a satisfactory explanation.

The focus group will take a maximum of two hours. If you wish to take a break you may leave the room.

Your identities will be kept secret assuring anonymity, however to ensure anonymity you must also use discretion in discussing the activities of the group outside this room.

I have handed out name tags; please write your name clearly on them, you may use your real name or another name if you feel more comfortable. I shall anonymise all names later. The discussions in this focus group will be kept anonymous. The group's discussion may be used to develop further instruments in the future.

Please turn your mobile phones to silent and try not to use them, it is important to concentrate and create an interesting and thoughtful discussion.

Introductions – *Allow the members of the group to introduce each themselves (where and what they studied, where they work now) and establish if the group members know each other.*

Topics and Themes – *As recommended by Liamputtong (2011) for social science focus groups, I shall use a less rigid structure for the questions. Certain questions shall be raised explicitly however I hope to elicit the topics and themes from the group and also explore unexpected lines of inquiry.*

Sections –

- 1. Expectations, impressions and memories of the UK and studying at your university**
- 2. Study skills and educational expectations in China and the UK**
- 3. Research and the writing process**
- 4. Plagiarism & Academic Integrity**
- 5. Returning to China**
- 6. Teaching in China**

Section 1 – *Building a rapport and bringing the group into the context.*

- Why do Chinese students choose to study in the UK?
- How did you arrange your study abroad experience? Did you use an agent to help arrange your study abroad? How was this experience?
- Was studying in the UK what you expected?
- What were the biggest challenges Chinese students faced while living in the UK?
- How did your language improve when you were studying in the UK?
- Who did you mainly socialise with/study in the UK?
- What are your fondest memories of living in the UK?
- Looking back on this, what were the biggest differences between living in the UK and China?

Prompts: Role of parents, choice of subject, choice of university, memories, differences, independence, freedom.

Section 2 – *Getting more specific on studying in the UK and the differences with China*

- What are the biggest challenges Chinese students faced while studying in the UK?
- How did you overcome these challenges?
- Are there any differences between the way you studied in China and in the UK? If yes, what are they?
- Was language or culture the biggest challenge?

Prompts: Culture vs language debate, essays vs exams, creativity, criticality, individuality, Westernisation, Confucianism, academic communication.

Section 3 – *Moving on to writing essays*

- What is biggest challenge you faced when writing an essay in the UK?
- What are the similarities and differences from writing in a Chinese?
- Did you cite or reference work in a different manner?
- Did the sources (e.g. books, journals, websites etc.) you used differ between studying in the UK and China?
- What was the value of writing essays?
- Did you encounter proofreading services in the UK? If, yes, what did you think of these?

Prompts: Researching/finding sources, reading Chinese/English sources, length of assignments, citation and referencing, note-taking.

Section 4 – Hopefully the topic of writing will elicit references to plagiarism.

- What are the similarities or differences between plagiarism and academic integrity in China and here in the UK?
- Have you read about or did you experience Chinese students involved in plagiarism?
- Unfortunately, Chinese students represent a large percentages of plagiarism cases at universities in the UK? Why do you think this is and how do you think this could be prevented?
- Did you use Turnitin while you were in the UK? What were your impressions of Turnitin?
- Did you hear about essay writing services when studying in the UK? What was your impression/experience of these?

Prompts: Approach to truth in China/UK, study skills problems, criticality, independence.

Section 5 - Returning to China

- What was the impact of studying abroad on you?
- What do you think will be the impact of students studying abroad in general for China?
- What do you think British education could learn from Chinese education and what could Chinese education learn from British education and visa versa?
- What advice would you give to students looking to study abroad?

Prompts: Most valued skills, memorable experience, was it worth it?

Section 6 - Teaching in China? (Interviews with academics only)

- Has studying in the UK affected the way that you teach?
- What do you feel are the similarities and differences between Chinese academics who have studied in the UK and those who haven't?
- What do you believe are the differences in teaching style between China and the UK?
- Is plagiarism more problematic in China or the UK? Please explain your answer.

Conclusion

Using Kreuger's (2002) three step conclusion.

1. Summarize main discussion points with confirmation
2. Review purpose and ask if anything has been missed,
3. Thanks and dismissal –

I'd like to thank you all for taking part today. Remember that all your identities shall remain anonymous, however if you have any questions or feel uncomfortable about the discussions here today you may contact me. Thanks you.

END

Bibliography

- Frey, J. H., & Fontana, A. (1991). The group interview in social research. *The Social Science Journal*, 28(2), 175-187. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0362-3319\(91\)90003-M](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/0362-3319(91)90003-M)
- Krueger, R. A. (2002). Designing and conducting focus group interviews. *Unpublished manuscript. The University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota.*
- Liamputtong, P. (2011). *Focus group methodology: principle and practice*: Sage Publications Limited.

APPENDIX 2 – ETHICAL ISSUES AUDIT FORM



Education Ethics Committee Ethical Issues Audit Form

This questionnaire should be completed for each research study that you carry out as part of your degree. Once completed, please email this form to your supervisor. You should then discuss the form fully with your supervisor, who should approve the completed form. **You must not collect your data until you have had this form approved by your supervisor (and possibly others - your supervisor will guide you).**

Surname / Family Name:	Gow
First Name / Given Name:	Stephen
Programme:	PhD Education
Supervisor (of this research study):	Dr. John Issitt
Topic (or area) of the proposed research study:	
<p>This application is an amendment to research which was approved 18/03/2013. The main difference is the location of the data collection and that the participants are no longer students as they have now graduated. There have been slight amendments to the focus group/interview schedule to take into account the new context and participants.</p> <p>Researching Chinese Masters students’ epistemological development in relation to academic integrity.</p>	
Where the research will be conducted:	
<p>China, potentially in the following cities: Shanghai, Beijing, Nanjing Wuhan, Hangzhou & Suzhou. This will occur in May/June 2016</p>	
Methods that will be used to collect data:	
<p>Focus Groups and interviews depending on availability of participants and occupation of participants. Where a participant works in a university, an interview may be a more suitable option for a candid discussion of academic integrity and to protect confidentiality.</p>	
If you will be using human participants, how will you recruit them?	

The study uses criterion sampling and snowballing to gain participants. There are already a number of existing participants who will be contacted to take part in a final round of focus groups. These participants will be asked to find further participants who fit the criteria (Chinese students with UK Masters degrees) to take part. Finally, using the alumni associations of three UK institutions, a request for participants will be sent out.

All supervisors, please read *Ethical Approval Procedures: Students*.

Taught programme supervisors. Note: If the study involves children, vulnerable participants, sensitive topics, or an intervention into normal educational practice, this form must also be approved by the programme leader (or Programme Director if the supervisor is also the Programme Leader)

Research student supervisors. The application is a joint one by the research student and supervisor(s). It should be submitted to the TAP member for initial approval and then to the Higher Degrees Administrator who will seek a second opinion from a designated member of Education Ethics Committee.

All students: forms may also require review by the full Ethics Committee (see below).

First approval: by the supervisor of the research study (**taught students**); or TAP member (**research students**) (after reviewing the form):

Please select one of the following options.

I believe that this study, as planned, meets normal ethical standards. I have checked that any informed consent form a) addresses the points as listed in this document, and b) uses appropriate language for the intended audience(s).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
I am unsure if this study, as planned, meets normal ethical standards	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe that this study, as planned, does not meet normal ethical standards and requires some modification	<input type="checkbox"/>

Supervisor/TAP member's Name (please type):	John Issitt
Date:	12 April 2016

Taught student supervisors - If the study involves children, vulnerable participants, sensitive topics, or an intervention into normal educational

practice (see *Ethical Approval Procedures: Students*), please email this form for second approval to the Programme Leader (or Programme Director if the supervisor is also the Programme Leader). For this second approval, other documents may need to be sent in the same email e.g. the proposal (or a summary of it) and any informed consent and participant information sheets. If the study has none of the above characteristics, the supervisor should email this completed form to the Programme Administrator. This signals the end of the approval process and data collection can begin. If the study has none of the above characteristics, the supervisor should email this completed form to the Programme Administrator. This signals the end of the approval process and data collection can begin. The member of the EEC will notify the Programme Administrator only when the final outcome has been decided.

Second approval: by the Programme Leader; or Programme Director; or designated Ethics Committee member for research students:

Please select one of the following options:

I believe that this study, as planned, meets normal ethical standards. I have checked that any informed consent form a) addresses the points as listed in this document, and b) uses appropriate language for the intended audience(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am unsure if this study, as planned, meets normal ethical standards	<input type="checkbox"/>
I believe that this study, as planned, does not meet normal ethical standards and requires some modification	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Programme Leader; or Programme Director; or Ethics Committee member (please type):	
Date:	

The supervisor should now email this completed form to the Programme Administrator, unless approval is required by the full Ethics Committee (see below).

Approval required by the full Education Ethics Committee

If the application requires review by the full Education Ethics Committee, please select one of the following options then forward the application to the Research Administrator ().

	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>
The topic is sensitive or potentially distressing	<input type="checkbox"/>
The study involves vulnerable subjects	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other reason:	

Name of Programme Leader; or Programme Director; or TAP member (please type):	
Date:	

FOR COMPLETION BY THE STUDENT

Data sources

- 1 If your research involves collecting secondary data only **go to SECTION 2.**

- 2 If your research involves collecting data from people (e.g. by observing, testing, or teaching them, or from interviews or questionnaires) **go to SECTION 1.**

SECTION 1: For studies involving people

- 3 Is the amount of time you are asking research participants to give reasonable? **YES**
- 4 Is any disruption to their normal routines at an acceptable level? **YES**
- 5 Are any of the questions to be asked, or areas to be probed, likely to cause anxiety or distress to research participants? **YES**
- 6 Are all the data collection methods used necessary? **YES**
- 7 Are the data collection methods appropriate to the context and participants? **YES**
- 8 Will the research involve deception? **NO**
- 9 Will the research involve sensitive or potentially distressing topics? (The latter might include abuse, bereavement, bullying, drugs, ethnicity, gender, personal relationships, political views, religion, sex, violence. If there is lack of certainty about whether a topic is sensitive, advice should be sought from the Ethics Committee.) **YES**

If YES, what steps will you take to ensure that the methods and procedures are appropriate, not burdensome, and are sensitive to ethical considerations?

Discussions of plagiarism and cheating can be distressing if individuals have experience of these. I am careful to point out, especially in focus groups, that the focus group is about sharing experiences however it is the personal choice of the individual if they talk about their own experiences or talk more generally. I highlight that personal experiences can be couched in more hypothetical terms. I make sure to emphasise that the data will be anonymised and that members of the group should not discuss information disclosed outside the group. Furthermore, if people have disclosed information in the group or interview that they feel uncomfortable about, then they do have the right to withdraw from the study.

I have already carried out a number of Focus Groups on this topic and have yet to have any problems where students have felt uncomfortable. The new focus groups will involve graduates, so the

stress will not be as high as discussing the topic with current students.

- 10 Does your research involve collecting data from vulnerable or high risk groups? (The latter might include participants who are asylum seekers, unemployed, homeless, looked after children, victims or perpetrators of abuse, or those who have special educational needs. If there is a lack of certainty about whether participants are vulnerable or high risk, advice should be sought from the Ethics Committee. Please note, children with none of the above characteristics are not necessarily vulnerable, though approval for your project must be given by at least two members of staff; see above). NO

If YES, what steps will you take to ensure that the methods and procedures are appropriate, not burdensome, and are sensitive to ethical considerations?

- 11 Are the research participants under 16 years of age?
If NO, go to question 12.

If YES, and you intend to interact with the children, do you intend to ensure that another adult is present during all such interactions?

If NO, please explain, for example:

i) This would seriously compromise the validity of the research because [*provide reason*]

ii) I have/will have a full Disclosure and Barring Service check (formerly Criminal Records Bureau check).

iii) Other reasons:

Payment to participants

- 12 *If research participants are to receive reimbursement of expenses or any other incentives, including financial, before or after the study, please give*

details. You should indicate what they will receive and, briefly, the basis on which this was decided.

I may have to reimburse travel expenses for individuals if they live in large cities (such as Shanghai/Beijing) but will try to locate the focus groups in areas which are convenient for participants. I will also provide refreshments.

It is often considered good practice to consider what the researcher might offer the participants, in the spirit of reciprocity. Some ideas of what this might be include: materials at the end of the study, a workshop summarising the results of the study, a delayed treatment/intervention at the end of the study, an indication about where the findings might be accessed at a later date, a letter or token of thanks. Please ensure that you have considered the potential for reciprocity in your research.

If your study involves an INTERVENTION i.e. a change to normal practice made for the purposes of the research, go to question 13 (this does not include 'laboratory style' studies i.e. where ALL participation is voluntary):

If your study does not involve an intervention, go to question 20.

- 13 Is the extent of the change within the range of changes that teachers (or equivalent) would normally be able to make within their own discretion?
- 14 Will the change be fully discussed with those directly involved (teachers, senior school managers, pupils, parents – as appropriate)?
- 15 Are you confident that *all* treatments (including comparison groups in multiple intervention studies) will potentially provide some educational benefit that is compatible with current educational aims in that particular context? (Note: This is *not* asking you to justify a non-active control i.e. continued normal practice)

Please **briefly** describe this / these benefit(s):

- 16 If you intend to have two or more groups, are you offering the control / comparison group an opportunity to have the experimental / innovative treatment at some later point (this can include making the materials available to the school or learners)?

If NO, please explain:

- 17 If you intend to have two or more groups of participants receiving different treatment, do the informed consent forms give this information?
- 18 If you are randomly assigning participants to different treatments, have you considered the ethical implications of this?
- 19 If you are randomly assigning participants to different treatments (including non-active controls), will the institution and participants (or parents where participants are under 16) be informed of this in advance of agreeing to participate?

If NO, please explain:

General protocol for working in institutions

- 20 Do you intend to conduct yourself, and advise your team to conduct themselves, in a professional manner as a representative of the University of York, respectful of the rules, demands and systems within the institution you are visiting? **YES**
- 21 If you intend to carry out research with children under 16, have you read and understood the Education Ethics Committee's *Guidance for Ethical Approval for Research in Schools*?

Informed consent

- 22 Have you prepared Informed Consent Form(s) which participants in the study will be asked to sign, and which are appropriate for different kinds of participants? **YES**

If YES, **please attach the informed consent form(s).**

If NO, please explain:

23 Please check the details on the informed consent form(s) match each one of your answers below. Does this informed consent form:

- a) inform participants in advance about what their involvement in the research study will entail? YES
- b) if there is a risk that participants may disclose information to you which you may feel morally or legally bound to pass on to relevant external bodies, have you included this within a confidentiality clause in your informed consent form? NO
- c) inform participants of the purpose of the research? YES
- d) inform participants of what will happen to the data they provide (how this will be stored, who will have access to it, whether and how individuals' identities will be protected during this process)? YES
- e) if there is a possibility that you may use some of the data publicly (e.g. in presentations or online), inform the participants how identifiable such data will be **and** give them the opportunity to decline such use of data? YES
- f) give the names and contact details (e.g. email) of at least two people to whom queries, concerns or complaints should be directed? One of these people should be on the Education Ethics Committee (please use education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk) and not involved with the research. YES
- g) in studies involving interviews or focus groups, inform participants that they will be given an opportunity to comment on your *written record* of the event? YES

If NO, have you made this clear this on your consent form? YES

If NO, please explain why not:

Although the topic of academic integrity is sensitive, it is unlikely that illegal activity will be uncovered by the research. It is not the intention of the study to uncover retrospective acts of plagiarism and inform institutions that offences may have taken place. I feel mentioning this at the beginning of the

discussion will compromise my relationship with the participants. I do however advise students on their participation in the group not to overshare information and students understand that they can withdraw from the study if they do not feel comfortable with the information they have shared.

- h) inform participants how long the data is likely to be kept for? **YES**
- i) inform participants if the data could be used for future analysis and/or other purposes? **YES**
- j) inform participants they may withdraw from the study during data collection? **YES**
- k) provide a date/timescale by which participants will be able to withdraw their data and tell the participants how to do this? (NB. If your data is going to be completely anonymised, any withdrawal of data needs to happen before this.) **YES**
**NA if your data will be anonymous at point of collection*

If your answer was NO to any of the above, please explain here, indicating which item(s) you are referring to (a-j):

24 Who will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form? Please select all that apply:

CATEGORY	
Adult research participants	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Research participants under 16	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head/Senior leadership team member	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please explain)	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 25 In studies involving an **intervention** with under 16s, will you seek informed consent from parents?

If NO, please explain:

If YES, please delete to indicate whether this is 'opt-in' or 'opt-out'
If 'opt-out', please explain why 'opt-in' is not being offered:

SECTION 2

Data Storage, Analysis, Management and Protection

- 26 I am accessing data from a non-publicly available source (regardless of whether the data is identifiable) e.g. pupil data held by a school or local authority, learners' work. NO

If YES, I have obtained written permission, via an informed consent document, from a figure of authority who is responsible for holding the data. This informed consent a) acknowledges responsibility for releasing the data and b) confirms that releasing the data does not violate any informed consents or implicit agreements at the point the data was initially gathered.

- 27 I have read and understood the Education Ethics Committee's *Guidance on Data Storage and Protection* YES

- 28 I will keep any data appropriately secure (e.g. in a locked cabinet), maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (e.g. identifiers will be encoded and the code available to as few people as possible) where possible. YES

- 29 If your data can be traced to identifiable participants:
a) who will be able to access your data?

Only I will have access to the data where the participants are identifiable.

b) approximately how long will you need to keep it in this identifiable format?

3 months while I transcribe and anonymise the data.

30 If working in collaboration with other colleagues, students, or if under someone's supervision, please discuss and complete the following:

We have agreed:

- a) [Insert name(s)] will be responsible for keeping and storing the data
- b) [Insert name(s)] will have access to the data
- c) [Insert name(s)] will have the rights to publish using the data

Reporting your research

31 In any reports that you write about your research, will you do everything possible to ensure that the identity of any individual research participant, or the institution which they attend or work for, cannot be deduced by a reader? YES

If NO please explain:

Conflict of interests

32 If the Principal Investigator or any other key investigators or collaborators have any direct personal involvement in the organisation sponsoring or funding the research that may give rise to a possible conflict of interest, please give details:

Potential ethical problems as your research progresses

33 If you see any potential problems arising during the course of the research, please give details here and describe how you plan to deal with them:

Academic integrity is a sensitive issue and there is a danger that past instances of plagiarism may be discussed. I am careful to emphasise the aims of the research for the participants and highlight that uncovering past instances of plagiarism is not the aim. If there is a case where a participant has shared information they are not comfortable with, they have the right to contact me and withdraw from

the research or have comments struck from the record. I am experienced in carrying out research on this topic in China and the UK and am confident that any risks are outweighed by the benefits of the research and precautions have been taken to ensure participants are comfortable and confidentiality is assured.

Student's Name (please type):	Stephen Gow
Date:	01 April 2016

Please email this form to your supervisor. They must approve it, and send it to the Programme Administrator by email.

NOTE ON IMPLEMENTING THE PROCEDURES APPROVED HERE:

If your plans change as you carry out the research study, you should discuss any changes you make with your supervisor. If the changes are significant, your supervisor may advise you to complete a new 'Ethical issues audit' form.

For Taught Masters students, on submitting your MA dissertation to the programme administrator, you will be asked to sign to indicate that your research did not deviate significantly from the procedures you have outlined above.

For Research Students (MA by Research, MPhil, PhD), once your data collection is over, you must write an email to your supervisor to confirm that your research did not deviate significantly from the procedures you have outlined above.

APPENDIX 3 – INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOCUS GROUPS (EXAMPLE)

Project title: Mainland Chinese students’ epistemological adaptation to studying in the UK within the context of academic integrity

Project aim: The aim of the project is to understand the writing and research experiences of Chinese graduates when studying in the UK in the context of academic integrity. The research hopes to inform effective training and support for staff and students in future. The focus group will explore the general study abroad experience and perceived impact on the lives and careers of Chinese nationals. Specific attention shall be paid to teaching style, essay writing, research practice, note taking, source use, citation and academic integrity.

Research Method: Focus Group

You are asked to take part in a focus group discussion that will last no more than 2 hours. In the focus group you are asked to, and are understood to be speaking from, personal experience and not to be representing the views of all Chinese graduates of UK universities. The focus groups will follow a set of questions and give you the opportunity to share more general opinions and observations on the subject. Our discussion may cover some sensitive areas, you do not have to discuss anything you are not comfortable with. After the focus group I shall email you a summary of the focus group and you will be asked to comment on what we have discussed. Your participation in the focus groups is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw from the research at any time. If you do so, any data you have provided will be destroyed.

With your permission, the focus groups will be audio recorded. The audio files from the focus groups will be securely stored in a password protected research file. The audio recordings shall be transcribed and all identifiable people/places will be anonymised to assure confidentiality. The transcripts will be kept in a password protected research file and all original informed consent forms will be kept in a secure cabinet. All files shall be backed-up on a password secured USB in separate secure location from the originals. Only Stephen Gow will have access to these secure files. Anonymised data from this project will be stored for 5 years in line with University of York policy. Data from individuals may be presented in publication anonymously, using assumed names and places to protect the participants’ identities.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research you can raise these with Stephen Gow (stephen.gow@york.ac.uk) or the Chair of Education Ethics Committee at the University of York (education-research-administrator@york.ac.uk).

Researcher: Stephen Gow _____ **Date:** _____

Informed Consent Form

Full title of Project: Mainland Chinese students' epistemological adaptation to studying in the UK within the context of academic integrity

Stephen Gow, PhD Student, Department of Education, University of York.

stephen.gow@york.ac.uk

What I am agreeing to		Initial
1	I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.	
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.	
3	I agree to the interview / focus group being audio recorded	
4	I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications	
5	I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.	
6	I understand that anonymised data from this project will be stored for 5 years.	

Name of Participant _____

Date _____

Signature _____

Subject of Degree _____

Year(s) you studied in the UK (e.g. 2010-2011) _____

Your email address for further information _____

APPENDIX 4 – REVISED FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Academic writing, Plagiarism, Turnitin & Chinese Students

Focus Group Schedule – (adapted from Kreuger, 2002)

Introduction – *Explaining to the participants who I am, my research interest and experience in China. Aims to build a rapport with the students.*

Good Morning/Afternoon

My name is Stephen Gow, I am a PhD candidate from the Department of Education at the University of York. I am interested in the experiences of Chinese students in the British University System and I hope you can help me with my research, which may help you and future Chinese students in getting the most out of your time here in the UK.

I'd like to first to tell you a little bit about myself. I'm from Sheffield and have a Masters by research from the Institute of Education, University of London. I lived in China for 5 years, studying Chinese at Fudan University and then teaching English at SILC, Shanghai University and Tsinghua University. During my time there I got to know a bit about Chinese culture and had a great time teaching Chinese students and exploring the country. My parents live in Shanghai, on Nanjing Road, and my brother, Mike and his Chinese wife, Penny, live in Suzhou. I am very interested in China and especially China's educational development, particularly the *Gaokao* and also the keju, and Chinese learning styles.

Our general topic is the adaptation of mainland Chinese students to UK universities, however we may discuss more specific topics along the way. You were selected for this group as you are all mainland Chinese students studying in the UK and as a result will have similar social and cultural backgrounds and also similar concerns and experiences.

Guidelines

There are no right or wrong answers, only differing points of view. I shall be recording the group discussion and making notes, so please try to speak one at a time. You don't need to agree with others, but you must listen respectfully as others share their views.

My role as a moderator will be to guide the discussion, please talk to each other.

The main language of the group is English. You may speak Chinese to each other if you wish and then translate what you have said, or if you cannot translate at the time, we can return to this issue by email when you have a satisfactory explanation.

The focus group will take a maximum of two hours.

Your identities will be kept secret assuring anonymity, however to ensure anonymity you must also use discretion in discussing the activities of the group outside this room. I have handed out name tags; please write your name clearly on them, you may use your real name or another name if you feel more comfortable. The discussions in this focus group will be kept anonymous and all information is kept private.

Please turn your mobile phones to silent and try not to use them, it is important to concentrate and create an interesting and thoughtful discussion.

Introductions – Allow the members of the group to introduce each themselves and establish if the group members know each other.

Topics and Themes – As recommended by Liamputtong (2011) for social science focus groups, I shall use a less rigid structure for the questions. Certain questions shall be raised explicitly however I hope to elicit the topics and themes from the group and also explore unexpected lines of inquiry.

1. Expectations and impressions of the UK and the university
2. Study skills and educational expectations in China and the UK
3. The Writing Process
4. Plagiarism
5. Turnitin – impressions and use
6. Proof-readers & Essay Writing Services

Schedule

Section 1 (10mins)

- Why do Chinese students choose to study in the UK?
- Is studying in the UK what you expected?
- What are the biggest challenges Chinese students face while living here?

Section 2 (10mins)

- What are the biggest challenges Chinese students face while studying here?
- How have you overcome these challenges? Ask for examples.
- Are there any differences between the way you are assessed in China and in the UK?
- If yes, what are they? And does this change the way you study?

Section 3 (45mins)

- What is biggest challenge you face when writing an essay here in the UK?
- Is language or culture a bigger problem when writing?
- How and where do you search for sources, research papers? (Google, Baidu, Chinese databases)
- Has the way you search for papers changed during your time in the UK?
- How do you decide which papers to read? (abstracts, in the coursebook, recommendations)
- How do you take notes from these papers? (Copy and paste, handwritten, paraphrase into a word doc)

- Which sections of the papers do you usually take notes from (intro, methods, conclusion?)
- Do you find it easy to form opinions about the papers you are reading?
- What role does a dictionary (Chinese-English/English-English) or translator (e.g. Google translate) play in your writing and researching?
- Do you ever use ideas or information from Chinese research papers? If yes, how do you cite them?
- What strategies do you use to paraphrase texts?
- How do you decide what to paraphrase and what to quote?

Section 4 (30mins)

- Have you completed the Academic Integrity Tutorial? What do you think of it?
- What are the similarities or differences between plagiarism and academic integrity in China and here in the UK?
- Have you read about Chinese students involved in plagiarism?
- Why do Chinese students represent such a large percentage of plagiarism cases at the university?

Section 5 (20mins)

- What do you think of Turnitin?
- Do you use Turnitin?
- Why/Why not?
- How do you use Turnitin?
- At what stage of the writing process do you use Turnitin?

Section 6 (15mins)

- Have you heard of proof-readers or essay writing services?
- How wide spread do you believe the use of essay writing services are amongst students here at the university?
- Why do students use these services?
- What do you think about these services?

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