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**Talking about International Student  
Mobility (ISM) through the Voices of  
Individual British Students in China and  
Chinese Students in the UK**

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**A thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
of Manchester Metropolitan University for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **Abstract:**

In the context of globalization and internationalization of higher education, my research explores International Student Mobility (ISM) through the lens of the everyday life and study experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. Central to the discussion are the results of thematic analysis and associated semi-structured interviews conducted with 10 British students and 10 Chinese students. The results suggest that, first of all, education mobility should not be confined to a framework that considers it as a separate life episode. Partaking in international education is a life trajectory embedded in students' past experiences and future expectations. Different students therefore make sense of their education mobility experiences based on their different features. In addition, even though individual students' mobility experiences differ from each other, there also exists some shared experiences for the 10 British participants and 10 Chinese participants respectively. These shared experiences reveal how students use their affirmative agendas actively and creatively to expand life spaces and search for more possibilities in host countries. Furthermore, based on the identification of ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China, my research makes better sense of individual students' experiences in these contexts by presenting the interminglements between individual experiences and ISM-associated policy and practice contexts. Apart from these, my research also explores new possibilities of researching ISM by combining some traditional qualitative research methods with Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, and Koro-Ljungberg's new thinking of data.

## **Key words:**

International Student Mobility (ISM), Individual experience, policy and practice contexts, Method and methodology of researching ISM

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# **Talking about International Student Mobility (ISM) through the Voices of Individual British Students in China and Chinese Students in the UK**

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The focus of my research is an exploration of the everyday life and study experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. As a Chinese student studying in the UK, I witness the more frequent education cooperation between the UK and China. On the one hand, I feel that some of the international student mobility associated literature fails to represent me and my personal transnational life and study experiences. On the other hand, in 2018 there were a total of 492,185 international students studying in China, marking an increase of 0.62% compared to 2017 (MoE, 2019). It strikes me that regardless of the increasing number of international students studying in China, there is an obvious lack of literature focusing on the student mobility from traditional sending countries to China generally, British students in China particularly. Therefore, my research is an individual-oriented project aims to gain better understandings of the transnational experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. However, the orientation of this research does not mean that I only explore international student mobility from a personal perspective. Considering that both my research and my research participants' transnational practices, were conducted within the landscape of globalization, the profound influence it exerts on higher education, is made manifest in strategies and practices of internationalization of higher education, as well as the consequent increase in international student mobility. An exploration of the wider international student mobility associated policy and practice contexts helps to make better sense of individual students' experiences. In this chapter, I first give a brief introduction about globalization, internationalization of higher education, as well as on international student mobility. I especially focus on how I approach International Student Mobility, with an emphasis on how this is a difficult and complex concept. In addition, I announce the significance of this research in a context of the more and more frequent cooperation between the UK and China education systems. Following this, I outline the research purposes and questions. At the end of this chapter, I provide an outline of the structure for this thesis.

### **1.1 What are Globalization, Internationalization of Higher Education, as well as International Student Mobility?**

Globalization is affecting higher education worldwide (Koirala-Azad & Blundell, 2011). Internationalization of Higher Education (IHE), which can be seen as one of the ways a nation responds to globalization, refers to 'the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight, 2003:2). IHE embraces a variety of approaches: from research and



knowledge exchange; from staff experience to international student recruitment and transnational education (TNE), as well as in international student mobility (ISM) (Kelo et al, 2006; Botas & Huisman, 2013). 'International students constitute a substantial and growing mobile population globally' (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015: 947). ISM has been examined within several disciplines such as geopolitical, migration, education and psychology studies (Nielsen, 2014). In the following part, these three concepts, as the context of my research, are introduced respectively.

### **1.1.1 Globalization and the Internationalization of Higher Education (IHE)**

Although a highly contested concept, globalization refers to 'a social condition characterized by the existence of global economic, political, cultural and environmental interconnections and flows that make many of the current existing borders and boundaries irrelevant' (Steger, 2003:7). There are multiple social discourses, political rhetoric as well as academic theories surrounding globalization. For example, Knight (2004:8) considered globalization as 'the flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, value [and] ideas ... across borders. Globalization affects each country in a different way due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities'. Ennew and Greenaway (2012) highlighted the great degree of interconnectedness and interdependency between and beyond nations brought about by globalization. They also identified some of the key features of this process which include 'the blurring of national boundaries, the remaking of identities and the crossnational integration of economic, social and cultural activities' (p. 2). Phillips and Schweisfurth (2014) classified globalization into three categories which are: economic globalization, political globalization and cultural globalization. To be more specific, economic globalization refers to the emerging global economic networks that various nations are differentially involved in. Political globalization reflects the changing role of the nation state and of particular nations as they build complex relations with others and/or as they join larger units with other nations, like those classifications of globalization outlined above. Cultural globalization is manifested in multiple and complex ways including in changing cultural identities through different forms of transnational mobility via migration, tourism and international education, amongst others. It is argued that global mobility flows tie together the experiences of people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Gu & Schweisfurth, 2015). Moreover, both the increasing movement of human resources across national/cultural boundaries, and the fast-expanding global markets, require a more flexible, international based policy framework. From this point of view, these three categories of globalization are not mutually exclusive, they are actually happening simultaneously and interconnectedly.

Different nations have very different responses to globalization, and internationalisation associated with education is one of the forms of internationalisation that are entangled with all the three aspects of globalization: political, economic and cultural. 'This is as true in the newer developing countries as it was, and still is in different ways, for the established countries' (Porter & Vidovich, 2000:455). Salter and Tapper (1994) indicated that, state pressures on Higher Education (HE) in general, is a 'fact of life'. The view that education is both a producer of skilled human capital to national industries, and an important industry itself, is a longstanding one. During the last twenty years, HE's task environment has been changing dramatically. Under globalization, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are, on the one hand, offered more autonomy in terms of their organization and finance, whilst, on the

other, are required to take more social, political and economic responsibilities for their education products and processes (Vaira, 2004). According to this logic, they should not only continue to play their traditional roles in producing and transferring knowledge, but should also participate actively in those education markets which are global in their scope and in which competition and education reputation strengthening are key dynamics (Dickson, 2009). One manifestation of this marketization for HE is the education ranking systems, which range from national and global lists of the 'top universities' to subject guides that rate and rank HEI's according to academic discipline performance, and from the most desired education destinations to the most trusted education agencies who provide places or pathways for students to study. As Va Vught (2008) argues, these ranking systems have gradually constituted and reconstituted the global HE landscapes by repositioning some of the relatively new national players within this global education market, such as China and South Korea. These dynamics also force old players like the UK and the US to 'navigate a careful dance through this new world of reputation and enumeration' (Collins & Park, 2016:116).

In order for HEIs to successfully meet the challenges and survive this complex, dynamic and globalised environment, the conceptualization of Internationalization of Higher Education (IHE) arose in the late 20th century (Jones, 2015), and, since then, has become a strategic priority for HEIs, with varying emphasis in some particular countries and geographical areas. Jones (ibid) also argues that IHE is engaged in and operationalised for very different reasons and in very different ways within and across HEIs. Knight (2004) clarified that IHE can be distinguished at different levels: at the national level, IHE refers to those governmental-level policies that affect or are affected by an international dimension of education. At the institutional level, IHE can be differentiated as 'at home' or 'abroad'. The former focused on promoting, supporting and creating campus-based intercultural understandings, activities and climates amongst the student and staff body. The latter, on the other hand, is seen as focusing on a more outward facing strategy with an emphasis on the 'cross-border delivery of education to other countries through a variety of delivery modes (face to face, distance, e-learning) and through different administrative arrangements (franchises, twinning, branch campuses, etc)' (Knight, 2004: 20). Knight also indicated that two further terms -- cross-border education, and transnational education, have been used to describe an internationalization abroad-focussed strategy.

Following the development and expansion of IHE, the rising universality and significance attached to academic – and specifically student - mobility in the academic field deserves more critical analyses. 'Mobility is all the rage in the academy' today, 'in all corners of the globe' (Robertson, 2010:641). International Student Mobility (ISM) has always been conceived as one of the key elements of the international aspects of HE (Teichler, 2009). In light of the exponential growth of ISM, Verbik and Lasanowski (2007:1) stated that 'international student mobility has over the past 10-15 years become an increasingly important part of the global higher education landscape'. Wells (2014:19) also stated that 'with increasing numbers of students attending HEIs abroad, there is no question that International Student Mobility (ISM) is changing the global HE landscape'. Some of the most important rationales for ISM highlighted by policymakers are those associated with the economic and political benefits to HEIs and nations, as well as pointing out how ISM promotes cross-cultural knowledge of language and culture. In a related way, and from the

individual point of view, increasing language skills, developing cultural understanding and intercultural competence are some of the vital motivations for considering education mobility (Knight, 2004; Stier, 2004; Souto-Otero et al., 2013).

However, regardless the increasing significance of ISM, it is actually a complex concept from both practical and academic points of view. In the following section, the complexity around ISM is demonstrated from both the concepts of 'international student' and 'mobility'. The aim of the following section is not to provide an explicit and neat check list of research approach associated with ISM. As Tanesini (1994: 207) suggested, instead of seeing concepts as the descriptions of some coherent entities, it might be more helpful to see them as 'proposals about how we ought to proceed from here', which play the role as 'to influence the evolution of ongoing practices'. In the following section, I take a critical look at existing literature in order to highlight how the often taken-for-granted term ISM, the 'international student' and the 'mobility' in ISM, are actually much more complex, ambiguous and conflating than it is obvious at first sight. An exploration of the conceptualisation of ISM also helps to understand the specificity and particularity around my research focus, British students in China and Chinese students in the UK, as a small part of ISM.

### **1.1.2 International Student Mobility (ISM)**

As with many other concepts arising from theory and practice, ISM itself is not unproblematic. Contradictions and ambiguities exist in both component parts of ISM: 'international student' and 'mobility' with some of these complexities being addressed below. The concept of 'international student' is very complex. According to Bista and his colleagues (2018), scholars in the education domain have gradually adopted a nation-based, visa-based or payment-based definition of and system for classifying international students. For example, Shapiro et al (2014: 2) noted that an international student is 'a student who moves to another country (the host country) for the purpose of pursuing tertiary or higher education e.g., college or university'. The definition proposed by UNESCO (2015), refers to international students as 'students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin'. In the Australian government's policy, international students are also labelled as being 'full-fee paying' and 'on a student visa' (Bista et al., 2018:3). The figure of the international student as 'Other' emerges from these definitions and is based on each nation's political and economic interests in shaping internationalisation strategies and practices. As Merrick (2013) argues, the multiple and competing definitions of 'international student' nonetheless has the effect of constructing two distinct categories of student: on group of 'home students' and another group of 'international students'. In setting up this distinction through a series of largely geographical and political citizenship criteria, both groups tend to be seen as discrete, and are often homogenised within their group.

With regard to mobility, students undertake different types of mobility and this adds to the complexity in interpreting ISM as well. Gargano (2009:338) identified three categories of mobile students: those '...who study abroad for a semester...'; those '...who pursue short-term educational sojourns...'; and those who are '... degree-seeking students...'. De Wit (2012) made reference to 'degree mobility' and 'credit mobility' students within and beyond the EU, as well as 'short-term' and 'credit-seeking mobility', commonly known as 'study

abroad' in the US. Larsen (2016) also pointed out that there are a variety of terms being used to distinguish different student mobility schemes, such as credit mobility (short-term study abroad) and/or diploma or degree mobility which results in the acquisition of a final qualification, and/or educational immigration. Previous analyses of the available literature and data suggests that, when addressing ISM, apart from what has been discussed above, some other issues need to be clarified, for example, if mobility is only for study or study-related purposes such as work-based internship and, more specifically for language training (Teichler, 2017).

ISM may be an ambiguous concept but its impact can be deep. Different understandings and conceptualization of ISM expand the possibilities of thinking and utilising it in both social practice and academic research. From the policy and practice context point of view, ISM is an important phenomenon for both sending and host countries. Student mobility between two countries not only provides tangible economic effects, but also fosters strong academic and cultural links (Amendola & Restaino, 2017). Some commentators argued that the UK and China hold slightly different goals and ambitions in promoting international student mobility. Limited studies have shown that the Chinese government tends to put less emphasis on promoting outward than promoting inward mobility (Shao, 2006). Over the last ten years, the number of international students studying in China has grown faster than any other leading destination -- at an average growth rate of 10% a year since 2006 (Nolan, 2016). 'China has implemented an international education policy since 2000 which includes aggressive plans to attract international students to China' (Altbach, 2009:18). In the UK, apart from maintaining and expanding its territory in the global education market, the government also actively invests in promoting short-term outward ISM. The UK Strategy for Outward Mobility, which was issued by the British Council, has developed a strategy that includes setting objectives such as to 'promote the Benefits of Study and Work Abroad; Build Capacity in UK Higher Education to Facilitate Outward Mobility; Address Financial and Institutional Barriers to Outward and so on' (Newman & Graham, 2013:5). At the same time, from the individual student perspective, internationally mobile students have their own agendas when deciding and planning educational mobility. Motivations for studying abroad include, preparing for competition in future global labor markets, being global citizens who can understand the interconnections between people, institutions, and cultures (Wynveen et al., 2012). Internationally mobile students are the practitioners who conduct intercultural interaction, and deal with various challenges in new settings. Therefore, my research is an individual orientated research. In my research, I listened to the voices of single individual students who actually participated in international education experiences and through those experiences, conducted transnational practices every day. I also present a combination of my close reading of four policy documents associated with ISM in the UK and China (two documents from the UK and two from China). This policy reading not only reveals some the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in these two countries, but also helps to make better sense of student's daily experience in these contexts.

## **1.2 Significance of My Research**

In respect of the UK, there is a potential for re-thinking globalization after Brexit, with mounting calls by and of the government to deepen international relationships beyond the

EU. From this post-Brexit perspective, China is viewed as a prime target for future trade with intensified efforts to strengthen the Sino-UK-relationship and encourage more cooperation between the two countries in different areas, including for instance, in higher education. As a developmental strategy in the global market for higher education, the UK-China education alliance has gained increasing significance in relation to the cooperation between these two countries (Chan, 2004; Li et al., 2014). The British Council has launched a new UK-wide campaign to encourage and support student mobility to China, known as 'Generation UK' (British Council, 2013). This campaign aimed to grow the number of British students traveling to China to 15,000 by 2016, to take part in one-year university scholarships or two-month internships with Chinese businesses (Paton, 2013). Further, at the Workshop on Quality Assurance for UK-China Transnational education in Beijing on 8 March 2016, a statement of principles was developed to promote student mobility and enhance the quality of transnational education programmes between these two countries. Principles agreed included regular data sharing, practice and information sharing, inter-agency cooperation enhancement. All participant parties committed to following these agreed principles when establishing transnational education programmes (Bothwell, 2016). On the one hand, since Generation-UK was launched, more than 55,000 young Brits participated in the programme. In 2018 approximately 15,000 young Brits had access to study or work experience in China (Civinini, 2019). On the other hand, at 2017, UK universities have been involved in 23% of all Chinese-foreign joint programmes conferring in-country bachelor's degree level and above through foreign providers (British Council & China Education Association for International Exchange, 2017). The recent tensions between China and the US are further benefitting British universities. Applications from Chinese students to study in the UK have gone up 30% since 2018 (Weale, 2019).

With the increasing education cooperation and student mobility between the UK and China, as well as the urgent calls for practical guides, research addressing both British and Chinese students' transnational practice in each other's country is both significant and timely. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the daily transnational practices of the participants of the Generation UK programme and Chinese students in the UK. The research will simultaneously attend to, the connections between such individual practices and the policy and practice contexts within which such practices occurs. As Brooks and Waters (2011) indicated, the power relations that promote and support student mobility provide opportunities for international students, whereas what different individuals are able to do with these opportunities provides another set of questions. They concluded, perhaps inevitably, that further research is needed 'to understand how mobile students fit into the larger picture of the transformation in the spaces of higher education' (172). I hope that my study can offer insights into the activities students create as part of their mobility experience, as well as how they explore new ways of being against the wider backgrounds of globalization and internationalization of higher education.

### **1.3 Aims of My Research**

What needs to be clarified in advance is, the aims presented in the following section are the aims I started out with in the context of the argument I made above. My focus on these

aims developed differentially across the project and that this movement is part of what I will report in the thesis.

The aims of this research are:

- To gain a better understanding of international students' everyday life and study experience in host countries. To explore the resources students are able to draw on to negotiate their identities, social networks, as well as meaningful cultural repertoires in host countries.
- To identify some of the political, economic, cultural and practical contexts surrounding international student mobility in the UK and China.
- To compare the natures of the transnational practice between both participants of Generation-UK, and Chinese students in the UK.

## **1.4 Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis comprises 12 chapters. Following this introductory chapter is Chapter 2 which takes the form of a literature review about ISM from the individual perspective. In this chapter, extant ISM associated literature from the individual perspective is introduced from mainly four aspects. These aspects include, firstly, student's decision-making for studying overseas; Secondly, the various challenges which tend to be faced by international students in their everyday life; thirdly, how theories and frameworks about 'culture shock' and 'cultural adaptation' have been applied in mainstream ISM research; and finally, how the discipline of Geography has contributed significantly to more recent ISM research. Chapter 2 aims to give an indication of how ISM, as a rich but also difficult topic to be made sense of – has been conceptualised and treated in a number of academic disciplines. However, in the chapter I also discuss how my research is inspired by especially the contributions made by some of the research in Geographers. Even though this influence was not there from the start of my project, it gradually changed my way of thinking partaking in transnational education, from seeing it as a separate life episode with clear starting and ending points, to consider it as being embedded with individual student's past life experiences and future expectations.

Chapter 3 reviews academic and practice literature at a more macro-level. It includes a combination of the literature that addresses of ISM at the institutional/ (inter)national level, and explores a small number of the myriad policy and practice contexts of ISM specifically in the UK and China. As a way of helping with my exploration here, two of Shield's (2013) three theoretical streams about globalisation ('neoliberalism' and 'world culture') are introduced in this chapter. Based on these two streams, I focus on how different rationales of IHE and ISM generated by the governments of these two countries, as well as on how different foci and emphases are put on the practices of IHE and ISM in these two countries. Chapter 3 aims to identify and highlight some of the policy and practice contexts around ISM in the UK and China. It also sets up a basis for the later discussion in Chapter 11 about how individual research participants -- made sense of their experiences within these contexts. It helps me,

as a researcher, to make sense of the data that my project produces, as well as to extend and expand my explorations of ISM.

Chapter 4 and 5 are the method and methodology chapters respectively. In Chapter 4, I focus on the traditional qualitative methods utilised in my research which are, interview, transcription, thematic analysis, as well as translation. As dual language, face-to-face interviews form the basis of the data collection strategy in my research exploring the experiences of ISM, the application of traditional qualitative methods helps me to gain a better understanding of the lived reality of my 20 participants, of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. In Chapter 5, I disturb the traditional qualitative research bases of this approach. This desire of disturbing came initially from my thinking about what is language? What kind of role my participants' utterances made in my understanding of their life experiences? How do I make sense of their talking through me conducting the thematic analysis? These disturbances include: a Deleuzian understandings of language, Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about 'data' in (post)qualitative research, and the Deleuzian concepts of 'striated and smooth spaces', 'the becoming'. A Deleuzian understanding of language is invoked as it offers a theoretical framework to move my approach away from traditional, qualitative, language-based research practices that are based on memetic representationalism onto-epistemologies. This focus on understanding language through a Deleuzian lens also helps to explain my shifting researcher positionality across PhD. In addition, Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data which disrupts the more usual binary between the researcher and the researched, also inspired my (re)thinking about researcher positionality in relation to research on ISM. And finally, The Deleuzian concept of 'striated and smooth spaces', and 'becoming' are used in help to understand both how my thinking about ISM shifted through my PhD journey, and how this thesis presents this journey.

Chapter 6 to Chapter 11 are analyses and discussions chapters. Individual portraits of the 20 participants of this research are represented in Chapter 6 (10 British participants) and Chapter 8 (10 Chinese participants). These two chapters aim to show how participating in international education, being an international student, being in mobility, contains different meanings for different individuals; how individuals' past life experiences and future expectations are simultaneously embedded in their current studying abroad life; how, as a result of these past experiences and hopes for the future, participants' transnational experiences also differed. Chapter 7 and Chapter 9 are the thematic analyses of interview data from the British and Chinese participants respectively. These two chapters aim to demonstrate that, after showing the diversities in individual student's experience, shared commonalities also exist for British students in China on the one hand, and Chinese students in the UK on the other hand.

Chapter 10 addresses some of the translation issues involved in the current research given that the research interviews were conducted in the interviewees' first language (Chinese or English) and presented in English here for the reader. In this chapter, six Chinese words describing some of the shared feelings of my Chinese participants are translated into English. However, rather than considering this chapter as a traditional, correspondence-type translation of selected words from Chinese directly to English, the chapter represents how the experiences related by the two participant groups in this research in their first languages -- British students in China and Chinese students in the UK, started to make connections

across language through the translation process. The chapter attempts to demonstrate how a range of shared ISM associated vocabularies, no matter whether in English or Chinese, emerged across the two groups during the translation processes of my dual-language research, against the background of globalization and IHE.

In Chapter 11, based on the identifications of some of the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China outlined in chapter 3, I discuss how these contexts were revealed from individual student's experiences; how individual made sense of these contexts. This chapter aims to make connections between individual experience, and the policy and practice contexts within which that experience plays out. This chapter also highlights some of the contradictions between policy maker's expectations and the practical, lived realities of the interviewees, and, on those bases, offers recommendations for supporting international students.

Chapter 12 is a summary of the results and discussions of the current research, which clarify the findings of my research, as well as the contribution of my findings to the extant ISM literature.

Finally, Chapter 13 presents the conclusions and implications, the limitations of this research, as well as considerations for future research.

During my research process I encountered Deleuze and Koro-Ljungberg as theoretical frameworks that contest and disturb traditional qualitative onto-epistemologies. These frameworks had a significant impact on the research and on me as a researcher. Therefore, throughout the thesis I insert a number of textual interruptions -- which I include as theoretical reflections and red text. Some of these interruptions are more closely aligned with traditional qualitative inquiry, which can be seen from the theoretical reflections. These reflections are mainly about how I understood and continued to grapple with the idea of (this) data: how data appeared in different forms at different research stages, how these different forms of data (continue to) resonate with my understandings of ISM from an individual perspective, from the perspective of the two participant groups, from the connections between these two groups' point of view, as well as from the connections between individual experiences and the policy and practice contexts within which these experiences played out. These reflections are also about how I understood language, how this understanding made the role played by themes in my research transform from the representation of students' life realities, to the Deleuzian word-words coexisting with all the social activities of students who had the right to made such statements. How this order-words also triggered my production of the red text, which represents the coherence which might feel like less coherent. The red text is mainly about my engagements with my participants, my data, my three years of research, as well as about how as a transcultural and bilingual researcher, and a Chinese student in the UK myself, my own researcher positionality shifted through these engagements.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review about International Student Mobility from the Individual Perspective

The focus of this chapter is on ISM associated literature from the individual perspective, which refers to studies targeting students' transnational experience instead of policy and practice contexts. Fink (2005:3) defined the literature review as a 'systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating, and synthesising the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars, and practitioners'. The function of a literature review is not only in introducing readers to existing research in the field, but also, and more importantly, in identifying research gaps and exploring new possibilities that need to be addressed in the field (Cohen et al., 2011). ISM from the individual perspective has been examined within several academic fields such as migration, education, psychology and geography studies (Nielsen, 2014). The massive movements of international students in all directions challenge not only HEIs' view of international students and what kinds of supports they might need, but also our existing understandings about what mobility means, and what kinds of challenges and achievements can be produced by it. *Considering that I do not hold any particular theory or framework for understanding international students' transnational education experiences. This project aims to make sense of students' experiences from a wider perspective without setting any particular focus. Therefore, instead of conducting a traditional literature view about ISM, I do a 'scoping' review, put emphasis on some exemplars of existing work that speak directly to student experiences.*

The literature review conducted was based on my own experience of partaking in transnational education as a process, which starts from international students' decision-making of studying abroad. Following it is students' life in the host country, which can be divided into social and academic domains. International students are likely to face various challenges in both these two domains. However, achievements and new possibilities also emerge from education mobility. The literature reviewed in this chapter reflects that literature published after the year 2000. The key terms used in searching for relevant literature included ISM, international student(s), mobile students, and IHE. The disciplines and cognate areas covered in this research crossed a wide range, including that from migration studies, education studies, psychology, as well as geography. Through me conducting literature I realised that the complexity and multiplicity in the epistemology, methodology, and methods of data collection and analysis used by the research across disciplinary boundaries in attempts to better understand ISM, make it impossible to ascertain one agreed way of defining ISM or of following a simplistic and liner thread through the myriad literatures which address the substantive topics. Studies reveal that ISM associated literature is broad in scope which is difficult to encapsulate in a neat summary. However, this complexity is not necessarily or solely a negative phenomenon: different understandings and conceptualizations of ISM expand the possibilities for thinking about and utilising the concept in both academic and social practice. Therefore, this review is constructed to give the reader a view of the major trends in the ISM studies that have taken the individual student perspective as their focus. In the following section, the literature about ISM at the individual level is discussed.

## **2.1 ISM from the Individual Perspective**

In this section, the literature about ISM at the individual level is divided into four parts which are first of all, student's decision-making of studying overseas; Secondly, the various challenges which tend to be faced by international students in their everyday life; thirdly, how theories and frameworks about culture shock and culture adaptation are applied in ISM research; and finally, how the discipline of Geography, especially the critical human geography which is emerging as a key theoretical framework in (re)understanding ISM, has contributed significantly to ISM associated research.

### **2.1.1 Decision-making for studying overseas**

Some scholars regard the figure of the 'international student' as another category of international migrant. Research informed by this point of view tends to consider those undertaking ISM as a group of people involved in the exchanges driven by the increasing intensity of economic, political and social relationships across and between nation-states and that are seen as a product of wider globalisation dynamics. Some of the most significant factors affecting students' decision-making process are identified in the research from a migration studies point of view (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002; Brooks & Waters, 2011; Chao et al., 2017). Traditional push-pull models, with human capital theory are the most commonly utilised theoretical frameworks for analysing international students' decision-making process when thinking about study overseas (Findlay, 2010; Levatino, 2017). Altbach (1998:240) proposed the push-pull model for ISM. In this model the push factor refers to those unfavourable conditions in students' home countries which motivate students to study in other countries. The pull factor refers to those favourable conditions in host countries which attract students to study there. For example, in relation to push factors, Bessey (2012) identified greater geographical distance between home and host countries, as well as the degree to which the home country is a politically unfree country as two of the significant factors that decreases student migration to Germany. However, this research also demonstrated that partner universities across home and host nations play a role in facilitating stable streams of student migration over time. From the human capital perspective, Rosenzweig (2006) proposed two human capital models for explaining student migration. On one hand, a lack of adequate educational facilities – either in terms of quality or capacity – in home countries, and an awareness of the expected benefits of investment in education are both key in shaping decisions about study abroad, and directly relate to ideas about the development of human capital through investing in educational progression with the idea that such investment will accrue benefit later. On the other hand, student migration could also be a means of entering the labour markets of host countries. This latter basis for decision-making is an example of a 'pull' factor whereby the attractiveness of a host country's labour market prospects acts as an incentive in making such decisions. Based on Rosenzweig's models, Beine et al. (2014) proposed a more complex framework when considering these two types of factors that shape decisions to study abroad: those affecting migration costs such as distance and migrants' network in host countries, and those affecting the attractiveness of the destination such as wage levels in the host labour market and the quality of universities in the host country. This research identified the significance of educational migrants' networks which was undocumented in the previous literature. In addition, Gonzalez and his colleagues (2011) analysed a wide range of determinants affecting students' decision-making from economic, social-cultural, as well as some other

determinants such as language, climate and university quality. They found that, first of all, economic support could enhance propensity of student mobility. In addition, the attitude towards educational background abroad at the country level could potential encourage ISM. And finally, mobility can also be utilised by students as an opportunity to learn a foreign language.

Apart from this research focusing on those external factors that enhance or constrain student mobility, some scholars also interpret ISM as the outcome of individual decisions that reflect students' cultural background, as well as the social and economic opportunities those backgrounds provide (Souto-Otero et al., 2013). In a discussion about the social and economic activities facilitating transnational student mobility from South Korea to Auckland, Collins (2008) proposed 'bridges to learning' as a conceptual tool in thinking about how international students' movement is facilitated across both physical and social distances. For Collins, international students are conceived of as 'simultaneously mobile and emplaced, able to move between territories but always assisted and limited by spatially-grounded relationships and activities' (p. 401). For example, education agents operating in both home and host countries, as well as the range of interpersonal relationships in which students thinking about ISM are embedded are some of the most significant and bridge-like elements which support and affect the movement of people between these two connected places. In this, Collins underscored how decisions that seem to arise from individual cognition are, in fact, shaped and facilitated by actors and in relations that are located beyond the individual's concerns. Beech (2015) criticized Collins's research as being too focused on the role of immigrant entrepreneurs in facilitating student mobility rather than on social networks. Instead, Beech acknowledged the influence of social networks, which includes those attaching to family histories and friends' experiences. He also concluded that these social networks go beyond 'shaping the pathways of mobility and instead in large part actually determines whether mobility takes place' (p. 346). Beech did, additionally, argue that social networks are not stable and passive entities but are ongoing in their development and structure. However, it seems to me that international students are, to some extent, constructed as being excluded from creating such networks and are limited as someone who is simply informed by them during decision-making processes. As Beech demonstrated in his research, when students are surrounded by family members or friends or other people who have chosen to go abroad in the past, their own decision is influenced by these social resources. However, it might also be possible that students actively make connections with a wider range of people when they are considering or preparing for studying abroad.

Despite all the accumulated knowledge about international students' motivations or determinants for studying overseas, previous research still remains somewhat unsatisfying to me. First of all, it seems that the role played by higher education institutions should be more visible and audible. In addition, it seems that taking transnational education is explored as a separate period of life, distinct and discrete from an individual's previous experiences and future expectations. Consequently, the bulk of this research puts too much emphasis on external factors affecting students' decision-making process instead of focussing on the direct voice of international students and their agency in the decision-making process (Hadler, 2006).

### **2.1.2 Challenges faced by international students**

It is a common view in some of the literature associated with ISM to see international students as a group of students who are in a 'deficit' position and therefore requiring additional and specialist support for both their social and academic lives (Li & Gasser, 2005; Zhang & Goodson, 2011). From this point of view, a great deal of existing literature is focused on identifying the vulnerabilities and unique social-cultural and learning needs of international students. In addition, this literature also focusses on making recommendations to HEIs in responding to such vulnerabilities and needs. For example, Sherry and his colleagues (2010) examined the life experiences of international students at the university of Toledo in the US, not only in terms of academic experiences, but also in respect of the social and cultural aspects of students' experiences. In this study several challenges for international students were identified, including: language issues, adaption issues, financial problems, cultural misunderstandings. Significantly, the perceived exclusion of international students from local and university communities was identified as one of the main challenges faced by international students.

Apart from the studies attempting to identify a range of common challenges for international students, other academic literature focuses on only one specific aspect of students' experiences: either academic or social challenges. In terms of academic challenges, some studies indicated that international students, especially those whose first language is not English might find their professors' or classmates' accents difficult to follow. International students from certain cultures such as Asia might prefer passive learning styles that privilege listening and memorizing materials instead of engaging actively in learning through challenging and critiquing ideas and arguments (Woods et al., 2006; Lin, 2012). Another study conducted by Cowley and Hyams-Ssekasi (2018) explored the initial higher education experiences of first-year international students in the UK. This study indicated that in the academic domain, the key challenge faced by international students was language. However, they noted that it is difficult to separate out these issues of language from other overlapping areas of challenge for these students considering that language proficiency is closely associated with other issues such as understanding assessments, technical language and academic writing.

Alongside research that explores the academic challenges of international students and, with regard to the social challenges faced by international students, financial and emotional difficulties, lack of support, homesickness, as well as a sense of isolation are some of the key challenges identified (McClure, 2007; Zhao et al., 2008). In addition, it seems that previous research highlights the fact that interaction between international and domestic or 'home' students tends to be infrequent and superficial (Leask, 2009). For example, Kudo and Simkin (2003) identified contextual opportunities, host attitudes, and communication competences as some of the key factors negatively affecting the integration of Japanese and host (Australian) students. As a corollary, Dunne's research identified (2013) some of the factors affecting intercultural communication from specific host student's point of view. He found out that factors including perceived utility, shared future, concern for others, as well as mutual interest and curiosity could enhance intercultural communications between international and home students. There are also studies focused on particular and specific challenges facing international students. For example, loneliness, which results from the lack of social and supportive networks, has been identified by some researchers as one of

the most severe challenges for international students (Zhao et al. 2008). However, a study conducted by Yeh and Inose (2003) suggested that a lack of English proficiency may be the single greatest barrier experienced by international students, since it affects not only their academic success but also their social engagements with majority home student groups. These latter researchers showed that international students with higher English language fluency may be less sensitive about their own accents and therefore more confident in their daily interactions.

In summary, the literature discussed above makes contributions in our better understandings of international students' life realities. It also offers valuable guides to support international students for HEIs. However, the deficit approach adopted by these researches fails to attend to the affirmative agency that lots of international students demonstrate as part of their ISM experience. This approach tends to construct 'international students' in pathological ways. This tendency is even more obvious in the strand of research addressing the 'culture shock' of international students.

In the strand of research addressing the challenges facing international students, 'culture shock' is probably the most common theme. Even when this issue is not expressed explicitly, it is arguably an implicit feature of a great deal of this research. Research has pointed out that international students are probably the best-researched group in the culture shock literature (Ward et al., 2001). Contemporary theories of culture shock, which are particularly concerned with adaptation, draws heavily on research involving international students (Zhou et al., 2008; Sherry et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2011; O'Reilly et al., 2015).

### **2.1.3 Culture Shock and Cultural Adaptation**

'Culture shock' has been defined as the 'process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment' (Pedersen, 1995). Reverse culture shock, or re-entry shock, which can be defined as the challenges of re-adjusting to one's own home culture after living in another cultural context, has also emerged in some intercultural literature (Gaw, 2000; Presbitero, 2016). In either direction, adjustment to the novelty presented by the new situation is key, and there is a further assumption that it is the individual who is mobile that (needs to and) will adapt. Berry (1997: 13) referred to adaption in its most general sense as 'changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands'. Successful adaption is viewed as comprising both psychological and sociocultural aspects. Psychological aspects include a clear sense of cultural identity, good mental health while; Sociocultural aspects include the ability to form supportive social networks, especially, in the case of international students, through new friendships with local students. Forbush and Foucault-Welles's study (2016) shows that a diverse social network can contribute to the social and academic adaptation of Chinese students in the United States. Moreover, Kim (2001: 56-57) indicated that adaptation is not a linear but cyclic and continual process as 'each stressful experience is responded to with a 'draw back', which, in turn, activates adaptive energy to help individuals reorganize themselves to subsequently 'leap forward''.

This cultural adaptation paradigm made valuable contributions in understanding processes of coping with the challenges faced not only by international students but also by people who were internationally mobile more generally. However, some researchers criticize the passive figures of international students being implied and constructed in those theoretical

frameworks closely associated with this culture shock, and cultural adaptation literature. They also argued for a paradigm shift away from a focus on adaptation towards a view that more fully considers international education experience as a process of self-formation, in which students: draw on and experience the strengths of their own agency and freedoms; are seen as being more able to manage their own lives, as well as being willing to explore more fully the possibilities offered by entering a new situation. Marginson (2014) for example, indicated that in cross-cultural psychology, international education is most readily understood as a process of “adjustment” to host countries. Here, ISM is imagined as a complete relocation process from home country to host country, from one culture as a constant, concrete entity to another culture as a distinct and separate entity. This relocation process is facilitated by language proficiency and cross-cultural understandings which are necessary to students’ psychological well-being and academic success. From this point of view, international students are often seen as in deficit in relation to both the social and academic contexts of host countries. However, based on almost decade of research into international student well-being and security, Marginson demonstrated that taking international education is actually a process of students actively and reflexively drawing on a range of resources to manage their own lives and fashioning their changing selves under transnational movements and contexts. International students cross multiple borders such as geographical, political, cultural and linguistic. Compared with host students, the resources and references international students can take as given from their host culture are extremely limited. However, on the other side, this uncertainty can also stimulate students’ potential and broaden their life spaces. The transnational practices that international students conduct in such situations of novelty has the potential to produce not just problems and barriers but also opportunities for personal growth. According to Marginson, international students actually ‘choose mobility to alter their space of possibles’ (2014: 10).

Beech’s (2018) research also offered a departure in its consideration of the seemingly too homophilious social networks of international students and the segregation between international and host students. Prior research has offered numerous explanations for this segregation such as language barriers, the perceived anxiety and expected huge effort in building intercultural friendships (Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Dunne, 2013). However, based on his observations Beech argued that, international students should not be viewed as passive figures who are simply affected by and make responses to the various external barriers in terms of building friendship with host students. Instead, it could be a conscious choice that they make in creating social networks with students mainly from their home countries. Beech further implied that students’ formation of multicultural social networks is a complicated process involving the convergence of several characteristics including shared values and interests. According to this view, forming homophilious social networks is actually a reflection of the desire on the part of international students to build support structures in a place of difference and unfamiliarity. Moreover, it seems that no matter whether and how universities might try to position their international students within the multi-cultural classroom or encourage them to develop cross-cultural communities, students would establish their own social networks ‘irrespective of university input’ (Beech, 2018: 22). Therefore, my research hopes to offer new perspective in terms of what international students really want to gain from their social networks and social practices.

In summary, international education is a complex, challenging but also significant and fruitful life event for every international student. Extant literature about ISM that is focussed at the individual level has offered valuable and rich explorations on not only the influencing factors for students' decision making from both the external and personal points of view, but also the potential challenges students are likely to face. However, some of the inadequacies in this research need to be mentioned here. First of all, even though some ISM related research focuses on the individual level, it seems that students' voices remain, to a certain extent, largely lacking. International students tend to be considered as passive figures who simply make responses to external forces -- including the academic and daily supports offered to them by HEIs. In addition, it seems that the research discussed above is largely based in the context of Anglophone countries. In this research, 'international student' refers to students mainly from some of the traditional sending countries such as Asia, Latin America and Africa and, 'language issue' refers almost exclusively to (deficient) English language proficiency or to English language barriers faced by these students whose first language is not English. However, education mobility has become a more widespread, common and diffuse phenomenon, and new emerging education destinations such as China has been attracting more and more student flows from the global north to the global south. As such, there is an urgent need for research on ISM to focus on the transnational education experiences of students from Anglophone countries to non-Anglophone countries, for example, British students in China.

#### **2.1.4 Mobility as A Becoming**

Mobility is linked to a world of practice encompassing fluidity 'at the expense of the already achieved, the stable and static' (Cresswell, 2006: 47). Previous research has demonstrated the effects residential mobility has on an individual's social relationships as well as on the self. Residential mobility provides both a space for the formation of new interpersonal networks, as well as a context in which transnational emotions are experienced (Oishi, 2010; Lun et al., 2012). Prazeres (2017) also indicated that mobility to a new place abroad can occasion a reflexive and transformative journey for those individuals involved. Although a considerable amount of ISM studies regards the involvement of formal academic settings as a crucial part of students' transnational practice, for international students, studying abroad is an important life event affecting not only their academic career but also their social relationships and their personal development in the long term. International students utilise transnational mobility as a resource of new conditions for self-exploration and self-transformation, as well as a vehicle to help them to become that kind of person they aspire to be. Brown (2009) noted that a growth in intercultural competence, as well as a shift in self-understanding tends to be experienced by international students. These changes happen as a result of not only students' exposures to the cultural diversity, their experiencing of the geographical and emotional distances involved in ISM, but also their removal from routines and their transfer into new roles. King et al. (2006: 259) argued that 'migration must not be thought of as a single relocation decision by an individual at a moment in time'. Some research further developed this opinion and called for more complex and procedural perspectives on international students' migration practices. For example, based on the further advance of Marginson's (2014) thesis of international education as self-forming, Tran (2016) theorised mobility as 'becoming'. This view of international education reflects the complexities and potentialities of students' lived realities through their engagement in geographical, educational and cultural border-

crossing. Tran insisted on this much fuller conceptualisation of ISM in place of a more unidimensional one that sees it as a simple relocation across national borders for educational purposes. By asking how students become geographically mobile, Carlson also (2013) suggested a biographical framework to connect students' mobility with various factors. These factors include the previous migration experiences of themselves and of their friends, their social relations, as well as all the life events linked to mobility in education institutions, such as the temporal difference in application processes for different universities. Carlson concluded that mobility starts long before the students themselves begin to think about and actually and/or engage with international education. As such, according to Carlson, students actually 'become mobile rather than simply choosing to be so' (179). Tran and Carlson's research offers a fruitful way of considering educational mobility as a process. This approach not only interconnects mobility with students' previous life trajectory, but also, and maybe more importantly, permits a closer look at the idea of 'becoming mobility', or, to say it in another way, to give proper attention to exploring what is mobility for international students, through the processes of encounter and engagement before and during their transnational practices.

Geographers have contributed significantly to deepening our understanding of student migration associated research. Geography is a complex academic discipline which is associated with people, place and space, as well as how they are embodied and represented. Migration studies, on the other hand, is the description and theorisation of the movement of people between places, which is clearly space-time related (King, 2012). Some recent studies have tried to demonstrate how ISM connects places over times through various players and activities such as migration agents, communication technologies, as well as lived corporeal practices (Collins, 2006; Collins, 2009; Collins, 2010). For example, Beech's (2014) study expanded the push-pull factors theory of ISM by utilising the concept of 'imaginative geography'. According to him, central to imaginative geography is the power relations between places, which can be applied to any context when comparisons are made between the 'familiar ours and the unfamiliar theirs' (172). He suggested that international students are perfect for an exploration of imaginative geographies, considering that, prior to their departure, they tend to collect information from social media and social networks and, in those processes, build a set of expectations about overseas education destinations and future experiences in those destinations. Moreover, such information is most likely to be associated with, taking the UK as an example, the portrayal of the UK as an education destination with different and entrenched academic, cultural and social environments compared to alternative destinations elsewhere. However, unlike most traditional push-pull theories listing a range of factors that may underpin decision-making in relation to ISM, Beech considered imaginative geographies as, first of all, being formed and shared through communities. In addition, according to Beech, these imaginative geographies may also provoke uncomfortable and contradictory feelings as some international students will subsequently find out that what they were expected is very different from what they actually see, or the realities that they encounter.

However, even within the discipline of Geography, different ways of conceptualising place and space lead to different understandings of ISM. For example, in many of the student



migration associated theoretical frameworks, sending and receiving countries tend to be seen as a given, as separate and distinct places or locations. Similarly, space can be viewed simply as a function of the geographical distance between two specified locations. Student migration is therefore the bridging of sending and receiving countries through mobility (Raghuram, 2013). However, in some more recent studies (Beech, 2014; Raghuram, 2013), place is considered not as fixed units but rather as a life space constructed with and through previous experiences and imaginings of possible futures in such places. From this point of view, our understanding of ISM expands and deepens, with mobility becoming instead a rich, nuanced and complex process that links students' life experiences with future expectations amidst the power relations embedded in a geometrical space.

Research conducted by Lysgard and Rye (2017) argued that ISM should be approached as a process of students developing their own spaces and that such spaces be seen as simultaneously mobile, temporal and at times stabilised and fixed. This research adopted the conceptualization of relational space, which understands space as the product of the multiple relations between people, places and processes. Some of these relations may cross geographical, political, cultural or linguistic borders while others may be more locally orientated. Their research applied the Deleuzian concept of 'assemblage' (1987) as an analytical and methodological approach to grasp how life events and daily practice can be linked to the relational spaces of and enacted through student mobility in a non-linear manner. By applying this concept in their research, Lysgard and Rye aimed to elaborate an analytical and methodological approach to manage the complexity of the relational spaces of student mobility without simply reducing the links across space to the distance between places. This research also applied the Deleuzian notion of 'smooth space and striated space' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) as a major frame for understanding assemblage in the context of international student mobility. Smooth space is associated with movement, with instability, with the formation of new identities and with what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) refer to as processes of de-territorialisation. On the other hand, striated space represents stability, order and controlled identities and territorialisation. In terms of ISM, on the one hand, student's desire for change, the reputation as a high-quality education institution of host countries, the career opportunities and the various future expectations in host countries are perceived as some forms that trigger instability and de-territorialisation. On the other hand, the elements of ISM that connote territorialisation seem to be more about the spatial connections students build to and in the host countries to which they travel. These connections are not just in relation to physical spaces like cities and the physical infrastructures of HE institutions, but also include connections made with social and emotional networks, as well as with cultural and social activities. This research further concluded that the assemblages of international students' relations to places involves a continuous negotiation between the dimensions of the territorialised and de-territorialised. One key aspect of this theoretical approach is that, what may appear as the stable assemblage of elements connecting the student to that space is, in actuality, only a temporary stability, and its elements may turn into a process of re-assemblage when the time is ready to make a change.

In summary, the literature associated with ISM at the individual level has shifted from that based on a more market-driven framework which focuses mainly on the determinants of students' decision-making processes, to focus more on the personal point of view of those

students engaged with ISM. This latter literature pays attention to the challenges faced by students in their academic and social lives. However, this literature, either explicitly or implicitly, tends to construct international students as in deficit with specific needs that should be met by their host countries and/or host institutions. A further trend identified in the literature understands international students as people who are willing to take control of their own transnational lives, rather than seeing them as passive figures who are simply affected by various external forces. Most recently, and particularly informed from Geography, the (re)conceptualisation of place and space in geography offers a progressive perspective from which we might view not only the multiple relations involved in students' transnational experiences, but also how the status of 'becoming mobility' emerges and shifts in these relations. This more individual shift offers valuable theoretical perspectives for my research, which mainly focuses on the daily experience of international students. The shift in literature changes my own view from seeing mobility as a simple relocation and adjustment process to considering it from a processual perspective which focuses on making connections of student mobility with student's past life experiences and their constantly emerging future expectations. This shift also inspires my thinking about how the sense of being mobile emerges from students' daily lives; from the multiple relations they build with place, space and people; and how, through conceptualising mobile students as 'becoming', new possibilities and potentials are produced in the very process of mobility that were formerly seen merely as barriers and challenges to be overcome through adjustment.

## **2.2 Looking Back, Moving Forward**

As an international and mobile Chinese student studying in the UK, I felt that most of the research literature failed to represent me, or my specificity as an individual. For example, the decision I made of studying abroad generally, studying Psychology for a Master's degree in Manchester particularly, was not entirely based on the consideration of push-pull model or human resource theory. It was associated with my previous working experiences, as well as my desire of tasting something different, searching for more possibilities. For me, partaking in transnational education is not a separate period starting from the first time I left China to the UK. Just as the sense of being mobile did not start to emerge exactly on the second I landed in the UK, and it would not disappear on the second I land back in China either. Speaking of my transnational education experiences, even though I encountered various challenges, I also made something out of them. I admit that my transnational experience is and will continually be affected by the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK. However, the achievement I made from education mobility is more than just being 'affected'. Therefore, in reviewing the literature related to ISM from the individual perspective, along with my self-reflection, I argued that it guided my thinking about ISM, reframed my view of 'international student' and 'mobility', more importantly, informed my next research steps in three ways.

Firstly, I aimed to avoid the over generalization of 'international students' as homogeneous student groups. Therefore, my research represented the distinction of individual international students, and the multiple realities for my research participants from mainly two perspectives which are: individual specificity and national specificity. The individual specificity is displayed in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 of individual students' sketches. The

national specificity, or the commonality in the transnational practices conducted by the two participant groups of my research – British students in China and Chinese students in the UK, are displayed in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9.

Secondly, I aimed to avoid the seemed inaudibility of individual international student's voices. It is not that the literature viewed did not represent student voices; that the voices of students were completely inaudible. However, previous researchers, when looking at students' decision-making of studying abroad, tended to treat them as rational actors/decision makers who made decisions in one point in time alone. They also tended to see taking international education as a separated life episode with clear cutting points from both the time and geographical boundary points of view. Instead, I considered partaking in educational mobility as a life trajectory embedded in individual's past experiences and future expectations. In addition, different individuals tend to gain the sense of 'being mobile' from the different relations they build in both home and host countries, with both the past and the future. In order to reveal these complexities and processual nature of mobility as informed in the literature, in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8, I produced sketches of the 10 British and 10 Chinese participants of my research. These sketches not only present the specificities of each individual student, but also reveals how transnational education experiences differ for each of them according to the distinctive life experiences and future expectations of them.

Finally, previous research, especially those for the purposes of making suggestions for supporting international students and facilitating IHE in HEIs, tended to see international students as passive figures who are in deficiency, being easily affected by external forces. Consequently, one of the challenges for international students is the adjustment issue in both the social and academic domains of host countries. Instead, I see international students as active figures who are willing to make their own choices, to use their own agendas, to expand and create their new life spaces, as well as to explore more possibilities. Therefore, I explored ISM from the 'mobility as a becoming' point of view. To be more specific, I aimed to explore how new possibilities can be produced from the multiple connections students made in new settings. In Chapter 7 and Chapter 9, I produced thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with the British and Chinese participants of my research respectively. This analysis represents not only the challenges facing these 20 participants, but also how challenges can be utilised actively and creatively by these participants for making mobility meaningful and glorious.

## Chapter 3: The Policy and Practice Contexts of ISM in the UK and China

This chapter undertakes a brief literature review about ISM at the national level, which refers to the policy and practice contexts relating to ISM, in the UK and China. The individual orientation of this current project determines that the focus is on individual international students' everyday life and study experiences. Whereas an exploration of ISM associated policy and practice contexts helps to make better sense of the transnational practices conducted by the participants of my research within such contexts. In order to do this, this chapter includes my close readings of two recent ISM associated policy documents from both Britain and China. In the case of Britain, the documents chosen are the 'International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity' (IES) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) and 'Generation UK - China' (British Council, 2013) issued by the UK government. The Chinese ISM associated policy documents chosen are 'Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era' (Opinions) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2016) and 'Rules on Foreign Students' Enrolment in China's Colleges & universities' (Rules) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2017) issued by the Chinese government. These four documents to a certain extent reflect timely the wider background against which both my research and my research participants' transnational practices were conducted, as globalization, IHE, the further opening up of Chinese HE, as well as the more frequent education cooperation between the UK and China. Shield (2013) proposed three theoretical perspectives of globalization which are 'The Neoliberalism Perspective', 'The Critical Theories' and 'The World Culture Perspective'. He also highlighted their implications on ISM. Considering that the Critical Theories cannot be revealed from the direct reading of these four documents at this stage, in this chapter, two of Shield's three theoretical approaches (The Neoliberalism Perspective and The World Culture Perspective) to globalisation are applied as a framework for interpreting these policy documents. Based on these two approaches, I mean to explore the rationales for IHE and ISM being generated by each of the governments, and how the different stakeholders of international education involved are represented. Considering that the main function of conducting policy document review in my research, is to make supplement to the literature review on the individual-level in a way of drawing a wider landscape of ISM, as well as to set a framework for contextualising my participants' mobility experiences. What I represent in this chapter is a thematic (light touch) analysis in interrogating these four government-level policies. The aims of this chapter are to highlight some key points of the policy and practice contexts of ISM in the UK and China, as well as to make connections between the academic literature reviewed and the policy contexts that, to some degree, shape institutional practices in relation to ISM. The current chapter also sets up a basis for the discussion in Chapter 11 of how individual students, the participants in this study, made sense of their experiences within these particular contexts.

In the following section, the UK and China's focus on ISM are introduced respectively. My policy reading based on two of Shield's (2013) three theoretical approaches (The Neoliberalism Perspective and The World Culture Perspective) of globalisation are also presented.

### **3.1 The UK's Focus on ISM**

According to Stacey (2019), revenue from HEIs in 2016 as £13.4bn make up 67% of total export revenue. In 2018, The UK Education minister Damian Hinds stated that international university students constitute an important source of revenue for UK universities and added that they are also an important part of Britain's cultural influence in the world. Hinds' comments reflect a wider conceptualisation of IHE in the UK. The recruitment of international students to British universities is significant in a number of ways as it has not only been central to the financial health of UK HEIs, but has also contributed to increasing the diversity of the student body, thus creating rich intercultural and international interactions on campus (Lomer, 2018).

According to Walker (2014), UK policies on ISM can be divided into three key periods along the two decades in which the marketization of HE has intensified. In recognizing the contribution made by the UK Higher Education sector to overall UK export performance, as well as acknowledging the important roles played by international students in fostering long-term political and cultural relations with wider international communities, the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair launched a scheme known as the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI) in 1999. The PMI was the first explicitly coherent British policy on ISM which aimed to encourage collaborations between higher education systems in a range of countries, working with the respective governments and other non-governmental bodies associated with the education sector. Although PMI was largely focussed on supporting research and knowledge exchange initiatives across national borders, a significant if less explicit aim was, to increase the number of international students -- especially non-EU students -- in the UK (Walker, 2014). The crucial elements of the PMI included an ambitious marketing campaign managed by the British Council, as well as encouraging 'joined up working' across several non-governmental stakeholders including UK Trade and Investment, the Home Office and the British Council.

The second period of UK internationalization began with the PMI rebrand (PMI2), launched in 2006, with a shift in focus towards promoting and improving international student experiences and increasing transnational education (TNE) initiatives. This more holistic strategy had a key aim of expanding the diversity of export markets instead of depending on a limited range of target countries; working on the reputation of the UK as a desired study destination, as well as building strategic education partnerships and collaborative arrangement overseas. The third stage, beginning in 2013 and still ongoing, was signalled via the launch of the International Education Strategy (IES) by the UK's Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Working with the estimation that the numbers of prospective international students would decline as a result of the then Home Secretary, Theresa May's

announced visa changes, the IES was launched as an industrial strategy for the international education sector, and targeted a 15-20% growth in foreign student enrolment over the subsequent five years. At the same time and, in order to support UK HEIs to build international education partnerships – especially with, those economically emerging and recently emergent powers, Generation UK-China was also launched by the British Council in 2013. This particular programme is working to create and provide opportunities for young people from the UK to experience, understand and engage with China, as well as to raise students' awareness of the benefits of doing so. The programme offers funded internship placements and academic scholarships for UK students to gain transnational experience in China. In 2017, the Department of Education announced a plan to double the funding for Generation UK. This announcement was, based on the recognition that this programme not only afforded the opportunity to build a generation that is more confident and knowledgeable in their engagements with China, but also in recognizing the strength of support offered by the Chinese government in support of the Generation UK programme (Civinini, 2018).

### **3.2 China's Focus on ISM**

In recent decades, China has gradually become not only a leading sending nation of international students but also an important receiving nation in the global international education market. Official statistics from UNESCO (2015) illustrate that among the top ten destinations, China is ranked ninth. In 2016, a total of 442,773 international students from 205 countries and regions were studying in mainland China, with an increase of 11.35% from 2015 (Ma & Zhao, 2018). This dramatic increase partly results from the considerable progress in transforming the domestic Chinese HE system.

The Chinese policy associated with inward student mobility can be roughly divided into four stages (Cheng & Huang, 2008) which are the Pre-reform era (1949-1980s); early stage of opening-up (1980s-1990s); further opening-up stage (1990s-2000); and the new century. The earliest international education was obviously policy-driven in China. From 1949 to 1980s, the ISM associated activities were considered as breakthroughs in developing geo-political relationships between China and other countries. However, the main target markets during this period were still in recruiting students from Africa because of the political consideration of maintaining friendly relationships with unaligned African countries back at that time. There were mainly two categories of international students: exchange students who were sponsored by sending countries, and international students who were sponsored by the Chinese government. In effect, there were no self-paying international students during this period. In addition, because international student recruitment was seen as a matter of building international relationships, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was seen as the most significant actor in the ISM landscape, whereas the role played by HEIs was relatively negligible (Cheng, 2009).

Since 1978, China has adopted a series of radical reforms and has adopted a policy referred to as 'opening up' as part of wider national strategy. Faced with a desperate shortage of intellectual talents for China's modernization goals, the Chinese government decided to send a large number of students on outward mobility, and to promote exchange of students with developed countries. In addition, receiving international students was also considered an important component of China's opening-up policy. Apart from an explicitly political perspective, the strategy was underpinned by a wider range of benefits in support of international education such as promoting cooperation in the field of education, technology, cultural communication and economic trade between China and other countries. It was also believed that, through these strategic initiatives, international students would contribute to strengthening mutually friendly relationships and understandings between Chinese people and people from different countries (Cheng & Huang, 2008).

From the 1990s onwards, the more expanded 'opening-up' policy for China aimed at enhancing educational exchange between China and other countries. Promoting international exchanges and cooperation between HEIs became one of the significant objectives of policy-driven ISM at this stage. During this period, the government's stated ambition was to encourage Chinese higher education institutions to establish collaborative relationships with their counterparts in other countries. Consequently, the more general trend towards internationalization in Chinese universities started to emerge. More detailed approaches towards 'opening-up' education were additionally listed in some of the documents during this period. For example, facilitating international students in taking Chinese Language Examination (HSK), as well as adopting a simplified application process for obtaining Chinese study visas, were specific strategies aimed at increasing mutual ISM. In terms of HEIs, it was also during this period that both the 211 Higher Education Project and the 985 Project were initiated and explicitly supported by central government. These projects aimed to identify 100 Chinese universities and establish them as research-intensive institutions, as well as to create 40 world-class universities in China that could compete in a global HE landscape (Liu & Zhang, 2007).

In the 21st century—the fourth period of Chinese internationalization—alongside the rising numbers of Chinese students studying abroad, China has become a more and more active and ambitious player in the global education market. The rationales and objectives of Chinese ISM policy has become more complex. The 'soft power' basis (cultural and socio-political influence) inherent in ISM, as well as the mutual cooperation and understandings that are potential benefits accruing from ISM, remain part of the focus for China's international education policy. At the same time, China is working on building its own international education industry with a focus on developing its domestic system in different regions and cities on the one hand, and on developing international connections with a wide range of countries and broader range of geo-political areas on the other hand. Furthermore, the huge amount of Chinese students studying abroad is also seen to be involved in this education landscape: Chinese students are seen as communicators representing China, and as human resources and knowledge producers contributing to the future development of China. In 2010, the Ministry of Education adopted the 'Project of Studying in China' policy, which set an aim for China to become the biggest destination country in Asia over the subsequent decades. In order to achieve this aim, China needed to diversify and balance its incoming waves of international students, establish a team of high-quality teachers for

international students, and enhance understandings and friendly attitudes towards China more generally (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010). In the same year, the issue of 'The Regulations on Management of Higher Education Institutions in their Acceptance of International Students' marked the beginning of a government-led, rule-based management system for international student education. In 2016, the government issued the 'Numerous Proposal on Opening up of Education in the New Era' policy, which can be seen as the first policy document that comprehensively guides the opening up of the Chinese education system. In 2017, the latest version of 'The Regulations on Management of Higher Education Institution in their Acceptance of International Students' adopts a more explicit focus on the quality improvement of international education.

In order to make supplement to the literature review on the individual-level in a way of drawing a wider landscape of ISM, as well as to set a framework for contextualising my participants' mobility experiences. In the following section, I introduce two of Shield' (2013) three theoretical approaches (The Neoliberalism Perspective and The World Culture Perspective) of globalisation. In addition, I present my thematic (light touch) analysis of two policy documents, 'International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity' (IES) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) issued by the UK government and 'Rules on Foreign Students' Enrolment in China's Colleges & universities' (Rules) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2017) issued by the Chinese government, through the lens of The Neoliberalism Perspective. I also present my analysis of another two documents, 'Generation UK - China' (British Council, 2013) issued by the UK government, and 'Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era' (Opinions) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2016) issued by the Chinese government, through the lens of The World Culture Perspective. These two perspectives of globalization reflect my readings of the selected ISM associated documents of the UK and China. My readings of selected documents to a certain extent reveal timely the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China.

### **3.3 Literature Review of the ISM Associated Policy and Practice Contexts in the UK and China**

One of the most profound phenomena brought about by globalization to higher education worldwide is ISM. Studies of ISM at the national level refers to studies targeting the policy and practice contexts around ISM, which can help to make better sense of individual students' experience within these contexts. The bulk of studies that take a more macro-level of analysis tend to adopt the lens of globalization and highlight its implications for HEIs. According to Shield (2013), the literature associated with this level of analysis can be distinguished broadly into three streams which are: 'neoliberalism', 'world culture' and 'critical theories' (Shield, 2013). In the next sub-section, The Neoliberalism Perspective is introduced. Two ISM associated documents, 'International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity' (IES) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) issued by the UK government and 'Rules on Foreign Students' Enrolment in China's Colleges & universities' (Rules) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2017) issued by the Chinese government, are analyzed through the lens of The Neoliberalism Perspective.



### 3.3.1 The Neoliberalism Perspective

A Neoliberalist perspective associates globalization with the decline in the power of nations as arbiters of national economic and political power, as well as with increased competition and opportunities in labour market and human capital on a global level. According to Neoliberalism Perspective, universities become autonomous actors taking part in the global HE market, and are supported by national policy to form national and international partnerships so as to develop innovative forms of education delivery to service this globalised Higher Education market. The shift to a “trade rationale” in the HE sector in the 1990s has led many universities to expand their activities across national borders in their search for new markets (Levantino, 2017). Ultimately, the landscape of HE becomes “borderless”, with universities exploiting their reputation or brand image (Middlehurst, 2001). This shift in the HE is affected by the global financial crisis, which consequently led to severe budget cuts in national-level HE systems, thus increasing HEI’s reliance on revenues generated from the higher tuition fees paid by international students. This shift also has resonance with Choudaha’s (2017) opinion that the narratives of ISM has gradually changed. It has transformed from ‘attracting global talent’, which is, itself, shaped by a strong interest in attracting highly skilled workers, to ‘recruiting international students’. As a result, one of the performance indicators often used for indexing global engagement of HEIs in internationalization is the number of international students enrolled at that institution (De Wit, 2011). De Wit proposed five mutually inclusive categories of IHE approaches at national or institutional level. These five approaches include rationales, policy, strategy, programme, and Ad hoc. At the national level, a ‘rationale’ approach refers to the rationales being given to IHE by national policy. A recent study conducted by Maringe et al. (2013) found that the rationales of IHE are based on three value-driven models: a commercial imperative which is mainly evident in Anglophone nations; a cultural imperative which is more evident in Confucian (e.g. China) and many Middle Eastern nations; and a curriculum-value driven process which is more evident in developing nations. Under the ‘policy’ approach, IHE describes those policies addressing the importance of HEIs’ international involvement in a variety of internationalisation activities that focus on issues of culture and soft power as a basis for delivering education services and trade. Finally, a ‘strategy’ approach considers IHE as one of the key national strategies levelled to achieve a nation’s strategic goals. At the institutional level, under a ‘programme’ approach, IHE involves providing funded programmes that facilitate engagement in a range of international education activities. The ‘Ad hoc’ approach focuses on the reactive responses that HEIs make in response to new opportunities in the global education market. Jones’s (2013) research conceptualises two main drivers of IHE. The first is associated with those institutional aspects of internationalisation that focus on enhancing educational quality and institutional reputation whilst simultaneously increasing economic benefit to the institution. The second driver identified by Jones revolves around the benefits to students of HEIs providing an internationalised education, including the provision student support services such as language assistance and the design of curriculum both at home or in collaboration with overseas partners.

In the following sub-section I present my reading of two of the ISM associated policy documents. These two documents are ‘International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity’ (IES) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) issued by the UK government and ‘Rules on Foreign Students’ Enrolment in China’s Colleges & universities’

(Rules) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2017) issued by the Chinese government. The intention of building an education industry of the UK government, as well as the intention of building an education service system of China government are revealed from my reading. These intentions to a certain extent attune to the neoliberalism point of view which considers education as market-driven.

### **3.3.1.1 The Building of Education Industry in the UK HEIs in the Context of Education Globalization**

The building of education industry in the UK HEIs are revealed from my reading of the document 'International Education Strategy: Global Growth and Prosperity' (IES) (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2013) from mainly two points. First of all, the way how the globalization of education is defined in the document is attuned to The Neoliberalism Perspective, according to which the increased opportunities and competitions brought about by globalization is significant for HEIs worldwide. In addition, the approaches proposed in the document in order to adopt a global education market also has resonance with The Neoliberalism Perspective, according to which universities are pushed to be independent players and exploit their reputation in global education market. In the following section, these two points are discussed in detail respectively.

#### **Point 1: Defining the globalization of education**

There are signs that the globalization of education is represented as the opportunities in some emerging markets that are identified in the UK government's IES strategy document. These emerging markets are identified as experiencing a surge in the number of young people. The opportunity, is '*a huge opportunity for us and one we must embrace*' (IES, 2013:3).

*We have identified eight priority countries and one region for international education. These are China, India, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Colombia, Turkey, Mexico, Indonesia and the Gulf* (IES, 2013: 10).

Moreover, it seems that this way of defining the globalization of education produces two groups of players: emerging powers like China, and provider countries, such as the UK.

*New relationships will increasingly emerge, between countries with a demand for education, and countries looking to supply it* (IES, 2013: 33).

#### **Point 2: Approaches to adopt the global education market**

The document proposes several new approaches for UK's HEIs in order to adapt to a more and more global market in education, as well as in seizing the opportunities stemming from it. In the following part, these new approaches are discussed as the establishment of new relationships with emerging powers, as well as the reputation-driven of UK HEIs.

##### **Point 2.1 The establishment of new relationships with emerging powers.**

There are signs that based on the market-driven nature of the UK's education export sector, the new relationships take the attuning between the international education markets and the providers as one of the priority concerns.

*We will demonstrate that the UK wants a relationship based on mutual respect that is thoroughly attuned to their developing aspirations and needs. Core to sustaining such relationships is a two-way exchange of ideas and people (IES, 2013: 9).*

*We have enhanced bilateral knowledge and innovation partnerships with emerging powers including the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) and UK-China Partners in Education Programme (UKCPIE) (IES, 2013: 10).*

### **Point 2.2 Reputation-driven**

Brooks & Waters (2011) point out that HEIs (particularly in Western economies) are increasingly aware of the importance of developing and maintaining outstanding brand image and global reputation. There are signs that UK HEI's are reputation-driven.

*The proposed scheme will export UK standards as the global benchmark of quality, enhance the UK's reputation as a global leader and signal to potential students the pre-eminence of the UK in English language teaching and learning (IES, 2013: 7).*

### **3.3.1.2 The Building of Education Service System in China HEIs**

In the Chinese policy document 'Rules on Foreign Students' Enrolment in China's Colleges & universities' (Rules) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2017), the intention of building a professional education service system in HEIs is also noticeable. It seems the representation of international student as 'the other' is more obvious in Chinese policies. In the following section, my reading of this document is presented from mainly two points. On the one hand, some detailed responsibilities HEIs should take when they are recruiting and training international students, are articulated specifically in the document. These responsibilities aim to support both international students' academic and social life. On the other hand, what international students are expected to do is also listed in the document. What is also interesting to be noticed is that, what is represented in the Chinese document is 'rules' needs to be followed.

**Point 1:** The responsibilities HEIs should take in order to build this education service system include:

*Higher education institutions shall take the detailed responsibility for the recruitment, education, teaching and daily management work on foreign students (Rules, 2017: Article 9).*

In terms of education institutions' management of international students, the document lists explicitly a range of issues from enrollment plan and major designing, to teaching conditions and training abilities, as well as the announcement of fees and charges standards

and so on. Furthermore, HEIs shall also define the working institutions to particularly undertake the management of recruiting and teaching international students.

In the academic domain, HEIs are expected to select teachers suitable for teaching international students, as well as to establish and improve the teaching quality assurance system.

In terms of international students' daily and social life, the document also lists explicitly a range of issues that are the responsibility of Chinese HEI's: from the improvements of necessary living and service facilities, and the organizations of cultural and sporting activities in a timely manner, to the educations of Chinese laws and regulations, an appreciation of school disciplines, and the cultivations of Chinese traditional culture and customs. However, HEIs generally do not organize international students' participation in military training, or religious and political activities.

**Point 2:** In terms of what international students are expected to do:

*Foreign students shall obey China's laws and regulations when conducting activities of publishing, association, assembly, procession and demonstration in the Chinese territory (Rules, 2017: Article, 40).*

*Foreign students are not allowed to take up jobs, operate business, or engage in other business-related activities during their study in China (Rules, 2017: Article 36).*

*Foreign students can live off campus, after registration at the local public security organization in accordance with relevant rules (Rules, 2017: Article 38).*

In summary, in order to draw a wider ISM associated landscape for contextualising and further interpreting the transnational practices conducted by the participants of my research. In this section, I read two ISM documents through the lens of The Neoliberalist Perspective. In terms of the UK document, the UK government is trying to build an education industry which is expected to make responses to the globalisation of higher education and the emerging markets brought about by it. This is also a reputation-driven industry aiming to meet the multiple needs of different customers. With regard to the Chinese document, in order to build the education service system, more detailed responsibilities and expectations are listed for not only China HEs, but also for international students. For HEIs, they need to take care of students' daily life; for international students, they are required to follow various rules and regulations. However, they are also allowed to have alternative options for accommodation. In Chapter 11, how individual participants of my research made sense of these contexts are discussed in detail.

In the next sub-section, Shield's (2013) World Culture Perspective is introduced. Two ISM associated documents, 'Generation UK - China' (British Council, 2013) issued by the UK government, and 'Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era' (Opinions) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2016) issued by the Chinese government, are analysed through the lens of The World Culture perspective.

### 3.3.2 The World Culture Perspective

In terms of a group of theories categorised by Shields as the world culture theory (2013), it accounts for globalization as the ‘worldwide models constructed and propagated through global cultural and associational processes’ (Meyer et al. 1997:144–145). According to this theory, values such as ‘individualism, voluntaristic authority, rational progress, and world citizenship’ (Boli & Thomas, 1997:171) are considered universal, global and stateless. This theory therefore gives rise to a genre of research linking various international organizations and actions with individual practices that reflect these values. For example, Schofer and Meyer (2005) applied the world culture perspective and found out that international HE expands faster in countries with strong links to the dominant international value system as reflected in international policies. They also argued that economic development had less influence than cultural and institutional factors on the expansion of international education markets and systems. Further, they concluded that the rapid and worldwide expansion of international HE was partly the result of the diffusion of universalistic cultural values such as global democratization, human rights, global scientization and cosmopolitanism.

Based on a world culture theory perspective, some scholars have further concluded that mobility, especially transnational mobility, leads to an awareness of others, a sense of belonging to the world, as well as developing and confirming cosmopolitan attitudes at the individual level (Ossewaarde, 2007; Mau et al., 2008). Previous studies have suggested that international travel, work and study experience contribute to the shifts in mobile people’s cultural references, enabling their development of intercultural understanding, as well as facilitating their engagement with cultural others (Schattle, 2007; Killick, 2012; Caruana, 2014). For example, Fordham (2005: 158) claimed that the successful participants of the Rotary International (RI) exchange programme produces ‘... the new global citizen, straddling two nationalities. This culturally hybridised citizen, according to RI, becomes a cultural change agent, a potential key to world peace’. Intercultural scholarly encounters, as one of the elements of ISM, can bring about the intermixing, combining and interchanging of multiple cultures for both international and home students alike. The literature suggests that international students are a group of people who tend to have: broad liberal education experience, knowledge of different languages, frequent exposure to different cultures, as well as an openness to cultural diversity. They are also more likely to be constantly looking outward and rejecting the logic of stereotyping and excluding others (Kim, 2001; Brown, 2009; Kirpitchenko, 2011). From the point of view of home students, universities’ aspirations around developing students as cosmopolitans are found in their efforts to internationalise. Some studies have claimed that ISM enables home students to develop the capacity to engage with cultural others through the ‘dynamic interplay of teaching and learning processes, content, and experiences in and out of the classroom’ with their international counterparts (Leask, 2009: 208). Therefore, it is suggested by some researchers that HEIs cherish the diverse, collaborative and creative communities formed by people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds on campus (e.g. Leask & Carroll, 2011). The recent focus of universities on graduate employability has, to a certain extent, turned the main benefits of the IHE from a purely financial basis to one that also emphasises the cultural benefits to the wider student body. Jones (2013) made a direct link between the “soft skills” that employers desire, (for example multilingualism, multi-cultural learning ability, self-confidence), with those skills said to be inherent in IHE efforts and with education mobility in particular. She also recommended exploring and creating strategies in

HEIs which offer intercultural learning and engagement experiences especially for non-mobile students. Most HEIs in the UK have developed institutional internationalisation strategies which include a focus on those activities that help develop cosmopolitan attributes in non-mobile students and are referred to as internationalisation 'at home' in response to these strategic agendas (Knight, 2004). Aligned with this type of thinking, Sawir (2013: 1) highlighted the benefits of inbound ISM to the domestic student body of host HEIs: 'the presence of international students has transformed the monolithic culture of higher education institutions worldwide into a multicultural one'.

In the following sub-section, 'Generation UK - China' (British Council, 2013) issued by the UK government, as well as 'Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era' (Opinions) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2016) issued by the Chinese government, are analysed through the lens of The World Culture Perspective.

### **3.3.2.1 This world culture point of view can be seen from the rationale of both Generation UK-China programme and the Opening-up of Education in China in the document.**

*Experience a whole new culture, push yourself out of comfort zone, being a mature and unique individual* (Generation UK, 2013: 1).

*The campaign aims to develop a new generation of globally mobile, culturally agile who can succeed and compete in an increasingly borderless market place* (Generation UK, 2013: 2).

*The Generation UK campaign is helping to provide the UK with a generation of young people that are increasingly confident, skilled and culturally astute/agile in engaging with China* (Generation UK, 2013: 1).

*By telling "good Chinese stories and spread the good China's voice" as an important content of China's opening-up of education, to synthesize the patriotism of overseas Chinese students and scholars, to actively promote China's development achievements, fulfilling promotional roles of foreign students and scholars studying in China and foreign teachers in actively promoting China's concepts* (Opinions, 2016, Article 4).

What is worth mentioning is that, from the World Culture Perspective, Generation -UK aims to gain better understanding of Chinese culture. Chinese government aims to utilise international students as Chinese culture and language promoters.

Apart from what is discussed above, considering that part of the focus of this current project is on the mobility experience of the participants of Generation-UK, a programme which is set particularly against the background of China as an emerging power and new player in global education market. My reading of the documents also paid additional attention on the representation of 'China' in three of these four documents.

*China is the second largest economy in the world and currently the UK's sixth largest non-English speaking export market, ... given its rapid growth and status as a major emerging*

*power, the business opportunities and challenges in China are significant (Generation UK, 2013:3).*

*It is vital ... that the UK's next generation of business leaders has stronger links with China and that our future workforce is China-ready (Generation UK, 2013:3).*

*'... for the whole of the UK to enjoy a strong and prosperous relationship with the whole of China' (Generation UK, 2013:1).*

*By deepening language cooperation and exchange with foreign countries, to reinforce the mutual assistance in the promotion of Chinese language and less-commonly used languages learning, to promote language interoperability with foreign countries to expand inter-governmental language-learning exchange programmes, to jointly develop language connectivity shared courses with more countries, and to promote the language interoperability between Chinese languages and foreign languages (Opinion, 2016: Article 4).*

*Chinese and general introduction of China are compulsory courses for foreign students. Political theory is the compulsory course for those majoring in philosophy, politics and economics and is optional for other majors (Rules, 2017: Article 24).*

*Chinese is the basic medium of instruction for higher education institutions to train foreign students. ... Higher education institutions can offer major courses in English or other foreign languages for foreign students in accordance with real conditions. For foreign students receiving academic qualification education in foreign languages, they should write abstract for graduation thesis in Chinese (Rules, 2017: Article 25).*

From The Culture Theory point of view, experiencing a new culture, enhancing understandings between people and culture are one of the main rationales in both the two documents, 'Generation UK - China' (British Council, 2013) and 'Opinions on the Work of the Opening-up of Education in the New Era' (Opinions) (The CPC Central Committee and the State Council, 2016). In addition, based on the background against which this project is conducted, the education cooperation between the UK and China, I also paid attention on the presentation of 'China', 'Chinese culture' and 'Chinese language' in the four chosen documents. In the document 'Generation UK - China' (British Council, 2013) issued by the UK government, China is first of all represented as an emerging power with huge opportunities and challenges, therefore, young British people are expected to be 'China-ready'. In addition, it is also a wholeness (a whole new culture, the whole of China). In the document. Considering that international students in China are expected to play a role as culture promoter, the significance and priority of China related issues are listed specifically in the 'Rules on Foreign Students' Enrolment in China's Colleges & universities' (Rules) issued by the Chinese government; whereas on the other hand, some compromises are also being made in the document. In Chapter 11, how individual participants of my research made sense of these contexts are discussed in detail.

In summary, in this chapter I present my readings of four of the most recent issued ISM associated policy documents in the UK and China. These four documents reflect timely the background against which both this research and my participants' transnational practices

were conducted: globalization, IHE, the further opening-up of the China HE, as well as the frequent education cooperation between the UK and China. My reading reveals that, first of all, from the UK point of view, the government aims to build an education industry attuned to the different needs of different customers. It is also a reputation-driven industry. From China point of view, international students are expected to be more of promoters for Chinese culture, language and positive China image. Based on this intention, the education service system Chinese government is trying to build requires both Chinese HEIs and international students to play their roles and take different responsibilities. For HEIs, they need to take care of students' daily life, they also need to select teachers suitable for the teaching of international students. For international students in China, it seems to me that the kind of student international students are expected to be in China, is different from the kind of student Chinese students are expected to be in China. International students in China need to take part in different activities associated with Chinese culture. They are also offered relative looser standards in both academic and social life than their Chinese, domestic counterparts. For example, international students are only required to write and abstract in Chinese for their coursework, and, unlike their domestic counterparts, they are allowed to live off campus. Additionally, the concept of 'China' as a wholeness which needs to be understood and engaged by British youth is also noticeable from my reading.

In Chapter 11, how the identified policy and practice contexts might be revealed from the daily transnational practices for the participants of this research in particular, and British students in China and Chinese students in the UK in general are demonstrated. How students make sense of these contexts are also discussed. My readings of these documents therefore help to answer two of my research questions which are:

To identify some of the political, economic, cultural and practical contexts surrounding international student mobility in the UK and China.

To compare the natures of the transnational practice between both participants of Generation-UK, and Chinese students in the UK.



## Method and Methodology

The method and methodology section of this thesis includes two chapters, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. In Chapter 4, I discuss some of the traditional qualitative research methods applied in my research. In Chapter 5, I introduce Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, as well as Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data. I also discuss how my engagement with these theoretical frameworks disturbed my application of traditional qualitative methods.

### Chapter 4: Traditional Qualitative Inquiry

In this chapter I discuss the ontological and epistemological assumptions based on which I chose qualitative inquiry as a mode of research. I also introduce the traditional qualitative research methods applied in my research which are: individual face-to-face interviews, transcription, thematic analysis, translation of Chinese-spoken interviews, as well as those issues that relate to adopting a traditional qualitative research positionality. In addition to outlining these as methods, I demonstrate how they contribute to achieving the original aims set out for my research.

As a reminder, my research adopted an individual-focused research orientation that aimed to explore the everyday life and study mobility experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. The aims of my research are:

- To gain a better understanding of international students' everyday life and study experiences in host countries. To explore the resources students are able to draw on to negotiate their identities, social networks, as well as meaningful cultural repertoires in host countries.
- To identify some of the political, economic, cultural and practical contexts surrounding international student mobility in the UK and China.
- To compare the natures of the transnational practices between both participants of Generation-UK, and Chinese students in the UK.

As Marginson (2014) argued, there is little space in utilising some of the quantitative methods that dominate mainstream cross-cultural psychology to apprehend individual reflexivity and self-creation in the context of ISM. In contrast, qualitative methods are seen as more open by means of allowing participants to introduce new insights into the theoretical development of the research field. Creswell (2013) indicated that the choice of research methods as part of research practice reveals certain philosophical assumptions behind the research. In terms of qualitative inquiry, the ontological assumptions underpinning this approach is the recognition of multiple realities, for both the researcher and those being researched. The utilization of individual face-to-face interviews in my research helped to gain better understandings of the distinctive life realities of my 20 participants. It also attuned and intensified my attempts at avoiding the relative lack of voice and the general invisibility of individual students' voice in mainstream ISM literature, as is indicated in the literature review presented here. In addition, to the specific ontological

concerns in choosing a qualitative approach for my study, I also chose an epistemological approach that aligned with the aims of the research and that took seriously those issues identifying in my review of the literature outlined in Chapter 2 above. As such I attended to the idea that, 'with the epistemological assumption, conducting a qualitative study means the researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied' (Creswell, 2013: 20).

My research began with a deeply held assumption: that there existed two separate ISM associated realities for British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. This assumption was based, at least in part, on recognising that these two groups of students came from distinct cultural and language backgrounds, and would be required to conduct very specific everyday transnational practices given the distinct policy and practice contexts in each of their home countries. Based on this assumption, I determined that it was important for my participants to talk and express themselves as research participants in the language they felt most confident and comfortable with. Similarly, I also felt that it was important for me to stay in and conduct my interviews in the same ISM host location in which my participants were studying. In addition, my participants were asked which language they preferred to use for the interview and all my participants chose their first languages as their preferred medium. This explains the Chinese characters being represented from Chapter 8 to Chapter 10, by which I hope to give readers a sense of the multiple realities inherent not only for my Chinese interviewees, but also for my British participants who were living in China, studying Chinese language, and even seeing these characters every day from everywhere. Finally, in order to capture the distinct and multiple transnational life and study experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK, I conducted thematic analysis in a 'within group' form for my two participant groups separately, which can be seen in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9.

#### **4.1 BPS Ethical Principles**

My research has obtained ethical approval from the Faculty of Health, Psychology & Social Care at Manchester Metropolitan University MMU Ethics Board (Appendix 1). Followed 'The University's Academic Ethical Framework' (MMU) (Appendix 2) in conducting interviews, I introduced potential participants to the aims and objectives of my research when I made initial contacts with them. Consent was gained from participants for data collection (Appendix 3). I also explained the nature and purpose of my research in detail to my participants orally before conducting interviews. My participants were informed at the outset that they could withdraw themselves and their data from my research at any time. During the interview, I made efforts to ensure a friendly and respectful tone of communication. Given the nature of my research, participants' personal and private information, such as relaying their daily experiences and personal opinions, was necessarily involved in the interviews and, as such, was subsequently treated as data for analysis. Asking such private information could give rise to a range of emotional responses on the part of participants, including their feeling of fear of exposure. However, in order to minimize these potential risks, when analysing data and representing my research, I did not share any personal details of participants' data with anyone. Interview recordings and transcripts were kept exclusively in my own password-protected USB drive and on my

personal university H drive. This data will be deleted completely as soon as my viva is conducted successfully. Finally, I have also given my participants pseudonyms in this thesis.

In terms of my fieldwork, ten of the face-to-face interviews were conducted in different provinces and cities in China. I had to travel around China in order to talk to my ten British participants who were studying in China. Therefore, I also followed 'A protocol for researcher safety' (Paterson et al., 1999). According to which, a critical aspect of safety in conducting research fieldwork is to assess in advance any potential risks: in my case, the risks associated with traveling around China and conducting interviews in different cities on my own. Given my previous experience, I assessed travelling around China as safe whereas meeting and talking to strangers as having some risk attached. Part of the preparation for researcher safety in this study was to inform another person of the time and address of each research activity event. In order to ensure the safety of me as a lone and remote researcher, I kept in touch with the head supervisor of my supervisory team when I was in China. I informed them of the time and locations of conducting interviews before interviews were conducted. I also confirmed the success of interview and my personal safety following each interview. Another aspect of working as a lone and remote researcher was the consideration that, 'researchers should avoid settings in which they are not easily visible to others' (Paterson et al., 1999: 264). This advice is, to some degree, at odds with the generally held idea that, qualitative interviews are supposed to be conducted in quiet and private places. Therefore, with a consideration for my safety as a researcher at the forefront, I decided that, I should maintain visibility in public places by conducting my interviews in public places such as coffee shops around university campuses and as early in the day as possible. However, in order to help my interviewees to feel more relaxed and comfortable in sharing their ISM experiences, we sought to find tables or seating areas in quiet corners.

A further issue relating to ethics is worthy of mention at this point. According to 'The University's Academic Ethical Framework' (MMU), some data with regard to matters such as political beliefs are considered as potentially sensitive data and, as such, should warrant the researcher's ethical consideration. However, I would argue that this aspect of UK institutional expectations of ethical practice is, to a certain extent, out of step with the meaning of confidentiality or privacy in Chinese culture. Generally, I would argue that Chinese people do not mind talking about their political beliefs, political issues associated with a certain area of China, or their personal relationship with families. I believe that my belief outlined here will be demonstrated adequately in Chapter 8 when I provide individual Chinese participants' portraits on the basis of their interviews. Therefore, I would also argue that, UK ethical standards can apply in a universal way since the researcher should always be aware of the potential ethical issues arise from the research. However, considering that, especially in some cross-cultural research areas, concepts such as 'sensitivity', 'privacy' are defined or interpreted differently according to different cultural references. Therefore, the researcher should also be able to navigate between following general principles and being flexible in details in the fieldwork.

## **4.2 Accessing and Recruiting Participants**

The interviews participants for my study comprised 10 British students who participated in the British Council's Generation-UK programme and studied in China, and 10 Chinese students studying in the UK. All 10 British participants took part in undergraduate courses, studying Chinese or Chinese combining with other majors. Some had been abroad previously and some had even been to China several times beforehand for a range of reasons including: travelling, on short-term exchange programmes, teaching English in China or whilst studying Chinese. However, several of these participants were completely new to China. These 10 British participants studied Chinese in a wide range of universities in China which were located in diverse geographical settings: from the very north-eastern city in China of Haerbin to the south-western city of Chengdu. In terms of the 10 Chinese participants, 4 of them were undergraduate students and 6 of them were graduate students. Only 2 of them had been to the UK previously; both as part of a university exchange programme. Half of them studied business related majors, the rest of them studied either science, architecture, linguistics and drama. These 10 participants were also located in a wide range of cities in the UK such as Manchester, Sheffield, Southampton, London and Edinburgh. Out of these 20 participants, 12 were female and 8 were male. These 20 participants' ages ranged from 19-25 years old. More detail can be seen from Appendix 4 which outlines of individual participants' key biographical information and their location of stay (and therefore interview).

Recruitment of the British participants occurred via a dedicated Generation-UK platform on Facebook. After obtaining ethical approval to conduct this study, I sent a series of messages to group members on the Facebook platform. In an attempt to initially reach out, I introduced myself and provided an outline description of this research to all the potential participants. I received positive responses from 10 students before I went back to China in order to carry out interviews there. However, 2 of the initial responders did not show up on the day we agreed for conducting the interview. Therefore, I had to repeat the initial access 'call-out' again in order to recruit 2 further British participants. Recruitment of the Chinese participants was in the form of a snowballing technique. After I made initial contact with one of my Chinese acquaintances who was studying in the UK, more participants were recruited by branching out from friend's friends. I did not lose any Chinese participants during the recruitment process. Signed consent was received from each of these 20 recruited participants and then interviews were conducted from September 2016 to July 2017. It is worth noting that Nielsen and Landauer (1993) produced a mathematical model based on 6 different projects and found that first of all, 4 or 5 participants allows practitioners to reveal approximately 80% of usability problems, whilst a maximum of 12 leads to a plateauing effect at 90% of pertinent material captured. Therefore the choice of 10 British and 10 Chinese participants is adequate for the usability consideration.

### **4.3 Semi-structured Interview**

In designing my semi-structured interviews, I was swayed by Lincoln and Guba (1985)'s suggestion that, 'the structured interview is useful when the researcher is aware of what she does not know and therefore is in a position to frame questions that will supply the knowledge required, whereas the unstructured interview is useful when the researcher is not aware of what she does not know, and therefore relies on the respondents to tell her'

(cited in Cohen et al., 2011: 412). The utilisation of semi-structured interview in this research was based on being, on the one hand, I aware of what information I expected to gain from my participants considering that I aimed to gain an understanding of mobile students' lives from a broad perspective. However, I did not hold any particular or specific theoretical framework or hold certain to any specific area of interest within that broad perspective. The questions I asked of my participants ranged widely: from student's decision-making for studying abroad, to how they built up their social networks, and how they gained a sense of belonging in the new setting; from what kind of uncertainties or difficulties they experienced in both their academic and everyday lives, to what kind of achievements they made from their international education. (The interview protocol that I adopted can be seen in Appendix 5. On the other hand, I also wanted to leave as much space as I could for my participants to express their own views and reflections related to the research questions. I would argue that semi-structured interviews helped me to keep the balance between acquiring the information I needed and exploring further possibilities with my participants.

Thus, the fieldwork approach I adopted in my research was to conduct semi-structured interviews and, thereafter, to audiotape and transcribe these interviews. As mentioned previously, interviews were conducted with British students during their mobility period in China, and with Chinese students whilst studying in the UK. Conducting the interviews in participants' first languages took into account that, participants' language utilisation is likely to reflect their cultural backgrounds and identities of these two groups of students. In addition, and especially for most of my British participants, conducting smooth communication in Chinese language medium was unlikely to be feasible on a practical basis. From September 2016 to January 2017, I went to China, stayed for 4 months in order to conduct interviews with my British participants and to further familiarise myself with the research landscape. From January 2017 to July 2017, I came back to the UK and conducted interviews with Chinese students who were studying in the UK before they all disappeared again for summer holiday. Interviews took place in the UK and China in public places such as Costa coffee at a time that was convenient for my participants. The setting acted as a formal, friendly and safe environment. Interviews were audio recorded and were around 70 to 100 minutes. It is interesting to notice that none of my British participants asked if the interview would be conducted in Chinese. This might have resulted from the fact that I initially made contact with them in English. Whereas half of the Chinese participants asked if they needed to speak English and expressed their concern as might not be able to communicate smoothly in English.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

In this section, I introduce the data analysis methods applied in my research. These methods I outline here are: transcription of audio-recorded interviews, thematic analysis, as well as translation of the Chinese-spoken interviews into English. I also highlight and discuss some issues pertaining to researcher positionality involved in my research.

#### **4.4.1 Transcription**

According to Oliver et al. (2005), transcription practices can be conducted with two dominant modes which are either naturalism or denaturalism. In a naturalist approach every utterance is transcribed in as much detail as possible. In adopting a denaturalist approach, the researcher also attempts a verbatim depiction of speech, but the approach has less to do with depicting idiosyncratic elements of that speech such as stutters, accents and nonverbal. The denaturalist approach, as it pertains to this study, is more concerned with the meanings and perceptions created through speech during the interviews. I adopted this approach, not least as considering that English is not my first language, it would have been very difficult for me to catch some of the subtle connotative distinctions attending to more subtle variations in speech, including those related to those in relation to accents. Therefore, a denaturalist approach was applied by me in transcribing the interviews so as to focus more especially on catching the meaning and perceptions of my participants' utterances.

#### **4.4.2 Thematic analysis for individual experience**

Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) defined thematic analysis as 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data', which can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches. My research followed the six phases of conducting thematic analysis which are outlined by Braun and Clarke, and are 1. Familiarizing oneself with the data by reading and re-reading the data; 2. Generating initial codes; 3. Searching for themes; 4. Reviewing themes; 5. Defining and naming themes; 6. Writing up.

When I finished the transcriptions of my 20 interviews, I started the initial phase of thematic analysis, with repeated and close readings of the interview transcriptions. Even though thematic analysis is utilised widely by researchers from different academic domains, this very first phase is hardly discussed in the literature. In my research, this phase played a significant role. It helped me to familiarise myself with every individual research participant through reading and re-reading their interview scripts, but also contributed to achieving one of the research objectives that emerged as I surveyed the literature relevant to ISM, which was to void reinforcing what I identify as the inaudibility of individual mobile students' voice. Based on my close reading of the interview transcriptions, (further details provided in chapter 6 and Chapter 8), I produced 'pen portraits' of each of the 20 distinctive individuals who participated in my research. Thus, I name this research analysis stage as the 'getting to know my participants' stage. These 'pen portraits' were firmly located on interviews data and produced by pulling together the participants' talks about their distinct studying abroad experiences. I also summarised each participant' experience by quoting one sentence or phase they said that could to a certain degree represent their specificities. This strategy of giving descriptive space to the participants' stories is not, in any obvious way a kind of analysis. However, I felt strongly that these 'pen portraits' provide a clear demonstration of, how partaking in transnational education is far from a separate and distinct period in the life of mobile students. Instead, I hope to show that this analytic strategy demonstrates clearly that mobility is experienced as part of a wider life trajectory that is embedded in and informed by individuals' previous experiences and their future expectations, as well as in how their transnational practices differ for individuals according to the distinctive features of their trajectory.

After the 'getting to know my participants' stage, phase 2 involved starting to code the data of the interviews with my British and Chinese participants separately. This stage involved the reorganization of important moments prior to a process of interpretation. At this stage individual interview transcripts were coded sentence by sentence, by choosing the shortest transcripts to assign keywords that described what the participant meant (Tesch, 1990). These keywords reflect the richness of the phenomenon under study. While coding, I asked van Manen's question "What statement(s) or phrases(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described" (1990, p. 93). From phase 3 to phase 4, themes were produced for each participant group by clustering key words (Creswell, 2008). As Braun and Clark (2006) also indicated, thematic analysis can be either strongly linked to the data itself, or may be more closely aligned with pre-existing analytic or specific theoretical preconceptions of the researcher. Considering that I did not hold specific and particular theoretical frameworks within the broad area of interest, what I wished to provide through the thematic analysis that I conducted was a description linked to the data itself. These three phases of producing themes helped me to see the commonality in the transnational practice of British students in China, as well as Chinese students in the UK. Therefore, thematic analysis is a perfect method that not only helps to demonstrate the diversity of individual experiences and avoids an over-generalization of international students, but also contributes to revealing the shared experiences between these two groups of participants respectively.

As well as themes emerging through the analytic strategy, I began identifying particular key words from the Chinese participants' interview data. I realised that some of these Chinese vocabularies used by them in describing their experiences of mobility, speak perfectly for some of their shared experiences. For example, 相依为命 (heavily relying on others for surviving), 圈子散 (quite scattered social circles), and 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human) are three key words which help to depict some elements of Chinese students' social life in the UK. Furthermore, and based on my familiarity with both every individual participant's story and with the rhythm and content of my interviewee's talk, these phrases or Chinese 'key words' helped me to make connections across not only the Chinese students' experiences, but also between Chinese and British students' experiences. These connections between the British and Chinese students' experience became even more noticeable when I identified and focused on phrases such as 外国人 (foreigner) and 不合群 (not fit into the communal life style) as two key words that spoke volumes about their mobility experiences, especially for 外国人 (foreigner), considering that this particular vocabulary was also utilised by several of my British participants, in both English and Chinese. These Chinese phrases occupy a significant part of my research space, not only because this feature of my research – taking phrases from another language (Chinese), is one of the key strengths of my work. But also because the translation process I conducted for these Chinese key words, transformed from a unidirectional translation from Chinese to English, to a bidirectional connections between the experiences of my two participant groups. These connections triggered me re-considering the original onto-epistemological assumption of my research as two separate and different ISM life realities for British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. These connections also disturbed my taking for granted researcher position as being an outside of my Chinese

participant group. Furthermore, these connections make the building and expanding of ISM associated vocabularies in different languages for different students from and to different receiving countries possible. (More detailed discussion of these vocabularies can be seen in Chapter 8, Chapter 9 and Chapter 10) These connections are the blueprint of Chapter 10 of translation analysis.

Phase 5 of the thematic analysis is defining themes. In order to make sure students' voices are audible through the whole research, as well as in this thesis for both my readers and me, I tried to name themes by my participants' own utterances as much as possible. During phase 6 of writing up, simple descriptions or some of the participants' utterance were also utilised to represent the themes in an expressive manner. The utilisation of research participants' own utterances aims to strength the link between Chapter 6 and/or Chapter 8 of individual students' 'pen portraits' and Chapter 7 and/or Chapter 9 of students' shared experiences. It also attempts to demonstrate that, even though different individual students make sense of partaking in transnational education in different way, shared experiences also exist for British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. Whereas at the same time, behind these commonalities, are the transnational practices conducted by every single and distinct British and Chinese student.

## **4.5 Researcher Positionality**

In this section I discuss the researcher position issue involved in especially two stages of my research, the stage of getting to know my participants and producing individual 'pen-portraits', and the translation analysis stage.

### **4.5.1 Potential position of the researcher in the development of individual 'pen-portraits'**

One of the main aims in producing pen-portraits of the 20 participants of my research, is to present some of the nuances of how partaking in transnational education comes to have different and significant meanings and values for different individuals based on the distinctive features of their former life trajectories. As a mobile student and researcher, I am not a completely outsider of my British participant group given that we all sense the 'being' or 'becoming' mobile from our transnational practices. However, as a Chinese student, my familiarity with Chinese culture and my proficiency in Chinese language could still exert influence on my identification of individual specificities through this 'getting to know my participants' stage. In order to embrace and utilise the complexity and richness of my own position, whereas also be aware of the potential bias brought about by my researcher position. First of all, the identification of individual specificity was focused on the feelings of 'being a mobile student'. This focus helped me to frame not any 'individual' but particularly individual mobile British and Chinese students, the individuals who speak for ISM. In addition, the identification of individual specificity was based mainly on the comparison within the 10 British and 10 Chinese participant groups respectively, which can be seen in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 of individual portraits. In terms of the 10 British participants, some of them seemed more relaxed whereas others struggled more. Some of them studied hard whereas others utilised this opportunity of studying abroad more as a wider life experience. With regard to my 10 Chinese participants, some of them seemed more sensitive to the perceived uncertainties, the unsettling feelings associated with mobility, and their



perceptions of deficit -- especially in the academic area -- than others. This 'within-group' comparison helps to avoid me identifying some of the British participants' individual specificities from a Chinese point of view. However, my familiarity to both Chinese culture and the transnational practice conducted by Chinese students in the UK, could affect how I identified the specificity of Chinese participants of my research. In order to reflect how my position made me more sensitive about some of the features assigned to 'Chinese students', I conducted self-reflection after producing the 'pen-portraits' of my research participants. I pick this point up and discuss it further in detail in the theoretical reflections in Chapter 8.

#### **4.5.2 Multilingual researcher as translator**

Several - particularly feminist - critiques have been influential in drawing academic attention to the issue of the 'position' or 'positionality' of researchers (Stanley & Wise, 1983). Positionality refers to the recognition of an individual's biography and lived experiences, which determine researchers as subjectively positioned individuals, as well as inevitably producing specific locations for researchers from which to see the world (McDowell, 1992; Moss, 1995; Rose, 1997). In recent years there has been growing agreement on the significance of this personal subjectivity, particularly for those applying qualitative methods in research. This is particularly so given that 'a different researcher, or the same researcher in a different frame of mind, might write a different report from the same data' (Brown, 2010: 238). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the influences exerted by researcher subjectivity, Dean and his colleagues (2018) conducted a research project in which six researchers from varying disciplinary and personal backgrounds analysed three interview recordings and transcripts separately. The study evidenced how, although a diverse research team can bring out deeper and richer analyses of the same interview data, there was, nonetheless, divergence between the researchers in their analyses of the same data.

Based on an epistemology that has variously been named as social constructionist or interpretivist, the influence of an individual researcher's position is a crucial component in the knowledge production process. Translation, being a part of this process, implies that '.. the relationships between languages and researchers, translators and the people they seek to represent are as crucial as issues of which word is best in a sentence in a language' (Temple & Young, 2004: 164). The point being made here is that, considering 'the view that meaning is constructed in, rather than expressed by, language' (Barrett, 1992: 203), the challenge faced by any researcher who is also a translator is more complex than merely choosing the right words to express the meaning 'properly'. 'The solutions to many of the translator's dilemmas are not to be found in dictionaries, but rather in an understanding of the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms and to changing identities' (Simon, 1996: 137). Through translation, the translated voice of others no longer simply carries what those others have said, but also inheres the ways by which the researcher-translators interpreted what others said, in addition to the ways these researcher-translators believe this voice can be best understood by their 'foreign' readers. Thus, translation means seeking, through analysis of two different linguistic and symbolic worlds, a meeting point between speakers and readers. 'In other words, translation is also about interpretation in the broadest sense of the word. To be able to discuss the nature of this

“more than words” quality of translation, we need to recognize the perspective of the translator’ (Temple, 2002: 847). From this point of view, during the process of translation, what should be of concern, is not only the description or representation of one word, but also, and maybe more importantly, the multidimensional positions the researcher-translators choose to take in the midst of these complex multilingual exchanges (Kramersch & Whiteside, 2008). Therefore, ‘... researchers and translators should be part of the methodological discussions in any research involving more than one language’ (Temple, 2002: 847). Some research has explored the positionality of translators whose role starts from receiving data and who subsequently conducts a translation of that data. For example, based on the discussion of translations produced by three bilingual translators (Cantonese-English) with different backgrounds working on the same interview tape, Wong and Poon (2010: 156) concluded ‘ ... that the omission of a word or a phrase in the translated texts or differences in translation could have a significant influence on data interpretation, meaning construction, and the final representation of the participants’ reality’. However, this discussion risks isolating the translation from the wider research process. Therefore, the questions that arise from here are: what if it is the other way around: that the process of engaging with data and constructing meaning from and with it is having a significant influence on translation. What if this question, in the form of a statement could be made here as: data speaks for itself through translation? As Fathi (2013: 55) indicated, constructing a transcript from a translated interview involves difficult “interpretative decisions”. By reflecting on this process as an active process rather than a passive one, the researcher would have the opportunity to critically pay attention to the different stages of the creation of what counts as the “final” product.

The positionality faced by cross-cultural researchers is much more complex than their mono-lingual counterparts. There seems to remain an assumption that migrant researchers are able to gain better understandings of the life reality of the participants from the same national/linguistic background (Nowicka & Cieřlik, 2014). However, this insider/outsider binary is contested by several researchers as it simplifies the flexible nature of the researcher positionality issue faced by migrant researchers (Carling et al., 2014; Matejskova, 2014). Migrant researchers’ and translator researchers’ positionings are highly specific and complex. A research encounter is often a game of similarities and differences between the researcher and the researched. Not one of these two but most frequently the both, which results in ‘strongly contextualized sets of information which must be carefully and ethically translated into the language of dissemination’ (Gawlewicz, 2016: 38).

## **4.6 Translation Issues**

In the context of dual-- or multiple-- language studies there have been a certain amount of discussions and explorations associated with the common practice of involving translators in research processes (Temple, 2006; Regmi et al., 2010). These discussions are more especially common when disseminating research into English. Considering that English is currently the lingua franca of global academia (Ferguson et al., 2011), it seems understandable that data collected in another language be translated into English as this

helps the published studies be promoted to a wider international academic audience. Willgerodt et al. (2005) pointed out that most published cross-cultural literature failed to describe the translation procedures in detail. This dominant analytic approach to translation leads to a lack of theoretical and methodological understandings of how best to maintain and retain cultural sensitiveness toward the targeted, non-English speaking research group, whilst maintaining overall rigor and coherence in dual language studies. Moreover, and especially in the Social Science, even less theoretical attention has been drawn to the practicalities and challenges that transcultural researchers frequently face when studying their native populations abroad in their own languages and them re-presenting that 'other language' data in English (Gawlewicz, 2016). When the researcher himself takes the role of translator, he consequently becomes an intermediary, becomes the only one who is capable of generating communication between his participants and his readers, of introducing the life realities of the former to the later. In the following part of this chapter, some of the translation issues involved in the situation of cross-cultural researchers undertaking studies with their native populations abroad in their first language, as well as being the translators themselves are discussed. In particular, I focus on two aspects of this researcher-translator phenomenon which are, conceptual equivalence, as well as on some of the researcher positionality issues involved. These discussions foreground the significance of translation in my study as it plays a role of analysis which, not only helps to make connections between the transnational experiences of my two participant groups, but also makes it possible to build an ISM associated vocabulary in both English and Chinese.

Translating interview transcripts into the language of dissemination reflects the need to communicate with readers. However, it seems that in most of the research literature where this happens, the nature of what is communicated through this translation process is not fully brought into question. The extracts from interviews that are translated by the researcher are most often presented in the same way as extracts from interviews conducted in the shared language of participants, researchers and readers. A key consideration for the translation of extracts from other language interviews is maintaining equivalence across the source and target languages (Squires, 2009). This consideration requires translators to make multiple decisions on whether and how translation can retain emphasis on individual words as well as attending to the overall meaning in the extract (Chiumento et al., 2018). In terms of translation, Sutrisno et al. (2014) defined two types of equivalence between source and target languages, which are lexical equivalence and conceptual equivalence. The most basic way of achieving equivalence is in identifying the corresponding words in the target language which represent those in the source language. This basis for translation, is known as lexical equivalence. In addition and in contrast to finding lexical equivalence, conceptual equivalence refers to a translation process that 'involves translating lives rather than simply words' (Temple & Koterba, 2009:2). Conceptual equivalence in translation is seen as involving the comparability of concepts – rather than on a word-for-word basis -- between two languages. The deviation in terms of the content of one abstract idea, or concept, between different languages, is known as 'the problem of conceptual equivalence' (Jandt, 2003: 136).

In his discussion about the disappearance of the sociologist as translator, Poblete (2009) argued that when researcher himself takes on the role of translator, he becomes the only participant who is capable of generating communication between his informants and his

readers. However, in most of the literature, the extracts from interviews translated by the researcher-translator are presented in the same way as interview extracts from interviews conducted in a shared language of informants, researcher and readers. This form of presentation renders the role played by the researcher-translator as legitimate 'importer' invisible. In order to highlight the significance of the translation practice conducted by researcher-translator, as well as to clarify what researcher-translators are doing when they appear or pretend to be invisible, Poblete proposed five operations as a range of discursive strategies which allow the researcher-translator to not only seek linguistic equivalents which already exist in the two semantic worlds, but also to produce conceptual equivalence. These five operations are transposition, modulation, explicitation, equivalence, and amplification. The first one is 'transposition', which refers to the replacement of part of the source language with another part more suited to the reader's language. In the second operation which is called 'modulation', the translator restates the speaker's utterance because a literal or a purely lexical translation is impossible. The third operation is 'explicitation'. Through this operation the translator renders more explicit any meaning in the speaker's utterance which might be implicit. The fourth operation is 'equivalence', and refers to the process of replacing the speaker's utterance with an equivalent utterance in the reader's language. The last operation, 'amplification' allows the translator to develop information beyond that is lexically present in the original text. The three operations being utilised currently in this research are amplification, equivalence, and explicitation. In the following part, these three operations are discussed respectively.

As stated, amplification refers to the translation operation when there is the need to add new conceptual elements in order to represent that which is evoked in the source utterances being translated. In this current research, examples of applying amplification as a translation operation can be seen from the translation footnotes about 'red', '一本 (the first-class university), 走班上课 (living outside of campus) and 寄宿 (living in student accommodation in campus) in Chapter 9. These four are classified as amplification because, in terms of 'red', it is a colour associated with patriotism in China. With regard to the rest three words, they are all concepts defining some of the distinct features of the organization of Chinese HEs. Equivalence refers to the translation operation of replacing the speaker's utterance with an equivalent utterance in the reader's language. In this research, examples of applying equivalence are seen in the translations of, 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human), 不合群 (not fit into the communal life style), as well as 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) and are outlined in more detail in Chapter 10. These three are classified as equivalence because for 情 and 'emotions', 理 and 'rationalities', '群' and 'communal life', as well as 老外 /外国人 and foreigner, there all exist a common correspondence between these English and Chinese words in most of the dictionary. And finally, speaking of explicitation, which is utilised in translation whereby information that is implicit in a speaker's utterances needs to be explicated beyond its original lexical form. In the current research, examples of when explicitation is adopted as a translation operation are in translating 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility), 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles), as well as 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving). Again, these are outlined in Chapter 10, as more complex feelings beyond the literal meanings of these three phrases need to be represented.

My bachelor degree is in biology, which leaves, more or less, a positivist and scientific character to my way of thinking. One year of Masters study in Counselling Psychology offered me a broader onto-epistemological perspective. However, on reflection, I was still quite a Positivist, even though this is something that I only gradually realized through these 3 years of my PhD research journey. Therefore, the original assumptions underpinning this research were also quite Positivist. This is hinted at in having a comparative aspect to the research: there were two groups of students involved in this research, British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. The boundaries around and that marked these two groups used to seem obvious to me: they came from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, they spoke their mother languages during the interviews, they were also supposed to be affected by the different and specific contexts in their respective and each other's country as well. Whilst conducting interviews in participants' first language helped to make the interview 'talking' more smooth for them. There were several instances when my participants had to use their second languages, because certain concepts just could not be described easily in their first language. In addition, and speaking directly to the translation issues involved in this research, it is always a translation from Chinese to English, an interpretation of my Chinese participants' experiences, for the benefit of all the potential English readers of this research that is most obviously in play here. As such, I did not expect that my British participants' utterances would appear and even play such an important and indispensable role in the translation process. Some of my British participants' utterances have resonance with the Chinese words I tried to translate. These resonances help my reader and me to gain better understanding of not only these Chinese words, but also the transnational practices conducted by both my British and Chinese students (Also in Chapter 10) (Also in Chapter 10).

Tired to this issue of translation, and excavating further my researcher positionality, I have had cause to reflect on my relation with each of the two groups of students who agreed to become my research participants. I used to identify myself as an 'insider' with the group of Chinese students considering that, first and foremost, I am myself a Chinese student. Surely, I was supposed to share more in common with Chinese students. However, I did not expect to experience the oscillating lure with my participants: I would feel more intimate with my Chinese participants for a while, more intimate with my British participants for a while, sensed distance to both of these two groups for a while, and felt even lost for a while. By the way, I also used to call my participants 'informants', (another left-over from my formative days as a Positivist!), and so, their utterances were data, the interview transcriptions were also only data. Not just 'data' but, that kind of data that is frozen in the time of the interviews being conducted; 'data' as an intact and mimetic representation of 'my informant's' life realities. I had not been prepared for data becoming more active and fluid phenomenon with the ability to transform again and again throughout the different stages of this research. And these transformations, this movement of data does not give full credit to how this data penetrated into my life, made me a part of it, and/or made it a part of me. These unsettled and unsettling relations with and by my 'data', the fluid mobility of my researcher position vis-à-vis the data, marks most obviously my own onto-epistemological movements in terms of researcher positionality. I am no longer a Positivist in my orientation to research.

The questions that used to haunt me most severely was whether and how best I might research ISM. For example, I wondered whether, ontologically speaking, a direct

engagement with my research ‘target’s, my ‘informants’” life realities, was even possible? Or, can I represent these ontological objects right? Now I understand that these are questions based primarily on the premise that there is an entity to be represented, an entity which is independent of all research practices—including those of representation, with a form either like this or like that, and that can be represented either a right or a wrong way. This ‘something out there’ idea is just so hard to resist, isn’t it? Even scientific realists and social constructionists share it: the former merely state their representations of things in the real world whereas the latter put emphases on their revelation of the meanings of social activities through their research practices. It is through my engagements with Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy, and with Koro-Ljungberg ‘s thinking on ‘data’ that offered me a different onto-epistemological view, a chance to kind of escape from the Positivism inherent in from my formative science background. It is a journey of disturbing some of the separation and binary I took for granted, for example, the researcher and the being researched for my research, the insider or outsider for my researcher position, the separate life realities for my research participants: British students in China as one group, and Chinese students in the UK as another group.

## Chapter 5: Methodological Disruptions and Theoretical Movements

In this chapter I want to disturb the traditional qualitative paradigm, offer a departure from some of the mainstream qualitative methods by presenting some of the ideas which made me rethink my data and analysis. As a reminder, in Chapter 4 I discuss the research assumption based on which I chose traditional qualitative method: that there existed two separate ISM associated realities for British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. I therefore consider my researcher position as more of an insider of my Chinese participant group. In Chapter 4 I also introduce the traditional qualitative methods applied in this research which are: individual face-to-face interviews, transcription, thematic analysis, as well as translation of Chinese-spoken interviews. My thinking about the potential limits in my chose of traditional qualitative approach can be traced back to my experience of being haunted by my participants’ utterances, both in English and Chinese, through the first phase of the thematic analysis as familiarising myself with the interview transcripts. For example, one of my British participant’s utterance ‘I made Chongqing bigger for myself’ appeared in my mind so often that it started to speak for my life experience in Manchester. Every time when I explored a new restaurant or gallery in Manchester, I told myself ‘I made Manchester bigger for myself’. It seemed that this sentence ‘I made ... bigger for myself’ was not simply my participant’s words, or a small piece of my interview data any more. This experience triggered my (re)thinking about, in this current research, what kind of role my participants’ words, or the interview data played when I was conducting the thematic analysis? With whom/what I was engaging when I conducted thematic analysis: with some words which represent ‘life realities’? with one specific individual participant? with a group of participants? or with not any particular participant but a shared transnational education experience within the wider background of ISM, IHE and

globalization? What kind of role I played in all these possible engagements? Could my researcher position be simplified as an 'insider/outsider' of any participant group? In addition, as it is discussed in Chapter 2 of literature view, Lysgard & Rye (2017) adopted the conceptualization of rational space, which understands space as the product of multiple relations between people, places and processes across geographical, political and linguistic borders. My experience of being a scholar on the move has resonance with Lysgard & Rye's opinion. When I conducted my fieldwork in China and the UK, talked to my British and Chinese participants face-to-face in their first languages respectively, I was bothered continually by the ambiguity of the conceptualisation of border, by what I actually crossed from geopolitics, linguistics and academic disciplines points of view. All these questions challenged the onto-epistemological assumptions I set at the outset of my PhD journey. Through my exploration of these questions, I encountered Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, and Koro-Ljungberg's thinking of 'data'. Their inspired work helped me to explore and shift towards new possibilities of conducting this research, which initially started from a traditional qualitative approach. To be more specific, Deleuzian-inflected understandings of language offers another theoretical framework for conducting the thematic analysis of this study and, in turn, has an impact on my approach to the data and the outcomes of my data analysis. This understanding of language also helps me to frame my shifting researcher positionality across the duration of the project. In addition, Koro-Ljungberg's thinking of 'data' disrupts the binary between the researcher and the researched, and also inspires my rethinking of and about my researcher positionality across the project. And finally, two of the core Deleuzian concepts which are 'striated and smooth spaces', as well as 'becoming', help to understand the shifts in my understandings of engaging with and doing the research of ISM, of spatialization in the context of this research and this thesis as a form of representing these understandings. In the following section, these inspired thinking are introduced.

## **5.1 Deleuze and Guattari's Understanding of Language**

The reading of Deleuze and Guattari's work is an intense experience, even for native English speakers, let alone for me as a second language speaker. As described by St. Pierre (2017), Deleuze and Guattari throw out concept after concept without clear definitions or even with any intention of providing such definitions. It is from and with/in these intensities that I both encounter and subsequently put Deleuze and Guattari's work to use in this research. Given that my encounter with Deleuze and Guattari happened well after I started the research, it should be noted that my treatment of their work here is heuristic rather than reflecting a deep understanding. However, my inclusion of this work reflects the significance of such theorisations in disturbing my process in conducting what would otherwise have been a wholly mainstream qualitative research project on ISM.

**5.1.1 'Language is not life; it gives life order; Life does not speak; it listens and waits' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 76).**

Barad stated that 'language has been granted too much power' (2003: 801). According to Barad (2003), the belief in the ontological distinctions between those seemingly independent entities involved in representing phenomena -- the representations and that which is represented; the objects of observation and the agencies of observation --, as well as the taken-for-granted power of language as a tool to mirror pre-existing phenomena, is the foundation of representationalism. A more performative understanding of language challenges the representationalist investments in the power of words to represent pre-existing things. Instead, a performative approach to language shifts the focus of attention from questions of correspondence between language and reality, to matters of doing. This performativity point of view has resonance with Deleuze and Guattari's understanding of language. Deleuze and Guattari were opposed to the structural linguistics that dominated in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as its methodological individualism grounded in and emanating from the sovereign, individual speaking subject. Like many other theorists adopting a postmodernist and poststructuralist stance in understanding language, according to Deleuze and Guattari, there is no steady correlation between signifier and signified in language; no pre-existent content that needs to be represented; no coherent individual subjects with clear boundaries and particular characteristics behind speech/talking/language. 'The separation between subject and object, thought and matter, words and things, is an illusion of language' (Lecerle, 2002: 27).

In this section then, I discuss a small sample of those points and concepts from Deleuze and Guattari that I hold as being relevant for the current research with a particular eye on how their views on language might be made productive. These, language-specific ideas/concepts include: the presumption that 'language is a doing', and three additional points that arise from this presumption, i.e. order-words, incorporeal transformation and noncorporeal attributes.

As started earlier, according to Deleuze and Guattari, language should not simply be seen as a medium of communication but rather as a doing, a creation and as an organization of social orders. According to this complex view, the function of language is revealed from the implicit relation between each statement and the act being accomplished in and by the statement. This relation, is most readily signified by their focus on order-words. 'We call order-words, not a particular category of explicit statements, but the relation of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions ... Order-words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a 'social obligation''(1987:79). As a way of illustrating their idea, and taking 'you are no longer a child' as an example, Deleuze and Guattari suggest that in making a statement such as this, a series of requests for being an adult are attributed to all those bodies being affected by this statement in a particular society. '... these acts seem to be defined as the set of all incorporeal transformations current in a given society and attributed to the bodies of that society' (1987:80). That is, this kind of statement does not simply rest as a single utterance but has effects and resonances in respect to all those bodies being affected, these effects and resonances are what Deleuze and Guattari referred to as, incorporeal transformations.

Deleuze and Guattari also said, 'We must, however, distinguish between the actions and passions affecting those bodies, and acts, which are only noncorporeal attributes or the



“expressed” of a statement’ (1987:80). Continuing with the statement ‘you are no longer a child’ as an example, we might understand a particular logic about bodies: bodies mature and get old, according to which people go to school, graduate, get a job, get married, become parents and retire. Deleuze and Guattari suggest that only people who have experienced these, who understand the difference between ‘a child’ and ‘not a child any more’ have ‘the right to make such a statement’ (1987:82) as ‘you are no longer a child’. Only people who have acted as an adult according to the social obligation in a given society, can make such a statement. These acts of being an adult, are what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as, incorporeal attributes.

Furthermore, this right to make a statement does not come from any single individual, it is a right defined by and belonging to the collective of all of those individuals contributing to the creation and maintenance of this statement, of this ‘order-words’. Just imagine that your great grandfather said ‘you are not a child’ to your grandfather; your grandfather said it to your father, and your father said it to you. Every time when this statement is made, it is not merely an individual utterance. Rather it reflects and resonates with ‘all the voices present within a single voice’ (1987:80). It is from this point of view that Deleuze and Guattari stated that ‘there is no individual enunciation. There is not even a subject of enunciation’ (1987:79). Instead, their complex view of language would suggest that, in understanding how language works, focus should be given to the operation of the ‘... instantaneous relation between statements and the incorporeal transformations or incorporeal attributes they express’ (1987:81).

The very challenging point is that, both Deleuze & Guattari rejected to the hierarchical linguistic structure which positions a static reality at the bottom, endows language with a role as the transparent medium, and privileges human knowers at the top, who should be able to understand and represent ‘... depth – deep is meaningful’ (St Preire, 2017: 1082). For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘the separation between subject and object, thought and matter, words and things, is an illusion of language’ (Lecerle, 2002: 27). Instead, they proposed a flattened ontology ‘... that locates meaning in neither the speaker nor in language’ (St Pieire, 2017: 1084). In this flattened ontology, the purpose of language is not to mean or represent but to enforce order. language functions on the surface where bodies and expressions meet through the incorporeal transformations that order-words exert on bodies, or in the ways by which incorporeal attributes of bodies are expressed by order-words. Therefore, there can be neither a pre-existing speaking subject nor a pre-existing meaning in the individual utterance. The flattened ontology immanent in this view of language is based on the idea of mixture, not separation; on intervention, not representation (St Pierre, 2017). It is in adopting this point of view of language that Deleuze and Guattari can be harnessed in disturbing the conventional qualitative logic of representation with dualisms like word and meaning, appearance and interpretation. ‘Language is neither information nor communication’ (1987:79) but a doing, a ‘transmission of order-words, ... insofar as each statement accomplishes an act and the act is accomplished in the statement’ (1987:79).

All these tortuous and gnomic versions of some of Deleuze & Guattari’s ideas help me to make sense of my engagement with the interview data, with my research process, with my understanding of ISM. As a reminder, my research began with an onto-epistemological assumption that, there existed two separate ISM associated realities for British students in

China and Chinese students in the UK. I also positioned myself as more of an insider of my Chinese participant group. However, this statement made by one of my British participants, 'I made Chongqing bigger for myself', (and more statements can be seen in Chapter 10), are 'order-words'. It questioned my initial research onto-epistemology by haunting me, intervening in and speaking for my own transnational practices, and consequently blurring the boundaries between the researcher and the researched. This 'order-words' also disturbed my adoption of traditional qualitative approach by exerting incorporeal transformation on me, who is not only a transcultural, bilingual and mobile researcher, but also an international student, a participant and witness of ISM.

Braun and Clarke (2006: 79) indicated that research epistemology guides how meanings and significances can be informed and theorized from data. Due to the flexibility of thematic analysis, there is no one ideal and universal framework for conducting it. What is important is the decisions made by researchers in order to assure the approach they chose matches what they want to know, as well as acknowledging these choices as researcher decisions. The decision I made for the thematic analysis of individual experiences is based on the philosophical assumption about language as a doing, as well as the ontological flatten between enunciations and bodies, statements and actions. Therefore, I did not try to reveal any deeper meanings or real-life realities expressed by my participants' utterances. Instead, I focused on the language in use, in how my participant' utterances revealed the transnational practices my participants conducted that is linked to the statements they made, within the wider landscape of globalization, IHE and ISM. I also focused on how my participants' utterances, as 'order-words' made me realise the shifts on my positionality, as not only a transcultural and bilingual researcher, but also a Chinese student in the UK.

## 5.2 The Illusion of Data

In this section then, I discuss a small sample of those points and concepts from Koro-Ljungberg that I hold as being relevant for the current research with a particular eye on how their views on language might be made productive.

As discussed above, from Deleuze & Guattari's point of view, the role played by language as the presentation of fixed realities and deep meanings, is in place of in use, in context. Consequently, the function and even the definition of data, or to be more specific, 'interview data' is in question. Inspired by Baudrillard and other postmodernist and poststructuralist theorists, Koro-Ljungberg (2013) has challenged the traditional ontological promises held for 'data' as a straight forward representation of what she terms '*the frozen Real*'. In addition, she has proposed alternative ways of considering data, for example: as flow, as production or as reproduction. This onto-epistemological shift positions data in a more disturbing, unsettling but also active role in the process and outcome of research. As Koro-Ljungberg argued,

*Rather than asking what Real data is, what does Real data mean, or what do qualitative researchers want from Real data, I ask how have we come to know certain objects as data, what data may want, how data might take initiative and create itself in connection with other data, and how data could discover, invent, and displace the subject' (2013:275).*

In this new way of thinking about data, and its role in research, there is no longer a pure and simple 'real' for which data is a proxy. By a simple logic, neither is there an unproblematic way of thinking about, 'real data' either. Instead, in Koro-Ljungberg's terms, data exists only in and through that process by which it becomes recognisable. By presenting something as data, researchers call data into existence. By assigning meaning to objects, data is collected, interpreted and then destroyed. Moreover, this processual way of (re)thinking data highlights some and excludes other data probabilities, as well as simultaneously undermining any taken-for-granted ontological link between data and the real.

This processual orientation towards (re)thinking data also makes problematic the idea that a researcher position is one which remains constant, or can be made wholly explicit. According to Koro-Ljungberg's framing of data, a researcher will waver in their relation with data before, during and after the research process. For example, a researcher might engage with data in more intimate ways at some times during the research, whereas they might step back and observe the data with some distance at other times. Similarly, a researcher might (decide to) step back and observe some of their data from a distance whilst, simultaneously, being involved as a constitutive component of data at other times. Koro-Ljungberg, however, argues that the collapse of data's stable structure, necessarily signals data's end. Instead, she suggests that this crisis for data offers new possibilities; that this moment, could represent a new way of conceptualising and experiencing data by attuning us to data's haunting, its lingering of considering data as a becoming instead of it as a promise of accessing any pre-existent truth. As she argues: data is 'more important than the language that is used to signify or describe it' (2013:278).

In this current research, I took seriously some of the onto-epistemological disturbances introduced by Koro-Ljungberg in thinking about data, what might count as data, as well as my uneven and dynamic relations with that which might be described as data in my research on ISM. In doing so, I suggest that, in this current research, data transformed from the views expressed by 20 individuals into (and from) the imaginings of those adventures taken by two groups of students under the name of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK respectively (from Chapter 6 to Chapter 9). In chapter 10, I show how this 'data' transformed once again; from two sets of adventures to the several and many connections that might be made between these two sets of adventures that previously were considered separately. In chapter 11 the 'data' transforms one more time: from connections of individual and collective experiences to demonstrate how those experiences are entangled by and with the policy and practice contexts associated with ISM as outlined briefly in chapter 3. In this way, I hope to demonstrate how, in my (re)search into ISM, there is never any finality or fixity in my (or other) interpretations of that which acts as data for this project. Instead, I hope to show how onto-epistemological framings that disturb traditional qualitative research, might actually offer more in thinking with and for ISM. Moreover, such data transformations did not occur independently of my role as researcher.

At the same time as my data transformed, so too did my researcher position -- in complex and dynamic ways. These shifts in researcher position vis-à-vis data are outlined in the red texts that are scattered across this thesis.

### **5.3 The Smooth and Striated Spaces, as well as Becoming.**

In this section, two Deleuzian concepts need to be introduced in advance, which are 'smooth and striated spaces', and 'becoming'. This section is not a detailed discussion of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy as that is beyond the scope of current research. Nor am I making claims to present a comprehensive or deep understanding of their philosophy or their particular concepts: again, this is beyond the scope of the current project and also reflects how these scholars have generated a whole field of scholarship that is full of contestation. However, what I would like to do here is to demonstrate how an engagement with Deleuze & Guattari (1987) leveraged a shift in my understandings of both ISM, and towards my onto-epistemological understandings of engaging with and doing research. I do this here by situating the Deleuzo-Guattarian concept of 'smooth and striated space', putting this in relation with their concept of 'becoming', in order to demonstrate and suggest how these concepts have been useful and productive in re-orienting my understandings of spatialization in the context of this research on ISM and this thesis as a form of representing those understandings.

#### **5.3.1 The Smooth and the Striated spaces**

According to Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) philosophical musings, striated space is where phenomena like identities and social practices have become stabilized; smooth space, on the other hand, is identified with instability and through which new identities and practices become possible. There are points, lines and spaces in both of these theoretical spaces. However, in the striated space, lines tend to go from one point to another in routinized and formulaic ways. As such, the nature of lines in the striated space is closed intervals. Also in the striated space, one closes off a surface and locates it according to assigned breaks. Striated space is therefore filled with fixed points and elements, organized metric lines subordinating to points, as well as distinct forms and orders. Whereas in the smooth space, it is the opposite. Points are between two lines therefore the nature of lines are the open intervals. Also in the smooth space, one distributes oneself in an open space. Smooth space is therefore '...the continuous variation, continuous development of form; it is the fusion of harmony and melody in favour of the production of properly rhythmic values (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 528). However, their distinction is not offered as a way of privileging either of these two spaces. Similarly, they propose that it is not the features of these different spaces that allows different formations of identity and practices to happen, but that two kinds of formation set distinct roles for points and lines and spaces, and produces and creates two different spaces. They also add that 'The two spaces in fact only exist in mixture' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 474), in the process, 'smooth space allows itself to be striated, and striated space reimports a smooth space ... all progress is made by and in striated space, but all becoming occurs in smooth space' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 486). Therefore, the essential operation is the transformations between the striation and smoothness: 'the mode of spatialization, the manner of being in space, of being for space' (532). Furthermore, 'the smooth and striated are not types of space or place so much as

conceptual tools for thinking about space' (Dovey, 2010: 20). This focus on transformation, and on the betweenness of these theoretical framings of being/becoming in/for space inspires my re-thinking of traditional and dominant conceptualisation that views the world in terms of pre-existing unities that are framed and understood in/through fixed and binary oppositions. This thinking, nudges and shifts the research, the research process as well as this researcher towards a more thorough engagement with the dynamism of the concepts operate as/between binaries as well. In this sense, ISM is a voyaging, rather than specifically as a point of departure, a point of arrival, or even as a logically understandable process of adjustment. And, by the same token, thinking is a voyaging, conducting research is also a voyaging, an ongoing spatialization. Voyaging itself, is 'a becoming, and a difficult, uncertain becoming at that' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 532).

### 5.3.2 Becoming

Deleuze's earliest suggestions regarding 'becoming' appears in his book *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (2006), and *Difference and Repetition* (1994). Traditionally, Western philosophers sought their philosophies to come to rest in a 'being', where being was conceptualised as the final and stable unity. In *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, Deleuze proposed the concept becoming. His becoming, in one sense, occupies the role that previous notions of being had played in much previous philosophy, in the sense that becoming is also the final reality, behind which there is no other reality. In another sense, Deleuzian becoming is more disturbing and unsettling than the stability offered by conceptualisations of being (May, 2003). In what might appear a complete contradiction – and Deleuze's work might be said to be full of these. -- Deleuze utilised 'being' in his book *Difference and Repetition*. However, he emphasized that, unlike predecessors, this is the being of becoming. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari further developed the concept becoming. One of the most important points of Deleuzian becoming is that, becoming undermines stable identities, fixed terms, as well as pre-existing ontologies; instead, it exists in and as transformation, through the ceaseless departure from and returning to (unstable) identifications. According to Deleuze & Guattari, 'What is real is the becoming itself, the block of becoming, not the supposedly fixed terms through which that which becomes passes (1987: 238).

For Deleuze and Guattari in their later joint work, 'all becoming is a becoming-minoritarian' (1987: 320). In Deleuzo-Guattarian terms, 'majority' and 'minority', by no means signify a relation of bigger and smaller in terms of quantity. Rather, these concepts refer to the statues of domination or, universal standards, and of subversion of the dominant respectively. Both the majority and the minority are necessary in thinking about and through the idea of becoming, whereas neither is singularly essential in the process of becoming itself. Both the majority and minority are identifications whereas becoming itself is not. Becoming implies 'two simultaneous movements, one by which a term (the subject) is withdrawn from the majority, and another by which a term (the medium or agent) rises up from the minority' (1987:321). It is in alignment with these Deleuzo-Guattari concepts that I announce my speculative engagements in viewing this current research as a becoming. As such, I note here, the potential in my approach to shift from and to traditional qualitative research methodology as a 'majority' framework. At the same time, I presage my disturbance of the binary insider/outsider in terms of my researcher position a productivity in the Deleuzo-Guattarian terms of 'minority'.

In this thesis you'll see two spaces, the striated and the smooth. On the one side, I consider the utilization of traditional, mainstream, representationalist qualitative research method in this research: interviewing, transcription, thematic analysis, as the basis of striated space. In this striated space I draw a picture of the transnational practices conducted by my 20 participants, by British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. The repeated reading of interview transcription helped me to get to know my 20 participants as distinctive individuals. It also helped to demonstrate how taking transnational education, as an episode in the life trajectory of participants, is embedded in students' past experiences, as well as in their future life expectations. I do this, most particularly, through the presentation of individual portraits in Chapter 6 (British participants) and Chapter 8 (Chinese participants). Themes I produce in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9 reveal the two adventures taken by British and Chinese students in each other's country respectively. These adventures are about the engagements with China in the form of everyday transnational practices by my British participants (Chapter 7), as well as the perceived uncertainty in both academic and daily experiences for my Chinese participants as they engage with their ISM experiences in the UK (Chapter 9). Still in this striated space, how my participants made sense of the ISM associated and how that might be (re)framed in terms of the policy and practice contexts in the UK and China is also discussed.

On the other hand, I consider the departure from this traditional, mainstream qualitative research method, as the basis of operating research and research sense-making in the Deleuzo-Guattarian notion of smooth space. In this smooth space, represented most obviously in the several theoretical reflection sections throughout this thesis, you will see how Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy about the striated and smooth space, about language, about the becoming, as well as Koro-Ljungberg's inspiring thinking about what is data, disturbed my applications and understandings of the traditional qualitative research methods initially adopted. This is not positioning striated and smooth space as a clean binary framing how I understand and continue my understanding of ISM and the research processes. Instead, you will see how, in this space of research practice and representation, several Deleuzian concepts, for example – 'order-words', 'incorporeal transformation' and 'noncorporeal attributes' – were not only closely embedded in transcribing the interview recordings, conducting the subsequent thematic analysis and translation analysis, but also offered new understandings and possibilities for utilising these traditional qualitative methods in researching ISM.

In addition to thinking through and attempting to represent how these disturbing onto-epistemological concepts were put to use in this research, I will also attempt to highlight how, as a cross-cultural and bilingual researcher myself, I am imbricated in and through, the smooth spaces of this research. It seems to me that multiple boundaries had already existed for and/or in this research even before I started to do this research, before you started to read this thesis. However, this is not how this research has actually happened. In the smooth spaces of the research, me as a researcher transforms from an invisible to visible actor/actant in the research, my researcher position also shifts from specific to ambiguous. Therefore, me as a researcher appears continually in this thesis, in the color of red. (Why it is red? You'll see it in Chapter 8). Moreover, this red bit of me becomes more and more noticeable, transforms from appearing only between two chapters, to wandering in and amongst the chapters of this thesis. For example, this red me appears at several points in

Chapter 11 when I discuss some of the about translation issues attendant on this research. The continuous conversion between smoothness and striation, between stability and movement, between settling and disturbance is one of the most significant threads that not only runs through the data, through my participants' stories, but also penetrates into and produces my self-reflections as a cross-cultural and bilingual researcher.

In summary, based on the introduction in Chapter 4 of the traditional qualitative research methods applied in my research, as well as the future discussions in this chapter about the onto-epistemological disruptions and movements arising from my engagements with Deleuze and Guattari, and with Koro-Ljungberg, I summarise here the key methodological components that I take forward into my results sections and beyond.

My research is an exploration of ISM using traditional qualitative research methods. However, it is also an exploration of the possible becoming attendant on the use of onto-epistemological framings that disturb those traditional methods. On the one hand, I conducted face-to-face interviews and transcriptions in my participants' first languages in order to get access to their multiple life realities of ISM. I also attempted to follow the 6 phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006): phase 1 of this process involved a close reading of interview transcripts and helped me to become even more familiar with my 20 participants. It also provided a basis on which I produced the individual pen-portraits that are presented in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8. The themes emerging from the interview data produced on the basis of operationalising phases 2 to 5 of Braun & Clark's framework for thematic analysis, allows me to interpret and (re)present what I consider as the commonalities in the transnational practices conducted, respectively, by British students in China (Chapter 7) and Chinese students in the UK (Chapter 9). Furthermore, an addition to Braun & Clark's framework for conducting thematic analysis, and as a function of translating my Chinese participants' interviews into English, I identified a number of key words used by these Chinese participants, which I considered significant and allowed me to make connections between some of the language used by Chinese participants and that used by their British counterparts. These connections form the blueprint for Chapter 10 in which I demonstrate a further method of data analysis which I term 'translation analysis'.

On the other hand, I recognise how, what I outline immediately above as my methodological approach, was greatly influenced by my engagements with the alternative onto-epistemological framings that I discuss in this current chapter. In this, I suggest that what seems like a straight-forward qualitative study on ISM becomes more complex. For example, based on the Deleuzian assumption about language as a doing, as well as the ontological flatten between enunciations and bodies, statements and actions, I focused on how my participant' utterances revealed the transnational practices my participants conducted that are linked to the statements they made, within the ISM-associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China. With regard to the application of Koro-Ljungberg's thinking of data in my research, it is one of the main conceptual frameworks for understanding, in a more complex and nuanced way, how data in this current project appeared: as individuals at one stage (Chapter 6 and Chapter 8); as distinct adventures taken by the two participant groups at another stage (Chapter 7 and Chapter 9); as a set of connections between these two participant groups, at a further stage (Chapter 10), and then, as a tentative set of collective experiences in the final stage of my

analysis/interpretation (Chapter 11). Moreover, at the same time as my data transformed, so too did my researcher position in complex and dynamic ways. These shifts in researcher position vis-à-vis data are outlined in the red texts that are scattered across the thesis. And finally, Deleuzian 'smooth and striated space' and 'becoming' inspires me to see and research ISM from a more productive point of view. This is a way which, instead of seeing partaking in international education as a separate life episode working on adaption and adjustment, considers it as active engagements international students conduct with the stability and instability, the settling and the unsettling produced by education mobility. Deleuzian 'smooth and striated space' and 'becoming' also shifts my thinking about this research and this thesis as the presentation of my PhD journey, from the traditional qualitative point of view as representing my research participants' studying abroad experiences, to a more inclusive and dynamic process of engaging with not only my participants' but also my own mobility experience within the wider landscape of globalisation, IHE and ISM. The shift in my thinking about this research also transformed the relation between my research participants and me, from the being researched and the researcher, to being both the participants and witnesses of ISM.

My decision for doing a PhD about the transnational practices of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK did not come out of the blue. I did my bachelor's degree in biology in China, and spent those four years in gradually realizing that I prefer encounters with people instead of with other creatures in labs. Post-graduation, I worked one year in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language (TCFL) -- an area which is completely unrelated to my undergraduate degree. During this year I got to know and made friends with some foreigners (I'll talk more and at length about this word 'foreigner' later in Chapter 10 of this thesis). This experience produced in me an image of a whole world outside there, a world I had never bothered to think about it before. In no small way because of this awakening, I decided to do a master's in psychology in Manchester, in the UK. Some of my thinking around this decision went like this. First of all, a one-year Master suited my initial intention of having a bit of taste of the western culture and then heading back home. Secondly, one of my British students back in China described Manchester as one of the best places in the world. Right now, when I am sitting here and telling this story, I think I agree with him.

I did my master's in counselling & Psychotherapy Psychology at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU). My Master's dissertation was about symbolic consumption by Chinese students in the UK. I engaged with this research not least because I saw some of my Chinese friends' almost obsessive shopping, on buying things that, at that time, I did not think they really needed. Now I think that this level and kind of consumption depends on how you define this word 'need'. Well, this could be another three years of a PhD, so I'll leave it there for now.

The current PhD came from a significant moment: there was one time my Korean roommate asked me, all of sudden: "are you lonely?". I stood there and could not stop wondering, am I lonely, are my Chinese friends lonely, are all international students lonely, not only Chinese or Korean or Asian, but also western international students? Do my Chinese friends buy things because, at least to a certain extent, they are lonely? If Chinese students feel lonely in this country, would it be the same for British students studying



abroad, for example, in China? If studying abroad is such a lonely and challenging journey, why do we do this? All of these struggles, are they worth something?

Reading relevant literature offered me a broader perspective in terms of the life experiences of international students. According to this literature, international students are required to face and overcome significant and serious challenges in both their academic and social lives. However, studying abroad is also a valuable and exciting adventure. Based on my own experience, it seems that none of any of these elements can speak for my whole study abroad journey. What I hoped to achieve in focusing on the study abroad – or ISM – experiences of international students as part of this current PhD, was an overall understanding of students' life reality. Furthermore, I became increasingly aware of the sharp increase in the number of Chinese students studying in the UK, as well as the imperative for more frequent and meaningful education cooperation efforts between the UK and China, which tend to act as the external forces exerting both direct or indirect impacts on students' transnational practice. Therefore, the transnational practice that my research focuses on includes both an exploration of individual students' experience of ISM, and an exploration of the entanglements between the policy and practice contexts of ISM and those individual experiences.

From September 2016 to October 2017, as part of my fieldwork for PhD, I crossed the geopolitical borders between the UK and China, between different provinces and cities in the UK and China. I talked to the 20 participants face-to-face in order for them to share their feelings of being a foreign student in the host country just at that moment when they were in mobility. In order to ensure the accuracy of transcriptions, interviews and transcriptions were conducted simultaneously. Considering that my participants were all full-time students, interviews were almost all conducted on weekends, so I had at least one week of time gap for transcribing each interview. This was particularly important for my engagement with British participants' interview data because their dialects were commanding me to do the transcriptions as soon as I could still remember some details of their stories.

In terms of my experience of conducting interviews with my British participants in China. I felt surprised about their openness as, to be honest, they talked more actively than I expected. I even had the occasional feeling that they really did want to talk to someone about their experiences, and then I showed up at the perfect time. When I was conducting interviews with them in public places such as Starbucks, for several times I could sense the attentions we drew from local Chinese people, especially in some cities where it was still not normal to see foreigners walking around or sitting over there with a Chinese person, such as in Chengdu and Chongqing. Some people gave us a double look, some people stood a bit to listening what we were talking about. It was like we, my participant and me were together creating and staying in this 'foreign zone'. I also felt that my participants seemed more used to living with this attention as they were barely distracted from their talking whereas I even could not resist occasionally looking up and checking if it was my illusion of somebody staring at us. However, this sense of being an 'attention collector' appeared more significant when I was conducting the thematic analysis on my British participants' interview data. This was especially the case when they talked about their being the minority in China, which can be seen in Chapter 7.

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2017, I finished all my interviews with British participants. On the same day, I emailed my supervisors and wrote, 'I'll see you in Manchester'. Then, metaphorically, I carried not only the interview recordings, part of the transcriptions, but also many life episodes of my British participants, back to the UK.

In terms of my experience of conducting interviews with my Chinese participants in the UK. The most noticeable impressions I gained was that my Chinese participants were not as scattered widely as my British participants were considering that, I did not need to travel that far in order to meet my Chinese participants in different cities in the UK. What is interesting is, I hadn't realised how huge China is and how many miles of travelling I had to do in order to approach all my British participants in China. The geographical vastness of China was made particularly apparent when, I came back the UK and was able to talk to one Chinese participant in Scotland after only four hours of travelling. In China, four hours of travelling on the train, you would probably still stay in the same province. As a result of this observation, and for almost the very first time, I realised that China is huge. Even though I had been repeatedly telling people about China's vastness for such a long time, it seems that, up until this point, I had continued to take this hugeness for granted.

## **Analysis and Discussions**

The analysis and discussions part include five chapters (from Chapter 6 to Chapter 12). In Chapter 6 and Chapter 8, the distinctive life experience and transnational practice of 10 individual British and 10 individual Chinese participants are presented respectively. In Chapter 7 and Chapter 9, themes from interview data tell the one adventure of British students in China and another one of Chinese students in the UK. These two adventures to a certain extent represent the ISM realities for these two particular groups of students in these two particular countries, at the individual level. In Chapter 10 some translation issues involved in this research are discussed. To be more specific, 6 Chinese words are translated and interpreted. These Chinese words describe some of the shared feelings between not only my Chinese participants, but also between my British and Chinese participants. In this chapter, I trouble the simple version of translation, demonstrate the complexity and confusion. Furthermore, during the translation process, the life experiences of Chinese and British participant groups started to make connection, my position as a transnational and bilingual researcher also started to shift. In Chapter 11, the interminglement between the policy and practice contexts of ISM in the UK and China, as well as individual experience is discussed. Finally, Chapter 12 is a summary of the findings of my research, as well as the contribution of my findings to extant ISM literature.

### **Chapter 6: Getting to Know the Generation UK Participants as Individuals**

In this chapter I present the portraits of my 10 individual British participants with distinct features and life experiences. These portraits were produced through phase 1 of my thematic analysis as getting to know my participants from the repeated and close reading of their interview data. These portraits help to demonstrate how studying abroad has different meanings for different students, how transnational practice also differs for different individuals. I also discuss my theoretical reflection about what is data, when data became data at the end of this chapter.

#### **6.1 Individual Story**

There have been some arguments about the tendency towards the assumption of international students as a homogeneous group and thus being classified by broad categories like nationality or ethnic group. Critics of this approach to thinking about international students point out that this construction, risks an overgeneralization of international students and even of those who come from the same country (Lee & Rice, 2007; Wu, 2015). Hanassab (2006) argued that even though international students share some commonalities, there are also differences among them. He therefore suggested to examine students' experiences and needs based on their nationalities. However, other studies demonstrate that even taking a national perspective is a too broad approach in

conceptualising international students. This latter approach points to the fact that international students are influenced by distinct personal, familial and institutional factors, therefore students from the same country do not necessarily experience the new environment in the host country in the same way (Jones, 2017; Heng, 2018). Although the 'international students' being represented in the literature cited here are students mainly from Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, or to put it another way, from the traditional sending countries, the diversity of students from the same destination country can also be seen from the British participants interviewed as part of this current research. For these 10 participants, some had been to China several times whereas others had never even thought about going to China before encountering the opportunities offered by the Generation-UK programme. Equally, some of the participants seemed more relaxed whilst others seemed to struggle more, particularly at the initial stage of their ISM experience. Some participants were more language proficient than others. Some participants seem to pay more attention to their academic study during ISM whereas others seemed to consider this opportunity for partaking in transnational education as a wider life experience.

What needs to be mentioned is, the individual pen-portraits I produced in this chapter and Chapter 8, came from the first phase of thematic analysis conducted by me as: familiarising myself with my research participants by repeated and close readings of the interview transcriptions. These pen-portraits are located firmly on my data. I presented individual students by pulling together what they said, how they made sense of their own transnational life and study experiences. These pen-portraits are part of my analysis whereas it is not thematic analysis. The individuals I present here

### **Alex: that quite relaxed girl**

Alex is the one participant who seems to be more relaxed than most of the other British participants. As she stated, *I think British people we have to kind of a bit less uptight in China, we have to be a bit more relaxed* (line 383-384).

Alex had spent one year abroad in Japan for her bachelor degree. What she learned from this one-year experience in both her academic and social made life, made adapting to China – as another study abroad destination – relatively easy for her. As she outlined, speaking of her academic study experience, *everything was fine* (line 245). Most of the teachers that she encountered in China were very nice. Although there were quite a lot of drills, she believed these were particularly helpful when learning a language. In terms of her daily life, as what would happen to foreigners in some parts of China, her friends and she were stared at and even photographed without permission by Chinese people on several occasions. This intrusion bothered her a bit, but she was willing to accommodate it as *one of those things, like if you get really angry about it you're just gonna be angry all the time* (line 272-273). She linked it to a previous experience in Japan when she had noticed people frequently slamming a door in front of her whereas in China for some reasons she almost stop thinking about the slamming. Before she went to China she was told that there were certain subjects that should be avoided at all costs, including topics related to Tibet or Taiwan. However, she

found out that *Chinese people don't seem care about it* (line 170-171). She even managed to make her mum relax by not telling her that she and her boyfriend would go about on electromobile with no helmet or any protection.

Alex felt quite *sad for having missed out on a lot of cultural experiences in China because of the language barrier* (line 329-334). However, it was for the same reason that China did not really shock her. The language barrier meant that she retained a great deal of distance from the culture. Equally, she did not get absorbed into Chinese culture enough to have reverse culture shock either when she returned to the UK. As she described, *I spent one week for Christmas then I went back to China, and I didn't really have any feelings either way. Like I wasn't in the UK going oh I really missed China but I wasn't in China and going oh I really missed the UK either. ... I'm quite lucky, or maybe just because I'm heartless or something ... I don't know* (line 345-351).

### **Connor: it's all difficult because I'm a foreigner**

As a foreign student in China, Connor experienced some inconvenience. One time, in order to tell his bank he changed his phone number, he needed to not only go to the police station to prove he was still in China and get a paper, but also had to go to the Yantai University office to make them to sign the paper. After all of these troubles, it took him two weeks to finally inform his bank officially that he had changed his phone number. He summarised this experience as *It's all difficult because I'm a foreigner* (line 254). He suggested that there might be other examples but stated that *I can't remember because I was here for so long and I adapted to everything so nothing was really so crazy to me* (line 259-260).

However, Connor also talked enjoyably to me about many tiny pleasures in his life. He had been to China three times before his current experience through the Generation UK programme. These previous visits were for teaching English, as an intern and as part of the Cambridge University exchange programme. As such, he stated that he personally had experienced no sense of culture shock. He said that he knew loads about China, he even knew Chinese geography better than English geography. He enjoyed his study and believed that all the teachers liked him because he was a good student, even though, he also said *Sorry, I love Chinese but I think it sounds horrible* (line 164). He described one canteen of Yantai University as *oh my God the best place ever* (line 30-31). Every day he would go there and get his juice from one lady, get something else from another lady and her husband, who made really good noodles. He knew all of them and talked to them all the time. He even gossiped about one of his Chinese friends being called by her mum as 小虎儿 (little tiger). This Chinese friend was his food partner who introduced him to lots of Chinese food whereas as he said, *some of them I did not like. ... I tried to pretend I like it. I think it's very British, British people are very good at pretending* (line 177-179).

In Alex and Connor's story, mobility is about a sense of so many daily issues being difficult whereas nothing being really difficult, about lots of tiny things keeping affecting them whereas no need to make a fuss of anything. Mobility is about accepting the unsettling,

getting used to this unsettling, as well as living with this unsettling. I pick this up in the discussion of what does this 'mobility' in ISM mean in Chapter 12 of conclusion.

### **Billy: make the most of It**

Billy definitely stood out among these 10 British participants because I could see all the struggles he had had to go through and what he made out of them during his three episodes in China. His utterance *make the most of it* (line 452) is a strong personal statement.

Billy had been in China 3 times with quite different feelings and achievements. The first time he went there to be an English teacher in his gap year; the second time he went to a private language school to learn Chinese; and the last time he was with Generation UK programme. As his summary of these three experiences,

*I think my first experience was the worst one, because nobody understood my need to have friends. And it was very difficult because the school didn't want us to make friends. I found a quote in a book and it was like we were kind of caged birds and we got out 2 hours every week and just put back into the cage again and then they would take care of us ... that's what it feels like. I should have moved and I should have complained to the organization but I stuck to it and I made the most of it. My second experience was very beneficial. It wasn't my favourite experience but it was a beneficial experience, because I did learn a lot and by the end of it I made lots of friends. And my third experience was the best experience because I came out with HSK5 Chinese, which is what I set myself an aim for. I made some great friends, I had a way more comfortable and independent life. I guess it's first the worst, second getting better, third the best (line 421-432).*

Billy stated that *isolation* (line 199) was the main difficulty he had to face during his first 6 months in China. The high school he went to as an English teacher was described by him as *in an almost ghost town with lots of new roads and buildings just being built up* (line 211-212). There was only him and another foreign teacher. As a foreign teacher, he felt that it was not encouraged for him to make friends with his Chinese students as it seems that foreign teachers were treated as young people who could not be trusted. He tried to talk to and get to know other Chinese teachers. They did get along but he felt this kind of friendship was a bit forced. He felt that, his Chinese teacher colleagues, who were all in their mid-30<sup>th</sup>, lived in distinctly different worlds to him. However, he still gained some understanding about China from this experience. He found Chinese people as *very patriotic and passionate about China* (line 256) whereas in England people are a bit more *cynical* (271) in terms of national identity. He also noticed the multiple gaps existed in China, in terms of both people between each generation, as well as between wealth and poor people. He felt in England his generation was not so different to his parents' whereas in China, every decade people think something different. He was also shocked that Chinese people could be very snobby to poor people. As he used to eat noodle in a kind of migrant village with people from all over China who were in informal work. When he invited one of the Chinese teachers to have dinner there, she refused to go because she did not want to be seen eating at place like that. He thought this only occurred in the UK and described it as *the Chinese version of Britain's class system* (line 279).

Speaking of Billy's second time in China. At first, he stayed for a while with a Chinese family, which was an experience described by him as difficult but also interesting. The family treated him *as a son which was very touching* (line 165) but he felt that they worried too much. They even gave him a curfew. Because of some family issues there was always a tense atmosphere and he found having a conversation with them as very difficult. As soon as he moved out and lived by himself, he had enough free time and freedom to make Chinese friends and learn Chinese. He concluded that *I say you can't go to 'home stay' and expect to just learn Chinese from a family. You have to make friends* (line 182-183).

During his third time in China, Billy was a participant in the Generation UK programme. The structured Chinese teaching and learning styles at university, which was quite different from his previous one-on-one Chinese tuition in a private school, gradually became one of the key challenges for Billy. In Billy's opinion, the textbook was very bad because it just gave an unbelievable amount of characters to foreigners, which was very *unrealistic* (line 291). He was also not impressed by the HSK exam as there was not enough time so he felt like instead of really reading and understanding something, he was actually just skimming and guessing. *And I felt like the HSK reading section, they would encourage you to basically not read the whole thing, you'd have to try to spot out the right characters from the articles* (line 254-256). *I can still remember what I was thinking when he told me this: now you share some common feeling with Chinese students when they are doing this annoying IELTS.* In the end, Billy decided to take the study in his own hand and he did pass the HSK5 exam. He loved Shanghai because Shanghai is like London: where he could find some western civilization, a more comfortable feeling, as well as people who shared similar experiences with him, no matter whether Chinese or not. He stated that, *I had a way more comfortable and independent life* (line 431-432).

Billy's statement 'make the most of it' speaks not only for himself, but also for all my British participants and all my Chinese participants. In his three experiences, struggles and difficulties never ceased to bother him whereas new possibilities never ceased to appear either. Partaking in transnational education is a Deleuzian spatialization, a voyage; a ceaseless process of 'striated space is constantly being reversed, returned to a smooth space' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 524); a demonstration of how to 'make the most of it'. I also pick this up in Chapter 12.

### **Kate: I made Chongqing bigger for myself**

Kate was my very first British participant who studied in Chongqing University. Among all of my 10 British participants, she seemed to be the one who struggled the most during the initial time of her adventure. However, the achievement, the new possibility she made out of her experience was also obvious, as she said *I made Chongqing bigger for myself* (line 377).

Taking part in Generation UK was Kate's very first time to China. She could hardly speak any Chinese. Therefore, she found out that before the class had started, apart from her roommate, it was difficult to make friends with anyone. She felt people staring at her on the street because she was a foreigner. She said she did not feel that way by the time we were talking but she could still remember that sense of insecurity during the early part of her

experience. She also struggled with what to eat because the food in Chongqing was too spicy for her. As she said *I like Chinese food in general I think. ... In the UK, we don't think Chinese food is spicy at all. ... I think lots of British people aren't really aware that every area has different food* (line 156-163).

For almost the first three months of her stay in China she felt *a bit upset* (line 381), doubted if it was the right decision in moving somewhere so different, and *wholly doubted* (384) if she fully belonged there. However, at some point she just gradually got used to everything. She said she was *very settled and content in Chongqing now* (line 422) because she had made more friends; she hung out with all different nationalities. She even met her Russian boyfriend in Chongqing. People helped her, and she also helped herself. She explored one area after another of Chongqing and, in doing so, made the city bigger for herself. She used to travel a lot in Asia and had previously taught English in Thailand for very short amounts of time, *but China was a new challenge because I actually had to live here* (line 402-403). Despite these initial misgivings, *things come together at the time you know* (line 394-395). When I am writing down her story, she is self-financing for continuing studying Chinese for two more years at Chongqing University after her six months scholarship of Generation--UK. She also planned to do a Masters in international business at the same university. Therefore when we talked about her roommate for whom integration into China was relatively easier because she was British Chinese, Kate said, *but still I have a, you know very good chance because I'm staying 4 more years* (line 105-106).

Similar to Billy's experience, Kate also encountered severe challenges brought about by education mobility. Like Billy, she also managed to learn from the challenges, utilized the challenges, transformed the challenges into more possibilities. In Kate and Billy's stories, mobility is more about building a bigger life space, mobility is a becoming. I discuss this further in Chapter 13 of conclusions.

### **Kaite: the girl who preferred everything to be organized**

Kaite utilized 'organised' very often during the interview. It seemed she needed everything to be organized. She attributed the frustration coming from disorganised stuff as part of her culture shock. *It's kind of culture shock maybe in the first month because we tried to organise things and nothing was happening and everyone was very frustrated* (line 181-183). For example, the international student center was not very helpful because there was only one person there who could actually speak English, and this person also seemed to go on holiday a lot, *I never understand why she was always away* (line 234). And *the Chinese government doesn't seem to have any regulations on visas. I never quite understand how visa works in China* (line 240-242).

Kaite was studying in Haerbin, a cold city in Northeastern China, quite close to Russia. Her father was from Hong Kong so she had been there previously on several occasions for travelling or visiting family connections. She also went to Shanghai with an exchange programme where she stayed with a group of British people during the whole 3 weeks. Therefore, she actually admitted that she had not known much about China before she went there with Generation-UK.



Kaite felt the teaching and studying in China was very structured and organized, whereas there was almost no organized social activities in Chinese universities. On the contrary, the teaching in UK universities was not very organized whereas the social life in UK universities was much more organised. As she described it, *so sometimes it's like oh I wouldn't mind playing badminton but I don't have anyone to play with* (line 154-155). She also felt surprised that *every Chinese studies very hard* (line 129-130). Therefore, one of her social activities was *so if you do want to hang out with someone you would be like, let's study together, like going to a coffee and studying together* (line 125-127).

One of the challenges of taking transnational education is facing and dealing with the uncertainty and unsettling in every day's transnational practice. To represent it in Deleuzian terms, it is the process of 'smooth space is constantly being translated, transversed into a striated space' (524). In Chapter 8 and 9 it can be seen how my Chinese participants also work on the striation in the smooth space. I pick up and discuss further about this point in Chapter 12.

### **Hayley: other things can come from it**

If Kaite was the one British participant who always studied, then on the contrary, Hayley, who had never been China before, was the one, and the only one British participant who admitted that her and several other British students taking part in the same programme, were not so bothered to study because the British Council paid for them: *I think it's more experience and fun* (line 163-164). However, she also stated that *other things can come from it* (line 273).

It seems that the significance of supports from friends is more obvious from Hayley's story. They had a core group of people who were like families. They did everything together, they supported each other. As Hayley described, *Because it felt like we got that close and we had such great friends, we kind of forgot about home a bit, and it actually felt like we didn't get homesick at all. We got used to it because we had each other* (line 340-342).

It also seems that, from Hayley's experience, there existed looser academic standards for, not all the international students or British students, but at least for some British participants of the Generation UK programme. Hayley felt that her Chinese teachers were more relaxed, *more like friends and less harsh* (line 222) than British teachers were. The whole study experience was, as she described, *I don't know I, feel like in the UK it's really official, ... but I feel like in China if anything went wrong, I don't know, I feel like you can get away with a lot more things. ... I just think because we knew it wasn't our degree, ... that's why we weren't asked to be that committed* (line 151-164).

However, *other things can come from it* (line 273). One of the things Hayley gained from this programme, is *just how you can change your attitude* (line 385-386). Before Generation-UK she had never thought of visiting China, she was not sure if that would have been her thing either. However, when this interview was conducted, China had become one of her favorite places. She did not want to go back to the UK. She also indicated that *the good thing from the British Council is that ... it gives people an opportunity to see China from a different perspective, in a more positive way. ... and I think it makes people want to learn Chinese, I know I want to* (line 261-266). Moreover, she started to like going places where

people do not speak English and she had to speak their language. *Just open your eyes to see new places* (line 400).

From Hayley's story I sense a different kind of student from me, from most of the Chinese students in the UK. This is a kind of student who tends to focus less on study, who is required to commit less in the academic area. This is a kind of student who is experiencing China, experiencing a whole different kind of culture, as what is expected in some of the UK policies as well. This is also a kind of student who has gradually taken the role as promotor of China, as what is expected in some of the Chinese policies. A further discussion about this different kind of student is in Chapter 11.

### **Leona: language changes my way of thinking, it becomes my direct feeling, it becomes more Chinese.**

Leona is the one who spoke the best Chinese among these 10 British participants. Sometimes she even found herself speaking Chinese in her head because, as she said, language changes my way of thinking, it becomes my direct feeling, it becomes Chinese (line 233-234).

Leona studied Spanish and Chinese for her undergraduate degree. However, as she said, without this experience, the language she had learned at university would all remain as very textbook Chinese. Benefiting from her language proficiency, it seems that Leona's experience was intermingled with more Chinese clues than other British participants'. For example, she enjoyed taking the train for travelling around China because she could meet people who she would generally not meet at university and her Chinese was good enough so *it is also interesting to listen to people talking on a train* (line 68). She tried to learn Chongqing dialect when she was traveling there because she felt that *language joins people together* (line 199), therefore speaking even just a bit of dialect made her feel *local* (line 202). She understood and even loved some Chinese TV shows very much, which helped her to gain deeper understandings about Chinese culture and Chinese people, about *what Chinese people value and appreciate, what they focus on, what they enjoy* (line 364-365). She made me realize some of the subtle expressions in Chinese I had not noticed before by explaining the difference between 我困了 (a sleepy way of feeling tired) and 我累了 (just feeling tired but not sleepy).

Leona's transnational experience in China has been such a significant episode of her life trajectory that when she came back the UK she felt having not much to talk about with her English friends. She was eager to share her experience whereas her friends seemed not very interested. She felt like she was the one who was doing something else and having less things in common with her UK-based friends. However, she also said, *I'm very proud of my experience. It's not something everybody can have. I feel like I can speak with confidence about the real China, I could tell people that what they've heard is not the real China* (line 379-381). It is the China where people also have fun, they go shopping, they go travelling, they also go to KTV. It is also the China with natural beauties. It is the China where Leona felt and saw things whereas *nobody speaks things like that* (line 383).

Leona was the only one British participant who explicitly listed what could be done for making her feel local, feel fitting in. If taking transnational education requires a certain level

of integration as what is indicated in some literature, Leona's story might be a good example in terms of British student's integration to Chinese culture. However, if taking transnational education is not simple as stepping into an unfamiliar territory and working on the integration, what is another possibility? I pick this up in Chapter 7 and Chapter 12.

### **Emmie: it's how you meet people**

Emmie had been in China four times before her current participation in the Generation UK Programme. She is the one who seemed to enjoy the communal life style in China the most. She described all of her unexpected encounters with Chinese people in China as *it is how you meet people* (line 149). Personally Emmie felt not much culture shock because she had been there so many times, she knew exactly what to expect: *I think maybe because I expect to see weird things, so I don't think it's weird. It's China so* (line 75-76), as she said.

Emmie met this random guy in a souvenir shop in Beijing, that random lady from a food market in Tianjin, another random boy on a train, and one more random nine year old boy in Xian who asked if they could practice English, to whom she responded *OK I have no plan let's talk* (line 144). She added almost all of these random encounters on Wechat (a Chinese online social app) and they still talked to her and sent her photographs occasionally. She understood this phenomenon of Chinese people just approaching and talking to her as a culture thing which, if happening in the UK, would be seen as suspicious. In China however, it feels normal for her. She said *I mean generally they just want to practice English which I think is quite nice, ... and I don't mind talking to people, it's how you meet people* (line 146-149). Like all the other British participants, she also had a sense of being the minority in China. Although she was the only participant who appeared to like this aspect of living in China, it was a reality check for her. **Emmie is the British participant who broke my previous stereotype of British people who cared about personal space and highly valued their privacy.**

When coming back the UK for vacations, Emmie and one of her friends who was on the same study abroad programme, both felt sad and missed China so much that they met in China town in London for a bit of Chinese taste. She personally could not make a clear sense of her feelings on returning to London. One possible explanation she offered was that *'it was definitely difficult because it went from that communal kind of living in the dorms, having people around all the time, being able to go out to badminton, go out to watch a movie. ... It was really odd not having people knocking on your door and being able to go out and just do things, and that was really strange, and I didn't know what to do* (line 298-303).

One of the aims of Generation UK is encouraging British young people to engage with China. Emmie's story to a certain extent reveals what kind of China is actually being engaged by British students, in what form of engagements. I pick this up in Chapter 8 about the themes of British participants' interview data, as well as in Chapter 11 about the connection between policy and practice contexts and individual experience.

### **Thirza: the endless tourist**

For Thirza, being interested in a different culture was like a family tradition. Her mum was an Arabic dance teacher for almost 30 years. She got interested in East Asian culture when

she was 13 years old. ... *so to me it seems like natural to be like very interested in another culture* (line 16-17), as she said.

Thirza had been to China once before her participation in Generation UK in 2008 for teaching English, then she was with Generation-UK from 2016 to 2017. The 8 years of interval made her more sensitive to the huge changes that have happened in China. For example, the first time she had visited Wutai Mountain, a Buddhist holy land in China, the infrastructure was not very good; the most people she saw were monks, there were some provision in English which seemed for the convenience of other pilgrims from India, Nepal and so on, not for the *tourist tourist* (line 77). On revisiting there 8 years later, everything was different. There were beautiful new roads, restaurants and coaches and coaches of Chinese tourists. *I feel like the first time, the Chinese people didn't seem to really understand that you've been visiting why you've been visiting. But the second time Chinese people themselves want to visit. So there was the idea of going on holiday, the idea of visiting the other part of China was much more normal* (line 92-102).

Thirza had been to a number of different areas in China and it seems the more places she visited, the harder for her to really describe what is it she really loves about China, because *it's got a lot of characters* (line 115). She personally preferred south China such as Guangzhou she described as a kind of minority culture where *there is lots of small streets, and the houses smell very old and I feel like that I've seen a bit of, like, history* (line 181-182). However, she did not like Beijing. *It's a bit too big and a bit too like, ... maybe it's too busy too noisy. I found it's too hard to get a sense of it* (line 157-160).

Thirza's experience also reveals what kind of 'China' is engaged with and will still be engaged with in the future by not only British but also other international students. The diversity and fast changing pace of this country make both the engagement, the preparation for this engagement, as well as the achievement from this engagement more complicated, but also more exciting.

The engagement with China conducted by British students through education mobility penetrate through Leona, Emmzie and Thirza's stories. Because of the distinctive features of these three participants, their engagements differ. Leona's language skill helped her to gain better understandings of local Chinese people's life and the Chinese way of thinking; Emmize's preference of the communal life style made her get used to and even enjoy the phenomena of Chinese people just approaching and talking to her, which might be seen as an intrusion for other British participants. Thirza sensed the diversity and development of China from her several travelling experiences. The voice of these three individual British students present how different meanings and values can be generated from partaking transnational education by different individuals.

### **Joe: it's just Joe**

Joe was that British participant from whom I could hardly see any distinctive features at this 'getting to know my participants' stage, even the easiness could not be discerned from him. He had been to China twice before Generation-UK to visit the Chinese friends he had made in UK university. He had basically no culture shock because, as he explained, the first two times, he knew some Chinese people, and after his travelling experience, he knew more

or less what to expect in China. He could only speak some basic Chinese whereas he met one British guy on the same programme who had been staying in China for a year and more proficient, and this guy helped him to sort out almost all the problems he encountered as an independent resident in China. *He is a very useful person to know because even though Generation UK prepared somethings for us, like we had this pre-departure brief thing and people who did the programme before came and answered our questions. But there are things you need to know but you wouldn't think of asking unless you've spent some time in China* (line 371-375). He also felt it was a bit difficult to make friends with Chinese, however, he said, *I will stay here for only one semester, during such a short time it is actually quite difficult to really make good friends with anyone* (line 134-136).

## 6.2 Theoretical Reflection: Data became Data

As it is discussed in Chapter 5, data as the representation of real has been criticized by many qualitative researchers. Koro-Ljungberg (2013: 274) pointed that, instead of seeing data as an ontological promise of truth seeking, it might be more helpful to discuss '... how have we come to know certain objects as data, what data may want, how data might take initiative and create itself in connection with other data, and how data could discover, invent, and displace the subject'.

Let's start from how data becomes data. I cannot make an explicit identification of the starting point of the existence of my data. It might start from me repeated listening to interview records and conducting transcriptions. It might start from me sitting there, talking to my participants face to face and recording. It might start from me drawing the interview question list based on my own experience. It might also start from that second when my Korean roommate asked me if I was lonely; from that second when I saw my Chinese friends just buying things, no matter if they actually needed those things or not, and thought about cultures of loneliness. It might even start from an earlier moment which I myself cannot remember or clearly identify. At different research stages -- from me conducting and reading interview transcriptions -- data appeared in different forms: they could be sounds and accents of my participants, they could also be some thinking of myself. However, these 10 participants, these 10 individuals did start to be individuals, appear like individuals. They appeared as individuals gradually, and became representable as individuals for both me and my readers. From this point of view, I consider the appearance of my participants in the form of individuals, as data becomes data, for this thesis, for both my readers and me.

To be honest conducting transcription was kind of a process of struggling and even suffering process for me, especially the transcriptions of my British participants' interview recordings, which bothered and even annoyed me occasionally because of the participants' accents and the many times of repeated listening to the interview recordings in an attempt of achieving more accurate transcriptions. It was the listening this carefully, the typing that accurately kind of issues that occupied all my attention. The intense attention I paid to the linguistic details and to representing these accurately partly resulted to a relatively

fragmented impression that I gained from my data. There was no single participant who appeared as a coherent figure with a distinct character for me back at this time. Data existed in forms of voices with accents which were easy or hard to understand, of incomplete sentences, of pieces of talking. In terms of my engagement with data, it felt more like my data was making commands to me to listen in detail, to type carefully and represent accurately. The relationship between me and data was intense, and my data was distant and harsh. With regard to my researcher positionality at this transcription stage, the boundary was clear, the position was simple, there existed my participants' talking and voices, the words and transcriptions as data, and me as a researcher who was trying to transform it from voices to words.

When I finished the transcriptions and started to read interview data through instead of listening to them for transcription, these 10 participants started to talk to me. This talking was more than just a series of commands. I gradually gained the sense of equal communications with my data, a sense of cooperation in terms of needing them to stand up as 10 distinctive figures, 10 beings. They offered me evidence of being 10 distinctive figures, 10 beings. At this stage, this 'getting to know my participants' stage, there remained a distinct degree of dualism in my positionality vis-a-vis the data. On the one hand, there was me, a researcher who was trying to know, and on the other hand, there were 10 participants who could be known, who agreed to be known. Importantly, the communication between my participants had not started yet. If doing research is, in part, about creating a research space, then back at this time, there existed merely 10 separate dots with different colours and shapes in that space. However, my data would not be satisfied with remaining with this status. When I was trying to produce themes, the 10 British dots started to talk to their British peers in English, the 10 Chinese dots started to talk in Chinese as well. They started to share their experiences, name their common feelings in English and Chinese respectively.

## **Chapter 7: Themes of British Participants' Experiences**

In this chapter I present the thematic themes of my 10 British participants' interview data. These themes represent British students' transnational practice from mainly three aspects which are, the everyday engagement they conducted with the host country China, the difficulties and challenges they needed to face brought about by education mobility, as well as the achievement they made from the opportunity offered by Generation-UK. I also discuss my theoretical reflection about how data started to talk to each other in this chapter.

### **7.1 Representation of Themes of British Participants' Experiences**

#### **Theme 1: The Vast Diversity of China**

Some of the British participants referred to their prior, direct or indirect encounters to Asian or Chinese cultures. These encounters take the form of, for example, travelling experiences, short-term exchange programmes, English teaching programmes, as well as

shared family interests towards different cultures. Such encounters appear, as one of the key factors leading to their involvement in international student mobility. However, instead of preparing them for China, it seems that the impressions gained from and through these previous encounters, actually failed to prepare them for the vast diversity of China, considering that this impression, which tends to be quite general and vague, can hardly be generalised to different areas and cities of China.

*China really interests me as a whole, but Chongqing specifically I didn't know anything about (Kate, line 21-22).*

*When I applied for this scholarship, I didn't know much about Haerbin, I thought oh look there is a scholarship in China which would be very cool, like Shanghai. And Haerbin is very different to Shanghai. It's quite an industrial city, like quite, not dirty but grey, and it's not a very exciting place to look at, there is no like pretty buildings. So I went to Haerbin, I was like where is this place (kaite, line 161-168).*

In addition, it seems that they make a clear distinction between a more international, more western China such as Shanghai and Beijing, and a more traditional, more 'real China'.

*So I think Shanghai is like London, ... We often go to Shanghai for a little bit of like western thing, western civilization, ... I don't know I just feel Shanghai has very international feeling and is a lot more comfortable. So more often we booked a weekend in Shanghai because we would go when we were feeling maybe a bit homesick or something ... then we booked a weekend in Shanghai because we has so much fun there (Billy, line 313-322).*

*It was because her house was in a very small village it was nice to see that side of Chinese life as well, rather than just the big cities. ... I mean in the cities I guess it was quite fast-paced, everywhere there were new buildings being built, new companies. But in the village you see people still have fun and things, and it was very quiet and there weren't many people around and there was no pollution. .... I mean I don't know but I guess it was a bit more traditional (Alex, line117-127).*

*Whereas my impression is in South China there is more minority cultures, like in Guangzhou there is lots of small streets, and the house smells very old and I like that, I feel I've seen a bit of like history (Thiza, line 180-183).*

*I'm very glad that I was placed in Wuhan because it was kind of like, we didn't have tourists, so we had to learn Mandarin and it was like real China really (Hayley, line 68-70).*

Apart from what is discussed above, universities located in different parts of China also have different situations.

*Basically the British Council doesn't send people to the best universities in China, so a lot of the international students that go to these universities come from developing countries, so they have different ideas and attitudes to British students. ... I think the British Council didn't mention anything about the other kind of students. ... if you go to 北大 (Beijing University)', for example, you've got American, English people, you've got, you know European, French,*

*they all come from a certain type of culture. And in the kind of university that the British Council sends people to, other international students we made friends with won't be from a very similar culture to you (Billy, line 350-3724).*

Theme 1 reveals what kind of 'China' my participants were actually engaging with. It is not the China they heard about from BBC or they learn about from Chinese history documentary. It is not the 'whole China' being represented in Generation-UK policy either. The diversity of China can be seen from several aspects including the characters of cities, the food, the academic and social environments. Moreover, this diversity made the transnational practices of these British participants differ from each other.

## **Theme 2: Sensing Boundaries from the Everyday Transnational Practices**

### **2.1 The Language Barrier**

Language does matter, and it seems that this is more evident for my British participants, considering that a lack of language proficiency made their life in China harder for them.

First of all, some British participants identified the language barrier as one of the main causes of their culture shock.

*... rather than like a shock while I panicked. I think I panicked when I just got on campus, I think it was part of the culture shock, ... and it scared me to think that I didn't know where I was gonna stay and I couldn't find out anyone who could speak English. That's the thing with language, I felt like a bit stuck (Hayley, line 313-318).*

*I think my culture shock lasted about one month, I really didn't like that, I just wanted to go home. It was not that bad. I was happy with my study; I loved my teachers and classmates. But when I went to the supermarket or went for dinner, I can't read the menu, I was like, where am I here? I don't understand anything they say. You know when people all speak at the same time you can't understand them, different dialects as well, you know it was difficult (Leona, line 196-204).*

There is also a strong sense of uncertainty and frustration that comes from living with a language barrier.

*I think when I first went to Haerbin because it was so different. It was a kind of maybe culture shock. But maybe it was just because I couldn't do anything because my Chinese was terrible more than anything else. It's like there was a lot of uncertainty on everything, ... it's kind of culture shock maybe in the first month because we tried to organise things and nothing was happening and everyone was very frustrated. ... Also like after one month or two my Chinese level just got to a high enough level to be able to actually talk to the people in the dormitory to sort out all the problems. I think the culture shock sort of things were caused more by the language issues than anything else' (kaite, line 174-177).*

In addition, the language barrier also limited their understanding of Chinese culture and Chinese people.



*For me the issue was the language barrier I think, I didn't really make many Chinese friends because I could only make friends with Chinese people that could speak English because my Chinese was really bad (Alex, line 149-152).*

*I've missed out quite a lot in terms of the cultural experience in China just because of the language barrier (Alex, line 250-252).*

*I feel like I can never experience it fully because I don't speak Chinese (Thirza, line 150-151).*

The language barrier is even identified as the one and only one barrier to know Chinese people and Chinese cultures, by some of the British participants.

*I don't think it was to do with the personality or cultural differences. I think it was just language barrier (Alex, line 156-158).*

*I think the only difference is language. Deep down the personality is all the same, the characteristic is all the same. You know you have outgoing people in England you have outgoing people in China, you have shy people in China shy people in England, you have all the same, but the language does make it different (Billy, line 406-410).*

## **2.2 Being a Foreigner, Being the Minority in China**

One of the most significant aspects of everyday experience for British participants, took the form of standing out, of looking so different that sometimes people stared at them and even wanted to take pictures of and with them. It is the feeling of, as Alex describes it, being a *rare animal in the zoo* (Alex, line 284-285).

*'Before this, I've always been like the majority, like in my town, at my school, everyone is British. ... I've never been like the minority. That was something difficult to get used to' (Kate, line 395-398).*

Making Chinese friends tended to be difficult because they were foreigners.

*But Chinese people are very open and friendly. They seem to be. I don't know if they just wanted to meet someone and practice their English (Kaite, line 322-324).*

*... because you're a foreigner, everybody wants to know you wants to have your Wechat, lots of people they want to know you but they don't really want to be your friend. It's just the illusion of, oh I have a foreign friend. ... You get lots of attention but maybe not so many friends, like good friendship (Leona, line 103-109).*

*... and they always wanted to speak English with me but I didn't want to speak English. So I was always careful like is he really my friend or does he just want to speak English with me. Some people they don't know what to say, they just almost like wow you're a foreigner this is amazing (Connor, line 181-187).*

Border studies have shifted its focus from a classical geographical perspective, which perceives borders as static and physical in their capacity to separate territories of different

states and countries, to an expectation of the erasing of borders and the establishment of a less bordered world resulting from increasing globalization (Van Houtum, 2012). However, in some more recent studies, instead of erasing borders, some scholars have recognized their multiplicity and complexity in terms of the particularities of lines and borders created by globalization for different actors. In addition, this more recent approach in geography highlights the need for explorations of alternative ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies to capture the new realities of borders (Ozdemir & Ayata, 2017). As Parker and Vaughan-William (2009: 586) stated, 'Rather than treating the concept of the border as a territorially fixed, static, line [...], we begin thinking of it in terms of a series of practices'. The construction and deconstruction of various types of borders is therefore 'the very story of human civilization and of contemporary social transformation' (Newman & Paasi, 1998: 193). This opinion has opened up new possibilities of understanding borders, not as a given but as a process of border-making or bordering that takes place through conducting social activities. Bordering refers to 'the everyday construction of borders, for example, through discourses and institutions, media representations, school textbooks, stereotypes and everyday forms of transnationalism' (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013: 3). Therefore, bordering is viewed as constituted through the socio-cultural, discursive, processual and functional processes by which borders are constructed and maintained. This new relational approach to borders locates 'borders' and bordering as significant subjects of inquiry (Parker & Vaughan-William, 2009; Doevenspeck, 2011) into, with regard to my research, international students' daily practice. Theme 2 of everyday bordering is a perfect example of how bordering not just happens around geographical borders, how it actually happens in mundane ways in social life. To be more specific, for my British participants in China, the language barrier and being a minority are, in effect bordering practices of their transnational experiences. Furthermore, this inquiry also helps to answer one of my research questions, as to grasp how the sense of being mobile can be linked to students' life events and daily practice.

### **Theme 3: Going beyond Borders**

In this research, for these 10 British participants, language does limit their possibilities of making more Chinese friends, integrating into local life, as well as gaining deeper understandings of Chinese culture. Language is a barrier to their full engagement with China. However, speaking Chinese dialect can make people feel fit in. Chinese, especially the horrible Chinese some British students spoke, can also contribute to establishing connections with international students from other countries.

#### **3.1 Language Joins the People Together**

Speaking dialect can make people feel local and fit in.

*I really like 重庆话 (Chongqing dialect) as well, it's very interesting, because it joins the people together though I don't understand. It is Chinese but slightly different. And the people they are very proud of the dialect, and they are very willing to share you a small part of how to speak 重庆话. You just feel like, you know you have the 本地人 (local people) and the outside people, it makes you feel local if you can speak a little bit. They really appreciate the effort if you can say a couple of words (Leona, line 163-171).*

Chinese can also become the common language of international students in China. Moreover, it seems this is a slightly different level of Chinese, compared to the language spoken by native Chinese speakers.

*The Korean people in my class didn't speak English so as our Chinese got better we could communicate in Chinese. That was actually really fun so in the second half of the year I think I made more friends that way because if you speak to a Chinese person it's really difficult to have a conversation because they speak quite fast. But if you speak to your fellow students like we were all the same level, it's not too bad, so that was quite fun (Alex, line 330-338).*

*And her (Leona's Thailand roommate) English is not so good, so we spoke Chinese together, and Chinese became our common language (Leona, line 97-99).*

*The Japanese guy is very nice, ... We had to communicate in Chinese because he did not speak English (Connor, line 165-167).*

And finally, it is also interesting to see how being a bad Chinese speaker in China could bring some random help from some random people.

*And even in a restaurant a few times like I couldn't remember the word or what I was trying to say and they were very patient and they were trying to help me with the Chinese. And I was like yes OK and they were helping me practicing even in like places like restaurant where you think they won't have time (Emmie, line 286-289).*

*The first girl I met was when I was on campus and I got totally lost and some like random Chinese guy was like, can I help you, which was very helpful and so friendly, then we hung out a few times (Kaite, line 41-43).*

### **3.2 Still Being a Foreigner, Being the Minority in China**

It seems that apart from drawing some annoying attention from local people, this being a foreigner, especially an international student, could also bring some advantages. Taking Connor's experience as an example, in Chinese university, teachers tend to adopt a not very interactive or collaborative pedagogical approach, instead adopting a didactic, one-way teaching style. In Connor's class, there were 16 Korean students who adopted a very similar approach to their Chinese peers in that they, did not ask questions. This was in stark contrast to Billy and another European student from Germany who would always ask questions.

*So I always felt guilty because I and the German guy would always ask questions and I felt like I was disturbing the teacher. But it's OK because they understood this was my way and they let me ask. So I asked fewer questions, I asked questions when it was really necessary (Connor, line 56-59).*

In this, it is more like a process of the majority and minority groups adapting to each other. From the ISM point of view, being a foreign student means not only working on adjusting different teaching and learning styles, but also being adapted and integrated by host country's education system.

Being the minority in China is an opportunity for a reality check, for the establishment of a transcultural reference in making sense of different circumstances.

*I had the feeling of being the minority, and I quite like it, I think not only to experience what it is like to be for other people, when they are the minority I think, it gives you a bit of a reality check I think as well, so you know what people might feel in different circumstances (Emmie, line 309-323).*

*It's a culture thing I think. I mean in the UK if people did it you would think they were really weird and you'd be probably suspicious, but I think in China I know a lot of people just will come and talk to you (Joe, line 222-224).*

*'I think English they are very reserved, lots of English people. ... They are very reserved and they don't ask questions. ... But Chinese people are very open and friendly. They seem to be, I don't know if they just wanted to meet someone and practice their English. They would ask any question, any question. ... But Chinese people in the UK, like studying abroad, they are much less asking questions. We've had this kind stereotype that Chinese students in the UK being quite quiet getting on with their study. I suppose it's because we are the minority in China so they are curious like oh this person is a foreigner. Whereas in the UK they are the minority' (Kaite, line 317-338).*

*I've kind of seen this in two ways, ... because I used to speak to my (Chinese) friend, and he said he used to feel a bit awkward because his English wasn't that great and when we were all speaking English in a big group he kind of feel a bit out of place and embarrassed. I think English people are really lazy at language (Hayley, line 249-257).*

This theme of 'go beyond borders' demonstrates how my British participants sensed the boundary brought about by education mobility, how they accepted it, lived with it; how they utilised what they could utilise; how they made the most of their life in China. This theme also answers one of my research question as to explore how new possibilities can be produced from the multiple connections students made in new settings. This theme has resonance with mobility as a Deleuzian becoming in a way that, striation can be transformed to smoothness, just as borders can be transformed to new possibilities, as well. I pick this up and discuss it further in Chapter 13 of conclusion.

#### **Theme 4: Living in an International Bubble**

*It was like an international bubble, not so much Chinese culture but Chinese culture mixed with other cultures' (Alex, line 341-343).*

*'I hang out with all different, all different nationalities (Kate, line 203-204).*

*This Japanese guy is very nice, and he lives next to me. ... And I have a French friend, ... and she is the only French girl there, and there are very fewer Westerners so she is my Western friend and I help her with her Chinese. And I have a Chinese friend. ... We always eat food together, he is like my food partner, he introduces me to lots of Chinese food (Connor, line 165-176).*

*Although the aim of the programme was primarily to improve my Chinese and deepen my understanding of the country and its culture, being surrounded by so many Korean students here in Yantai has meant that I have also started to learn a bit of the Korean language and have started to understand some aspects of Korean culture. This is something I could not have expected prior to my arrival (Connor, line 144-149).*

This international bubble also exists away from campus.

*This bar is very foreign, most people are foreigners, ... just because everyone in my class were saying, oh let's go to this place (Kate, line).*

This 'international bubble' is an open space which not only involved foreign students but also maintained connections with local Chinese students, even though the breadth and depth of those connections depends, to some extent on particular institutional regulations. For example, several British participants mentioned the different and separate dormitory structures for international and local Chinese students. In some Chinese campuses, there is a curfew for local students but not for international students.

*We were quite lucky in Hangzhou Normal University. The international dormitories there all have separate rooms so no one has new roommates in the international section. It's really unfair because the Chinese students have nearly 4 or 5 roommates in each room (Alex, line 174-177).*

*My experience for this past year on the programme is that it's difficult to speak to Chinese people because they were all kept in different buildings, and they had a different day to us, they had a curfew at 11pm and then they were really busy (Billy, line 402-405).*

Whereas in some other universities, language partners and English corners were also adopted, which facilitates some more frequent encounters between international and local students, even though the initial intentions of these encounters tended to be focussed on language learning concerns.

*Our university gave us all our own Chinese language partner and they sent them to our class to come and find us, introduced themselves. ... I think it was a really nice thing that Tianjin applied (Emmie, line 187-192).*

*My other friend is Alen, I also met him at English corner. ... And English corner, it was a place every Wednesday the Chinese students would meet and they would only talk English for an hour. ... And usually I knew a few foreigners would go but I started to go there every week and everyone crowded around me and they wanted to talk to a foreigner (Leona, line 69-84).*

In their study of international students in Norway, Lysgard and Rye (2017) observed what they described as a foreign student 'bubble' on campus, which was interpreted as a separate space that requires little or no involvement in the everyday life of the wider city. Considering that the common language spoken in the bubble was mainly English and not Norwegian language, this tended to limit the possibilities for integrating into the local life for the participants of their study. In my research, on the one hand, this 'international

bubble' not only can be identified but is also explicitly described by one of my British participants (Alex). On the other hand, it seems that this bubble does not appear as a completely closed system; it includes some connections with local Chinese students and/or local people.

### **Theme 5: Fitting in or Settling down**

Kramsch (2010) has been an open critic of state-centredness in border studies. He suggested that instead of seeing borders as reflections of the territorial and social consolidation of state space, research focus could be more on an understanding of the emergence of a sense of locality. In this research, two slightly different but also related senses emerge when some of my British participants felt content, felt that they were enjoying their life in China, or felt that they had adjusted to or they have the confidence to survive China. These two senses are 'fitting in' and 'settling down'.

On the one hand, being able to say dialects and utilising some apps can produce a sense of fitting in.

*You just feel like, you know you have the 本地人 (local people) and the outside people, it makes you feel local if you can speak a little bit. They really appreciate the effort if you can say a couple of words (Leona, line 169-171).*

*But slowly you just got used to it and you find yourself as well kind of copying the locals and fitting in. Like having Wechat account, and getting a local card so you know how to put your money in your card. And the second time when I was in China I also used the apps like 支付宝 (an online payment app) and 滴滴 (an app like Uber) and that makes me feel like I fit in because I'm using 滴滴 (Leona, line 189-195).*

On the other hand, the feeling of having a life here, creating a life space for self can also produce a sense of settling down.

*I think everyone coped quite well. Everyone was really nervous and really scared at the first week. No one could settle. ... And I think once we started to do the Chinese lessons and get into route, it was just like a kind of day-to-day basis. And it's getting used to like different surroundings, different kind of life (Hayley, line 344-348).*

*When I came back to China the second time, everything is easier, everything. Because I speak some Chinese now, and I can buy things, I know some places. I'm very content now. Before I was completely lost, and didn't know what to do. I'm very settled in Chongqing now. ... I just build, make Chongqing bigger for myself. I've still got lots to see, because Chongqing is very big. ... Because I thought, what is Chongqing? I thought Chongqing was just the university and Sanxia Square. And I sort of learn Yuzhong area, I thought OK, I'm happy with this area. Then I learn about campus D area. I went to explore, Once I explore, I really like Chongqing. But before, I wasn't brave enough to explore, I was sort of stuck in the university (Kate, line 302-320).*

One of the interesting findings is, it seems that a sense of locality is not really necessary for some people to feel at home. As evidenced by Kate and Hayley, who were still living in an international bubble with contacts to Chinese people and Chinese culture being very limited. Partly resulting from her better Chinese language proficiency, Leona seemed to have gradually realised what she could do to feel local. Or it is more like a process of Leona creating a life space for herself with more Chinese or local elements being involved in it. Whereas for Kate and Hayley, what they had achieved was creating a more settling-down space for them with perhaps less Chinese or local aspects. Due to the limitation on the research scope, it is hard to draw any conclusions as, for example, if there exists a superiority between a sense of fitting in and a sense of settling down. Does a sense of settling down lead to being transformed to a sense of fitting in through individual's better development of language skill and cultural understanding. Or if either a sense of fitting in or a sense of settling down is an unescapable stage for every transnational practitioner. However, this finding can reinforce the argument of seeing international students as people who just simply step into a territory of unfamiliarity, as well as seeing partaking transnational education as a process of passive adjustment. Instead, international students are active practitioners who make their own decisions, create bigger life space for themselves. They actually voyage smoothly through mobility, being in space in ways they explore and suit them.

Moreover, some British participants also mentioned their experience of reverse culture shock when they went back to the UK. The world 'routine' was utilised frequently when they tried to describe what was lacking in the UK, in their homelands after their several months of time in China.

*..., it was a bit like culture shock to my own culture, like being disconnected to everything in the UK, and a huge uncertainty. ... and I felt my routine in China far behind (Thirza, line 191-196).*

*I don't know, a little bit culture shock again, a little bit distant from my own culture, ... You know in China, things change every day, these new buildings, but in my town, everything is exactly the same. Then when I came back to China, it felt normal, I got back into my routine, I'm settled in Chongqing (Kate, line 335-342).*

It seems that with regard to ISM, the establishment of a life space, a space contains day-to-day base, routines, as well as expectations for future are vital for the emergence of a sense of locality or belonging at bordered spaces for international students.

### **Theme 6: Make the Most of It**

'Make the most of it' is the statement made by Billy when he talked about the achievements he made from his experiences in China. *I would say, this is probably obvious but, to make the most of it. Don't waste your opportunity you have in China (Billy, line 452-453).* When I tried to name the theme of what these British participants gained from their transnational practice, this statement jumped into my mind immediately.

*Yes like just push myself. And I thought I can never do it. But I can. And it just makes me feel like there is so much out there, like within the world, and it's so good like to see the new country and to experience living in a different country. Just open your eyes to see new places. ... I still think it's different in quite a lot ways, but not to a great extent where it becomes a problem. It's something you can cope with and you can enjoy (Hayley, line 394-404).*

*I think I've learned a bit about myself ... because obviously there are a lot more students in the dorms, like not just British and Chinese but there were like Japanese, Spanish, Italian, American and you have to live in close proximity with people that you don't know. You've got personality differences, cultural differences, language barriers. ... you've got to be quite self-aware of which to use, how to joke, you know, you've got to be considerate of others I mean. ... So it's quite good to work on that kind of skill. Even if you don't like consciously think of it, I think it's just a thing you pick up and you start to get (Joe, line 251-265).*

*Well I think I'm more comfortable with different things. Like when people do things differently, think in different way, you just don't jump to the conclusion about if it is right or wrong, you just accept it and try to understand it (Thiza, line 197-180).*

*I think it's important to remind yourself out there it's an experience, and even if it's hard, you will grow and learn things from it. And you just need to remind yourself of that. ... I think people just need to keep an open-mind, trying to be positive about it and make the most of this experience out there (Emmie, line 335-342).*

*Just seeing myself being able to encounter difficult situation I wasn't expecting before. ... You just have to deal with it, carry on, you can't make a big problem (Leona, line 358-362).*

This chapter represents the one adventure taken by my 10 British participants in China as part of their ISM journeys. This adventure might start from the first Chinese movie or Chinese history documentary they saw; it might start from their cultural constructions of China as a whole, as a general image. In this adventure, these 10 youth witnessed the diversity of China, they experienced the boundary between them and Chinese people from the language barrier, as well as the sense of being a minority in China. They used to struggle with the uncertainty and diversity of China; they used to feel stuck because of the language barrier or organizational issues; they used to be conscious of being the minority in China who drew too much attention from local people; they used to doubt if it was a right decision to go to a place so different, if they really belonged there. However, at some point, they just got used to it. They managed to accept the weird and even crazy things and experienced them as reality checks. They could hardly be shocked or make a fuss of anything anymore because they were prepared. They used to attribute 'not knowing what to expect' as one of the causes of their culture shock whereas now, they expected unexpectedness. They also proved their ability of being global mobile, being confident in engaging with China, no matter in the form of settling down or fitting in, no matter being inside or outside of the international bubble. They made every single city they stayed, and even China bigger for themselves. They felt more confident, satisfied and comfortable in China. These 10 British participants made the most from their adventure, from the opportunity offered by Generation-UK, from partaking in education mobility.



## 7.2 Theoretical Reflection: Data Started to Talk to Each Other

After thinking about how data becomes data in Chapter 6, now it is time to consider 'what data may want, how data might take initiative and create itself in connection with other data' (Koro-Ljungberg's, 2013: 275).

The representation of theme is an integration of the voices made by all of these 10 participants. Every single British participant contributed into this story. They whispered to each other, voted to someone to speak for them in the form of theme. They cooperated so well that sometimes I even forgot there were 10 participants here. As it is discussed in Chapter 5 about the Deleuzian language, 'There is no individual enunciation. There is not even a subject of enunciation. ... Indirect discourse is not explained by the distinction between subjects; rather, it is the assemblage, as it freely appears in the discourse, that explains all the voices present within a single voice' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 88). From this point of view, it is interesting to see the relation between some of the themes and the various enunciations of different participants behind it. It is not that the utterances are being represented by the theme or the theme being supported by the utterances. They coexist with each other, they are each other. Taking 'make the most of it' as an example, it is a statement made by one of my British participants Billy when he talked about fully utilising this opportunity to experience China. When I was trying to name the theme of my British participants' achievements from their adventures, this statement almost just marched directly into my mind. Even though the achievements mentioned by these 10 participants vary from language development, the development of intercultural understanding, to self-development. The sense of struggling, the sense of an endless new becoming, cannot be encapsulate in their words. It is only this 'make the most of it' that speaks for these participants. However, as soon as this 'make the most of it' became a theme, it lost its identification as Billy's enunciation immediately, it ceased to be anyone's enunciation any more. It became the statement of an order-words which are expressed by all the noncorporeal attributes, by all the efforts being put by British students in order to survive, or fit in, or settle down in China, on the behalf of ISM, against the background of IHE. This is the demonstration of the link between statements and social actions. This is also an example of one voice speaking for several voices.

I shared all the joys and frustrations with my 10 British participants in China when we spoke English together, when I read their stories, when I conducted thematic analysis. Me as a researcher did not take any active role, occupy any specific position during this process as I did not need to, my participants would not allow me to do so either. They communicated to other participants, gathered together some of their life episodes. They also voted for different voices as themes speaking for different gatherings. Therefore, with regard to the researcher positionality issue at this 'producing themes' stage, I was not anymore someone who remained distant from my participants' and observed their experiences anymore. I was one of them. Moreover, even though I am a Chinese student in the UK, and my British participants are British students in China, I did not have any sense of being an outsider of this group. I read their stories so many times that I could not even remember anymore 'the unfamiliar becoming familiar' process. I just came to know them. From this point of view, the boundary between the being researched and the researcher did not exist. At the same time, the representation of themes speaks for the commonalities of these 10 British

participants, for the one adventure taken by these participants, against the broader background of globalization and IHE. Every theme is the one voice speaking for several voices. Every single British participant had the right to make statements and created order-words on the behalf of British students in China, of ISM whereas no one can make all the statements and take this one adventure on his own. From this point of view, statements and order-words weaken and eliminated the boundaries between individual British students as well. Therefore, in this 'producing theme' stage, the research space transformed from 10 separate dots and me, to one adventure of several lines running through one space under the name of British students in China.

## Chapter 8: Getting to Know the Chinese Participants as Individuals

In this chapter I present the portraits of my 10 individual Chinese participants with distinct features and life experiences. These portraits were produced through the first phase of thematic analysis, by doing repeating reading of Chinese participants' interview transcriptions and getting to know them. These portraits help to demonstrate how studying abroad has different meanings for different individuals based on their distinctive features, how transnational experience also differs for different individuals.

### 8.1 Individual Story

#### 简苗 (Jian Miao): the becoming of high mover

When I think about 简苗, two sentences she said would always be eager to speak for her, one of which is *我觉得我来英国最大的收获就是我一个人也可以生活的很好 (I think the most important thing I've gained from my life in the UK is that, I can live a good life just on my own)* (line 175-176). Another one is *我的生活跟大多数人不太一样 (my life is not the same as most of the Chinese students here)* (line 223-224).

简苗 admitted that *其实我在英国没有什么社交圈 (to be honest I have not got any social circle in the UK)* (line 121). She also admitted that she was not very good at getting along with people, which used to bother her a lot when she was younger, when she still worried about people would judge her as *不合群 (not fitting into the communal life style)* (line 133). She indicated that *中国人太容易受到大家庭的影响。这点是在中国生存最头疼的事，你的事都是别人的事 (Chinese people are too easy to be affected by the big family, which is such a pain of living in China. All of your businesses are other's businesses)* (line 411-412). However, she also indicated, *但我觉得现在中国社会也是越来越宽容了，尤其是在大城市，就是你一个人的话别人不会觉得你不正常 (I think now in China, people are becoming*

more and more tolerant, especially in some big cities, if you choose to be alone, other people would not see you as someone deviant) (line, 235-237). She introduced me the concepts of 'high mover' and 'low mover' in our interview. As she defined it, high mover is that kind of person who has been to many different places, who tends to establish not very stable but very specific friendships with different people for different purposes. For example, high movers might have sporting mates, travelling mates and more intimate mates to talk about more private issues. Whereas low movers tend to have a more stable life pattern and social network. Then she included, '我觉得我是比较典型的 high mover' (I think I am a typical high mover) (line, 266-267).

简苗 is the only Chinese participant who had worked before taking transnational education in the UK. Her previous working experience, according to her, made her life quite different from other Chinese students. She did not make any good friends in the UK since on the one hand, after two years of working, she felt that she shared less in common with other Chinese students, who seemed not as mature and realistic as she did. On the other hand, she did not have any passion for knowing British culture or making friends with British people either. She did not find group work as helpful because, as she described it, group work is like 大家都一个锅 (everyone eating from the same pot) (line, 89). She felt that when she was working, she knew exactly what was her responsibility, who was the leader. Whereas, when she was involved in group work, she could not really see the different contributions made by different individuals respectively because everyone got a similar mark. Her objectives for studying abroad were clear and employability-driven: getting the degree, gaining a broader perspective for her future career. Therefore, when we talked about her achievement of studying abroad, the very first thing she mentioned was 首先我有一个标签 (first of all, I've got a label) (of having transnational education experience) (line 417). Even though she indicated that such a label is not valuable for everyone, she still stated that it is one of the most significant advantages for her career development. 我觉得就我个人来说对就业有利 (I think, from my point of view, it would benefit my employment) (line 53-54), as she said.

### **台 (Tai): quite careless about almost everything apart from study**

台 stated, 我比较疏离, 我特别乐意这样 (I'm quite alienated, I'm very happy with this) (line 177-178); He also said to me that 我在英国可以说是极度封闭, ... 我对我这个极度封闭的状态特别满意 (I'm having an extremely enclosed life in the UK, ... I fell very content with this extremely enclosed status) (line 284-285). He spent four years for his bachelor degree in Taiwan, in such a place as he described, in this whole world, you would not be able to find anywhere else that is more sensitive about Mainland China and Mainland Chinese people than in Taiwan. He struggled when he was living there although it was also people there who helped him when he felt desperate. Taiwan means a lot to him.

Occasionally he would still go to Taiwanese restaurants in London's China Town for a bit of Taiwan dialect and taste. He learned how to keep a proper distance from people through his life experience in Taiwan. When I asked what does this proper distance mean, he answered: *就是指散漫一点，平常生活散漫一点，别想太多，凡事慢一拍反应 (I mean being a bit careless, being a bit careless in your life. Don't think too much, make a bit slow response to everything)* (line 110-111).

He put all his focus on study, as he described *现在就很散漫现在就啊无所谓无所谓，现在都很散漫，什么事情都很散漫，就只有学业上心上心 (I'm quite careless, like it doesn't matter. I'm quite careless about almost everything, apart from my study. I only care about my study)* (line 263-264). Even though he was not very interested in making friends with, the word he used was *老外* (foreigner) (line 74), he also felt that, *我觉得老外其实没跟我们差别这么多，都是一些人情事理的事 (I don't think foreigners are really very different to us, it's all about the emotions and rationalities of being human)* (line 141). A contradiction can be also seen in his saying *我在英国可以说是极度封闭。但是留学还是会带来变化的，... 还有就是没来英国的话很多你觉得你能做到的事情是空谈，就一点点练出来了 (I am having an extremely enclosed life in the UK. However, studying abroad still brings changes to me, ... All those things you thought you could do would be empty talking unless you actually come down here. Those are that kind of achievements you can make only from this daily practice bit by bit)* (line 284-287).

Carlson (2013) suggested that the ways in which international students become mobile should be studied from a processual perspective that connects student mobility with the trajectories of students' lives. Students' expectations and objectives for studying abroad, their previous studying abroad, studying in homelands or working experiences, their relations with family and friends, their imagined futures could all exert potential impacts on how they live and their willingness to engage with the places in which they currently reside. Therefore, instead of seeing studying abroad as an encapsulated period of time spent in the host country, transnational education experience should be discussed as a space embedded by and negotiated through the past and future. This interminglement of time and space can be seen especially from both *简苗* (Jian Miao) and *台's* (Tai) stories.

### **韩 (Han): quite passive when doing that project**

Generally, Chinese students tend to study business or science in the UK. *韩* is one of the only two Chinese participants who studied social science (Drama and Screen Study). The disadvantage of Chinese students studying social science, especially some disciplines closely associated with history and culture, can be seen from his story.

He described his major as *就是它会沾很多原本你认为和这个专业一点关系都没有的东西。Seminar小组讨论的时候就会觉得特别恐怖，这种人文的东西你根本聊不过人家，而且有的时候你都看完了你也聊不过，人家不用看都知道怎么聊，因为这就是他平*

时接触的东西。比如有一次我们讲fandom, 就是粉丝这种文化现象, 就是他们很多人都喜欢doctor who, 就类似于国内的快乐星球之类的。然后底下就有人说哦我都知道好激动啊, 然后中国学生看着就懵了。还有莎士比亚, 他们讲莎士比亚都跟唠家常一样, 那些古英语, 就是对中国学生来说很难 (It is associated with lots of stuff you thought would be nothing to do with this major. Sometimes when we are doing seminar talking I would feel horrible because I am not capable at all of conducting this kind of culture conversation with my classmates, even though I have read lots of materials. They know what to say without reading anything, this is part of their daily lives. Like one time we talked about fandom, and many students love Doctor Who, something like our Happy Planet. Then these students shouted about how excited they were, and Chinese students all looked lost. And Shakespeare as well, they talk about Shakespeare like their domestic trivia, but that kind of traditional English is really very difficult for Chinese students) (line 166-176).

When we talked about group work, he said 我个人还挺喜欢 group work, ... 但是因为他们都是那种, 他们当时提主题的时候就是我们做的是关于黑胶唱片, vinyl record. ... 他们当时一说到这个话题就炸锅了就啊好激动我想做。但是我跟本就不知道他们在说什么, ... 因为我不了解这个话题, 做这个话题的时候就觉得自己很被动 (I personally quite like group work, ... whereas the thing is, I remember one time they proposed a topic about Vinyl Records. ... They were so excited and eager to do it when they talked about this topic whereas I had no idea what they were talking about at all, ... I almost knew nothing about this topic. I felt quite passive when we were doing that project) (line 140-151). When I am writing his story, 韩 is doing his Masters in America. I wonder if he is still facing the same struggle.

韩's story, to a certain extent, reveals the barriers of 'internationalization at home', of the ideal hope of utilising international students as cultural resources in globalising the curriculum. A detailed exploration of this issue is beyond this current research, however, in Chapter 9, the themes of Chinese students' experiences and, the extent of exclusion of Chinese students especially in the academic area is discussed. In Chapter 13, the conclusion of this thesis, some suggestions based on Chinese student's' academic experiences are proposed.

### **唐 (Tang): I am staying in this awkward status like being pressed from both sides**

唐 is another one Chinese participant and non-business/science student who studied in the University of Manchester, and is the one who used the word 'awkward' most frequently. She described Linguistics discipline in the University of Manchester as an awkward position because it was too small to be an independent faculty, therefore it had to be combined with other disciplines, which was something she did not realise when she was applying for this university. This situation led to, in terms of study, her feeling confident to write dissertations in Linguistics whilst she never knew what the standards for Screen Study assignments were. She complained about the difficulty in achieving a good mark in this academic area: she did almost everything she could, such as drawing a structure, discussing

with her tutor, getting someone to do the proof-reading for her. She felt so confident and yet, it almost drove her crazy when she saw it was still just a mark of 50 as a result. She summarised that *我觉得这个主观比较强的, 可能就是不是很好写 (I feel like it is really difficult to write essays of some topics of more subjectivity)* (line 87).

In terms of her relationship with her classmates, she liked her classmates in Linguistics because even though they did not know each other very well, she still felt they knew her and they would say hi to her. On the other hand, her classmates of Screen Study seemed not very friendly and more distant. Compared to Linguistics, Screen Study was a smaller class with fewer students sitting as *一坨一坨* (one bunch of people here and another bunch over there) (line 125). The absence of one person would lead to the whole bunch just disappearing. When they were meant to be discussing in seminars, it looked like they did not bother to talk about what they were supposed to talk, they'd rather chat about their personal lives which was something she knew almost nothing about. All she could do was just *尴尬的笑笑 (keeping an awkward smile)* (line 130). Moreover, her classmates of Screen Study all belonged to the Drama and Screen Study department, therefore they were more familiar with the students of Drama. As she described, *我就是插在中间了 (I am staying in this awkward status like being pressed from both sides)* (line 145).

The Chinese word *诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility)* (line 123) was used by 唐 when she was describing her feelings of not being very confident about her English, not having enough courage to talk to people especially those from America and Europe. However, this feeling is not only about language. It penetrated her story more generally. She felt it when she was in seminars talking. She felt it when she got a not very satisfying mark for the dissertation she worked very hard on, so she went to talk to her supervisor to clarify the reasons, whereas it seemed her tutor was not very patient. As she said, *每次我都, 特别想跟她好好聊, 每次她就板着脸, 聊了5分钟就把我轰出来了。就是一脸不情愿, 她给你的感觉就是你论文写的就是差, 我就是不想跟你聊 (Every time I would expect that we could talk about my dissertation properly whereas every time all I got was her straight face and five minutes of chatting, then she would just ask me to leave. She looked so reluctant. The attitude I got from her was that your dissertation was just terrible and I just do not want to talk to you)* (line 75-78).

### **冷 (Leng): a slowly progressive experience**

冷 came to the UK with an exchange programme between his university and Bradford University. He described this programme as offering him a chance to *出来看一看 (go abroad and have a look)* (line 6). When I engaged with 冷 's story, I continually had a sense that it was the gradual adjustment process between that very moment when this interview was conducted, and that second he had just landed in the UK, that penetrated silently in his story. Even though this sense of gradual adjustment is not something that can be easily recognized and described explicitly as an entity even by himself. As he said, *这是一个渐进*

的过程吧，反正我自己是感觉不出来 (I think this is a slowly progressive experience, I personally do not think it's something perceptible) (line 27).

冷 repeatedly mentioned that he knew nothing when he had just come to the UK. He came here with four other Chinese exchange students. At the very beginning of their adventures, they had this strong sense of **相依为命** (*relying heavily on each other for survival*) (line 135) because they knew nothing, whereas now, they had split up and all had their own lives. He used to live in the accommodation operated by the university because he knew nothing, whereas now he was able to find a flat of more reasonable rent by himself. He felt quite excited at the beginning because everything seemed novel whereas now he even occasionally felt bored. As he explained, it got dark too early in the UK in winter, and there was not too much entertainment for him.

冷 had a very loose relationship with almost everyone, and spent most of the time himself. He had several **零零散散** (*scattered*) (line 152) friends, three or four drinking mates, several studying mates who he would only meet at class and when the class finished, they would all **各回各家** (*going back their own houses*) (line 149). He kept in touch with five or six very good friends in China because he quite cherished this friendship. However, they did not talk very frequently because they **互相之间已经没有太大的交集了** (*actually do not have a lot in common anymore*) (line 202-203).

### **张冕 (Zhang Mian): I learn first of all, how to accept**

A strong sense of uncertainty and the effort being made in order to deal with this uncertainty, as well as the dilemma between controlling and accepting uncertainty are two of the main themes in 张冕's story.

In terms of his academic experience, 张冕's major was in a cross-disciplinary area as he needed to take courses in three different faculties which are automation, computer science and psychology. The different standards of assignments in science and social science made him very confused. He needed to be reasonable and convincing in psychology, which was fine for him. However, he described some teachers' requirements in the science disciplines as **很具体很死** (*very specific and extremely rigid*) (line 48). He summarized **做一样的东西我在这边付出的会比国内多很多，因为国内就很容易达到要求，这边就不会** (*For the same project I feel like I need to contribute much more here than in China because it is quite easy to reach the standards in China, but it is not that easy here*) (line 29-31).

In terms of his social life, 张冕's best friends were students who flew together with him from China to the UK. These friends, as he explained, went through the hardest part of his transnational experience with him. He described this feeling as **因为我觉得出国最艰难的部分是从家里往出走的那段时间，因为大家的新奇感和畏惧感都混在一起，... 所以说就是既有一点好奇心又有一点依靠感** (*I think the hardest part was the period I gradually*

*left home. We had this mixed feeling of excitement and fear, ... we were all curious, at the same time we all needed to rely on others)* (line 93-96).

When we talked about culture shock, he stated that he had not really experienced any adjustment difficulties. He felt lonely occasionally only because a girl he liked very much had married. Apart from this, there was nothing could not be changed. The uncertainties and struggles, no matter whether in his study or daily life, all could be overcome. What he has learned from this transnational experience was how to accept. As he said, *首先是要接受, 就很多事情发生了, 你也控制不了, 就也别多想* (*I learn first of all, how to accept. Many things have happened, things you cannot control, there is no point to think too much about them*) (line 208).

冷 (Leng) and 张冕 (Zhang Mian) both mentioned this sense of relying on others especially during their initial stage of studying abroad. I pick this up and discuss further in chapter 11 of translation.

### **童 (Tong): gaining some peace from studying abroad**

The complex relationship with her families in China is a very significant part in 童's story. She is the only grandchild of her paternal grandparents. Personally she did not want to study abroad, it was her families, especially her grandfather, who realized that almost all of his friends' grandchildren were studying abroad, mainly made the decision and offered partial funding to her. As a result, when she was struggling with her life in the UK, instead of talking to her mother on Wechat, she would rather just let it go because if she did talk at length with her mother, her grandparents, as her sponsors, would complain about why she had time for her mother but not for them. As she indicated, *出国就清静了嘛* (*it's like gaining some peace from going abroad*) (line 243). However, she also mentioned that one time she had this feeling of sadness all of sudden after a conversation with her mother as, *你也没想到你会想家吧? 我说是的。她说, 我也没想到你出去了我会想念你* (*Her mother asked, you would have never thought you would miss home, would you? She answered, no. Her mother said, I would have never thought I would miss you when you were abroad either*) (line 253-254). 童 was eager to go back to China when we were talking. She believed that, even though China is not the best place, it is still the most suitable place for her. However, she also stated, *我回国后就感觉到, 其实英国也没有那么差, 中国也没有我在英国时觉得那么好。各有好坏, 学会适应比较重要* (*I've started to realize since I came back from China the last time that, actually the UK is not really that bad, and China is not really that good either as I used to feel when I was here. There are both good and bad things in these two countries, what is important is learning to adjust*) (line 329-330).

### **不嗔 (Bu Chen): this is just one part of my life**

Like Alex, 不嗔 he had some previous studying abroad experience as he received his undergraduate education in America. It seems everything was fine for him. In terms of his



academic life, he described group work as ‘我在UCL的时候当然做过group work, 我觉得很开心啊。...你跟人家相处嘛, 就需要开开心心地过啊, 那如果很矛盾的话也做不下去啊 (I did group work at UCL, I was very happy with it. You get along with people, you’ve got to enjoy it, otherwise how are you supposed to get the work done) (line 57-60). With regard to his social life, he made different kinds of friends. Some of them were categorised by him as 酒肉朋友, 就是一起抽烟喝酒, 然后又不干什么实事儿 (drinking and eating mates, the things we would do together would be just smoking and drinking, but we wouldn’t do anything serious together) (line 130-131). 但是这只是生活的一部分 (But this is just one part of my life) (line 154). There were also two friends who were described by him as best friends who, as he explained he would chat something very private with, because 大家一起经历了一些事情吧 (we’ve been through something together) (line 201).

One of the interesting phenomena he spotted in the UK is that, British people do not pay as much attention to the degree or the ranking of university as Chinese people do. One time his friends and he met this old lady on a train, who asked them about which university they were studying in, they answered Sheffield University. This old lady said her son was also studying in Sheffield. They asked about which faculty, she said no, not at Sheffield University, he was at Sheffield Hallam University. 然后说那句话的时候感觉到她的眼神当中透露出一丝骄傲你知道吗。就感觉他们英国人感觉对于, 就日常的英国人的话对于学历不是很敏感。学校的好坏他们并不是像中国人追求的那么严重 (You know you can see the pride from her eyes when she was telling us this. I feel like British people, generally they are not that sensitive about degree, and they are not that eager for going to the best universities as Chinese people are either) (line 96-99).

### 张月 (Zhang Yue) and 周 (Zhou)

Just as Joe who appeared as a figure who can hardly be captured, two Chinese participants also gave me this impression, which are 张月 (Zhang Yue) and 周 (Zhou). Both of them were in their first year of undergraduate study, and retained sufficient in contacts and with support from families and Chinese friends in order to overcome the challenges in both academic and daily life. They had conducted some so-called intercultural communications with their British classmates, in the form of, for example, 三个人一起吃中餐, 聊到要不要去夜店玩, 也聊考试分数什么的。也挺琐碎的 (Three of us would eat Chinese food together. We would talk about if going to a club, or about our exam marks. It’s all about these trivial things) (张月, line 101-102). However, 跟他们聊不能扯太远, 还是我的原因吧, 我英文就那点 (I cannot be too tangential when I’m chatting with them. I think it’s my issue, I’ve only got such limited English vocabularies) (张月, line 148-149). They felt

everything was quite exciting and novel when they just arrived the UK. However, when they had got used to everything, they felt *其实没什么 (actually there is no big deal)* (周, line 18) and even a bit bored occasionally. Both of them stated that they had never experienced culture shock considering that *你知道我交的英国朋友都不太深, 所以就都打打招呼泛泛而谈, 不会有什么特别 shock 的经历 (I haven't built very deep friendship with any British person. It's almost all that kind of saying hi and some small talk, so I could hardly experience anything very shocking)* (周, line 212-213).

## 8.2 Theoretical Reflection

In terms of the significance of individual pen-portraits I produced in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8. First of all, these portraits help to avoid the over-generalization of individual international students. In addition, these portraits also demonstrate how studying abroad is a life trajectory embedded in students' life experience and future expectation, how partaking in international education has different meanings and values for different individuals based on their individual specificities. What needs to be mentioned is, I did not aim to present the rationality inherent in individual from a traditional western humanist point of view. These portraits are not the touching stones which represent the life realities or the true meanings of being an individual either. The emerging of individual in this research is contingent on the whole landscape of globalisation, IHE, as well as the more and more frequent cooperation between the higher education systems in the UK and China. It is also this contingency that inherents in the individual students I produced through pen-portraits, makes the commonality within the British and Chinese participant groups possible.

When I conduct self-reflection on this 'getting to know my participants' stage, I realised that as a transcultural and bilingual researcher, as well as a Chinese student myself, my familiarity to both Chinese culture and the transnational practice conducted by Chinese students in the UK, affected how I identified the specificity of individual British and Chinese participants of my research. When I was engaging with my British participants' experiences, my focus was mainly on how they made sense of being mobile students. The distinctive features of each individual came mainly from the comparisons within the British participant group. For example, Alex was the most relaxed one whereas Kate struggled the most especially during the early period of her adventure; Kaite was the one British student who spent more time on studying whereas Hayley was the one who utilised this transnational education opportunity for gaining a broader life experience and perspective; Leona was the one participant with the highest Chinese language proficiency; Emmzie was the one participant who got used to and even enjoyed the communal style of life in China such as random people just approaching her and practicing English with her. Whereas when I was engaging with my Chinese participants' experiences, some subtle and discursive elements brought about by my deeper understanding of Chinese culture, as well as by my own life and study experience in the UK were involved in the process. For example, in 简苗 (Jian Miao)'s story, the pain of being Chinese as your business is everyone's business is something also bothers me. 童 (Tong) talked more about her relationship with her mother and her grandparents. As the only one child in a big Chinese family, the pressure of meeting

everyone's expectation also sounds familiar to me. The challenges 韩 (Han), a social science student needed to face in the academic area, such as lacking sufficient British cultural reference on the one hand, whereas not using his Chinese cultural points reference on the other hand, are some of the challenges I need to face as a Chinese student studying psychology in the UK as well. As a transnational and bilingual researcher whose first language is China, and who had never left China before coming to the UK to do a Master, I am aware of the potential impacts brought about by my cultural and linguistic background to the current research. However, I am also an international student, I also share commonalities with both my British and Chinese participants; My background brought about some advantages and specificities to my research as well. I pick this up and discuss it further in the red bit in Chapter 10 of translation analysis.

Conducting transcriptions of my Chinese participants' interview data, compared to my British participants', was easier for me. Even though I was still listening carefully, typing accurately and finding that these issues occupied all my attention, the transformation between voices and words was relatively smoother. However, it does not mean there was any communication between my Chinese data and me at the transcription stage. It was still a process of data making commands to me, no matter in Chinese or English. My researcher positionality was also simple. My participants existed as data in forms from voices to words, as well as me as the tool for conducting this transformation.

When I finished the transcriptions of my Chinese participants' interviews, and started to read through them, these 10 Chinese individuals also started to talk to me, in Chinese, as well as allowed me to get to know them. What was interesting is, it seemed that speaking the same first language as me, did not make them more familiar or intimate for me than my British participants. I started to get to know these 20 participants all from scratch. It was an unfamiliar yet becoming more familiar process for every single individual regardless of nations or languages. As had happened to my British participants, there were also two Chinese participants 张月 (Zhang Yue) and 周 (Zhou) whom, when describing them, they failed to appear as individuals to me. Compared to other individuals, they did seem thinner and vaguer. When I conducted self-reflection on this, I realized that I relied on unique experiences at the getting to know my participants stage. Moreover, the standards of being unique were based on my experiences. 张月 and 周's experiences were to a certain extent what I took granted for, what was normal for me back at that time. What I could gain from their stories was something had not yet started to matter at the 'getting to know my participants' stage. Yes, that was something that had not yet started to matter. But they would, as you will see, in the next chapter, 张月's voice becomes quite noticeable in the discussion about Chinese students' conscious choice for building and maintaining homophilious social group. In Chapter 11, 周 becomes the participant who reminded me of what I used to think about this 'foreigner'.

## Chapter 9: Themes of Chinese Participants' Experiences

In this chapter I present the thematic themes of my 10 Chinese participants' interview data. These themes represent students' transnational experience from mainly 4 aspects include their decision-making around studying in the UK, their social network in the UK, the challenges they faced in especially academic area, as well as the achievements they made from education mobility.

### 9.1 Representation of Themes of Chinese Participants' Experiences

#### Theme 1: Decision Making around Studying in the UK

Compared to British students, Chinese students tend to have clearer objectives for studying abroad, which included studying and getting the degree. Among my ten Chinese participants, four of them were receiving undergraduate education in the UK. In terms of these four participants, one of them was part of a cooperation programme between his university in China and The University of Bradford. The other three undergraduate students all decided to study abroad because it seemed more difficult to be recruited by the universities on higher ranking in China. As 张月 (Zhang Yue) indicated, '*国内考到一本比较困难, 在这里考到好大学会相对容易很多*' (It is quite difficult to pass the entrance examination of the first-class universities in China. However, it is much easier to be enrolled by some good universities here) (line 11-13). 唐 (Tang) also stated a similar reason as *出国上好一些的大学的可能性, 对我来说, 比在国内参加高考的可能性更大一点* (The possibility of going to a better university abroad, for me, is bigger than passing the entry examination of some good universities in China) (line 45-46).

With regard to the postgraduate student participants, the reasons for studying abroad were more diverse. It could be due to the influence of family or from a consideration for future employability; it could be for the purpose of learning some more mature or advanced knowledge; or it could also be in attempting to searching for new possibilities.

In terms of why these students chose to come to the UK, it seems that the comparison was conducted most frequently between the UK and America as potential study destinations. Safety was the priority consideration. As 唐 (Tang) said *美国太乱了, 好怕死在美国* (America is really a mess, I'm a bit afraid that I might die in America) (line 10). 张月 also indicated *因为英国感觉是比较绅士的国家, 而且安全. 主要是安全, 跟美国比* (I feel like the UK is a country of gentlemen, and it's safe. The most important thing is it's safe, compared to America) (line 33). Apart from safety, another reason is that, the application process for UK universities is more simple than that of American universities.

#### 一本 (the first-class university):

In China, when students graduate from high school, they need to take part in the entry exam for universities which is called as 'Gao Kao'. There are two entry routes for most of the

universities in China, one for the first-class universities, another one which requires lower marks and is for the second-class universities. For some of the best universities in China such as Beijing University, they draw their own routes independently based on numbers of seats they can give in that year.

## Theme 2: The Chinese Channel from China to the UK

It seems that for Chinese students, establishing their social networks in the UK tends to start when they were still in China and preparing for going abroad. There are numerous social medias and online platforms for this kind of peer searching. For example, 张月 (Zhang Yue) searched for Chinese students going to INTO Manchester (see the not below) and who might, therefore be living in the same accommodation as her when she got to the UK. 张冕 got in touch with students not only living in the same accommodation, but also flying together to the UK with him. 周 (Zhou)' first friend had even studied IELTS in China, flew to the UK and studied a foundation year in Exeter with her. Moreover, Chinese students managed to build up a channel with their Chinese friends from the very beginning and all the way along their journeys to and in the UK. 童 (Tong) got to know her very first friend in Loughborough, who was more familiar with the city, online. This friend made her initial days in Loughborough much easier by showing her around, telling her where to do shopping, where to eat and things such as this. In terms of 唐 (Tang)'s roommate, whom she got to know her in advance, as she described, *她带着我认识的曼城, 一个地方一个地方走过来的 (I just followed her and got to know Manchester, one place after another place)* (line 106). Then, more and more Chinese students would gather through language class, Welcome Week, Chinese Society, or faculties of universities. As 张月 (Zhang Yue) described, *我们系有 8, 9 个中国人, 大家都认识。你知道就这么几个中国人, 如果我认识这个, 这个认识那个, 就都认识了。... 我们一起复习的同学有一个 BBC, ... 刚开始他的汉语还结巴, 现在老跟我们在一起汉语越说越好了 (We've got eight or nine Chinese students in our faculty, and everyone knows everyone. You know just these several Chinese, if I know this person, this person knows that one, it would end up as everyone knows everyone. ... One of these Chinese is a BBC (British Born Chinese). When we just knew him, he stammered when trying to speak Mandarin, now his Mandarin is getting more and more better)* (line 119-125). As a result, some Chinese students feel that they *塞在中国圈子里 (stuff themselves in the Chinese friends circle)* (台, line 152). Their lives here *跟在中国生活没有什么特别大的差别, 我身边大部分还是中国人, 吃中餐居多 (are not very different from my life in China, like still being surrounded by Chinese people, as well as eating Chinese food most of the time)* (唐 Tang, line 115-116).

In addition, it seems this Chinese channel did not only exist in social networks, it actually penetrated into several other aspects of life. For example, 台 (Tai) mentioned how first-hand information from Chinese people determined where he lived.

我住的是学生公寓，不是学校的，是第三方的，是 Vita。Vita 在上海是有办事处的，然后我们就有第一手资料嘛，然后就是因为，本来我也有看别的，但是爸爸妈妈就觉得有中国人了解过的比较靠谱 (I am currently living in student accommodation, not university's accommodation. It is through Vita. This company has set an office in Shanghai so the first-hand information is available for us. I personally had considered about different choices whereas my parents thought it should be more reliable to gather information from Chinese) (line 36-39).

INTO Manchester:

'INTO Manchester Limited is an independent educational institution delivering a variety of programmes for international students, either to prepare them for study in higher education in the United Kingdom or to improve their English Language skills. INTO Manchester has a branch campus, which is a separate subsidiary company, known as INTO London World Education Centre (WEC). Both centres are part of the INTO University Partnerships (IUP) network of centres in the United Kingdom and the United States and are wholly owned by IUP' (QAA, 2018).

### Theme 3: The Scattered Social Networks

In terms of social life, some of my Chinese participants utilised this word '零零散散' (scattered) to describe their social circles in the UK. Literally, this 零零散散 (scattered) means that their social circles are like stars scattering here and there. They might have several 酒肉朋友，就是一起抽烟喝酒，然后又不干什么实事儿 (drinking and eating mates, the things we would do together would be just smoking and drinking, but we wouldn't do anything serious together) (line 130-131). They might also talk to someone online about all those trivial things such as pets whereas at the same time they also feel 主要还是接受到自己本身并没有特别喜欢社交 (I've accepted that I myself am not a very sociable kind of person) (韩 Han, line 239-240).

我圈子比较散，基本上就是住的地方一圈人，系里面一圈人，然后教会一圈人。... 对于我来说朋友就分熟的朋友跟不熟的朋友吧。在这里熟的朋友挺多的，就基本上住楼里大家都算熟，然后经常一起上课的，也算熟，就是写论文的一起。我基本上系里的朋友就是不写论文基本上没什么事没什么交往，写论文了就哎呀你怎么样了写几个字了干嘛干嘛 (My social circle is quite scattered, basically a bunch of people from accommodation, a bunch of people in faculty, a bunch of people from church. ... For me friends can be classified as familiar and unfamiliar. I've got quite many friends I'm familiar with, like people living in the same building, people having classes and writing dissertations with me. My friends in faculty, we've got no other contacts apart from writing dissertations together. Therefore our conversation would be about how is your dissertation going, how many words you've written, things as such) (台 Tai, line 65-96).

我在这里都是些零零散散的朋友，... 我觉得好多留学生差不多都是这样，可能圈子很大的那种交际能力很强谁都认识的那种人不多，然后一个朋友也没有的也不多。都不多，就是像我们这种中间的有个小圈子的人稍微多一些。多数时间自己相处 (I have some scattered friends here. ... I think this is the same for most of the Chinese students here, like you can hardly find out anyone who is like a social butterfly, you can hardly find out anyone with no friends either. Most students would be just like me with a small social circle and spend lots of time on their own) (冷 Leng, line 151-157).

可能就是跟不同的人又不同的话说吧 (It's more like, you approach to different people for different things) (韩 Han, line 203-204).

#### **Theme 4: The Conscious Choice of Making Friends with other Chinese people**

In some existent studies, international students tend to be viewed as passive figures who are simply affected by and make responses to various external barriers, especially in terms of building friendship with host students. However, Beech's (2018b) research offers a departure in its consideration of the supports and benefits a homophilious friendship group or network can bring to international students, who are living in an unfamiliar environment, far from their usual one. It seems that creating social networks with other students mainly from their home countries could be seen as a conscious choice made by international students, rather than this being seen as some problematic default position imposed on them. Based on this observation, Beech further implied that students forming multicultural social network is a highly complicated process involving the convergence of several characteristics including shared values and interests. My research offered some detailed perspectives in terms of the concerns involving in the establishment of Chinese students' social network.

大一的时候不是很适应他们的口音啊，速度跟不太上。沟通不是很顺利而且有些人他们可能他们说一些东西我没听啊或者反应一下他们有些人甚至会生气，有些人还是挺不友善的... 反正我觉得英国人给人一种比较冷淡的感觉，不是特别好相处 (I could not get used to their accents in my first year and was a bit behind their paces. It felt like our communication was not very smooth or maybe sometimes I was not listening or I did not respond and some people even got angry about this. I felt some people were not very friendly. ... Anyway British people gave me a feeling of being cold, of not being very easy to get along with) (韩 Han, line 113-127).

我觉得英国学生让人觉得很疏离，可能是因为他们走班上课，不像中国学生寄宿，感情就会好一些。他们好像广交朋友，但是交的都不深。或者他们可能就是跟谁都可以玩起来，但是也不会什么事都跟别人说 (I always get this sense of alienation from British students. I guess it is because most of them are living outside of campus, not like most Chinese students are living in student accommodation in campus, so we have a better relationship. It looks like, British students can make many friends but they barely build up

*deep friendship with anyone. Or they hang out with everyone whereas they share very personal issues with no one)* (张月 Zhang Yue, line 107-111).

**走班上课** (living outside of campus):

走班上课 (living outside of campus) and 寄宿 (living in student accommodation in campus). In China, people would find it difficult to locate a university laid out like MMU, with an open campus without walls separating it from the outside world. Universities in China are likely to be contained within a closed area with clear boundaries. Furthermore, generally undergraduate students are not allowed to live outside of their university campus. This means that, instead of applying for accommodation, Chinese students would be assigned to, for example, this dorm of this building, with these roommates. Most of the time, their roommates would also be their classmates. It is easier to establish deeper relationships and bonding with peers this way. When Chinese students come to the UK, they more or less apply a similar life style. When 张月 mentioned about this 寄宿 (living in student accommodation in campus), she did not literally mean living in campus but this life style of living with other Chinese classmates and spending lots of time with them.

*我觉得老外人还可以，就是，没有那么太聊得来的吧 (I feel like foreigners, they are nice people, it's just, we've not got too much to chat about)* (冷 Leng, line 15).

*可能跟英国人的 culture shock 不是很大吧，因为英国人一般都很礼貌我觉得，就是即使你跟他有有一些什么冲突他也不会太表现出来，而且没有跟他去朝夕相处，我觉得如果你离得越近的话可能会 shock 会更大一些，但是如果你只是在一起上课什么的，我是没有发现有太大的 culture shock (I haven't really experienced any culture shock with British people. I suppose it's because generally British people are very polite. Even though there are some conflicts they won't make it explicit. And I've never really spent lots of time with any British people. I guess if we are very close there might be more shock, but if we just go to lectures together, at least for me there is no big culture shock)* (周 Zhou, line 160-165).

*我们最开始来的时候也想认识点外国人，就没话题聊啊，... 就会发现你找到一个话题，聊着聊着就陷入了尴尬的沉默。中国人在一起就总是会有话聊 (We used to try to know some foreigners when we just came here, but we've got nothing to talk about, ... You would always come to an awkward silence after you found out something to talk and talk a bit with them. It's never been a problem to find out something to talk about with Chinese people)* (童 Tong, line 164-168).

*我觉得老外挺无聊的，娱乐方式也就喝酒啊，去夜店啊干嘛的。所以其实我不太爱搭理老外。我是属于那种比较红的人，我觉得中国人最牛逼。... 但是总的来说我接触的还不多所以我答案也不算客观 (I feel like foreigners are quite boring, all they could do for entertainment are just drinking, going to a club, things like this. Therefore, I do not really bother hanging out with foreigners. I am myself that kind of quite 'red' person; I mean I*



*believe Chinese people are the best. ... Of course, generally speaking, I do not know a lot of foreigners so I don't think my opinion about foreigner is objective)* (台 Tai, line 74-83).

**Red:**

With regard to this 'red person'. Because the colour of the Chinese flag and the Chinese Communist Party's flag are both red, this colour red represents the country and the Chinese Communist Party in China. If someone is described as 'red', it means this person loves China very much. People in China also use the word 'red song' to describe those songs eulogizing China and the Chinese Communist Party. When I am writing this down, I could not stop thinking about whether I am red. Yes, I think I am. Well I do not think Chinese people are the best, but I do love China.

*多数中国人，我觉得很好，我也不是很专心去跟外国人做朋友，所以还好* (Most of my friends are Chinese. I think it's fine. I am not really working on making friends with foreigners, so it's fine) (台 Tai, line 66-67).

*还是中国人，语言通，他能够理解你的想法，然后你也能理解他的想法，可以互相倾听。... 在一起经历的事情多... 就能一起玩，也能一起面对困难的朋友* (Still Chinese, we speak the same language, they can understand your opinion, you can understand theirs as well, we can listen to each other. ... We've been through so many things, ... We can have fun together, we can also face challenges together) (张月 Zhang Yue, line 131-132).

*因为虽然也想交朋友，但是交朋友也是要挑的啊，跟他们在一起很无聊* (I do want to make friends, but it does not mean I can be friends to anyone. I feel quite bored hanging out with some foreigners) (童 Tong, line 134-135).

*我觉得朋友从来都不缺，... 有机会就会相处，你选择去跟他成为朋友* (I've never felt my lack of friends, ... I just get along with people whenever I've got a chance, like you choose to be friends with them) (张冕 Zhang Mian, line 184-186).

First of all, for most of the Chinese students who participated in the current research, it seems that the encounters between them and locals or between them and other international students tended to be limited within academic activities. In addition, it seems that gaining intercultural knowledge or conducting intercultural communication, so to speak, is not the primary objective for most of the Chinese students' attempts to gain from their transnational education experiences. Certainly, there exists some obstacles in terms of language, culture or different life arrangements between them and their counterparts. However, it is hard to say if these obstacles are the obstacles of making friends with local students, of getting to know British culture, of integrating into the UK academic system, or of the internationalization of UK HE at a more macro level. Moreover, students do play roles and make their own decisions in the establishment of social networks whilst in host countries, and in expanding their transnational life spaces.

## Theme 5: The Uncertainty Chinese Students Faced in Academic Area

A strong sense of uncertainty is embedded in Chinese students' academic experiences. Consequently, the searching for standards penetrated into Chinese students' study experience, as well as being represented by some Chinese students as one common complaint: I do not know their standards.

*我觉得这里老师给分挺严的，而且问题是我不知道他想要的点是什么。就有的论文我自己觉得写的可牛了，然乎就分很低。有的论文就是挤出来的，像屎一样，然后分特别高。我觉得到现在我也没有闹清楚为什么给我这样的一个分数 (I think my teachers are very strict with respect to marking, and the thing is I do not know what points they actually require. Some of the dissertations I felt very confident about could get a terrible mark whereas others, which I felt awful about could get a quite high mark. Until now, I still do not understand why I got marks as such) (童 Tong, line 50-55).*

*论文就是，每次写出来我觉得特别特别好，老师评出来只有50分，每次看到成绩那一瞬间我就觉得... (In terms of the dissertation, so many times I felt I'd written down something brilliant, and then I got a mark of 50. Every time when I saw the result I just felt...) (唐 Tang, line 65-66).*

*心理学院的教授就是做什么都很基础但是要reasonable，就是说给他写的东西都是要他能看懂的。并且他在意的是你会不会而不是你写了多少，这个我觉得还是不错的，但问题是转到工科这边去又不一样了。工科这边老师一个个都死脑筋就，... 我觉得老师的标准区别很大，尤其是我感觉就是做工程的就很specific，很具体很死，... 我觉得老师的标准区别很大，... 在国内，可能太熟悉了吧，做什么都能找到捷径 (The professors from Psychology faculty, they require my work to be basic and reasonable, or they need to understand what you write down. And they care if you make a point instead of if you write down a lot of words. I quite like this. However, with regard to the professors from science and engineering faculty, they require quite different things. I feel like their standards are very rigid and specific. I can tell clear distinctions between the standards holding by different teachers, ... Back in China, I suppose I am too familiar with everything, I could even easily find out shortcuts) (张冕 Zhang Mian, line 34-51).*

*因为整个历程就像是在冒险，我发现还有一点就是我来这边觉得什么事都没有在国内做得稳妥，就是确凿。我在国内做什么东西从来都是先想结果再想过程之后想一切的办法把这个事就弄到我想要的这个样。... 但来这边我觉得问题就是什么事都待定，每天都是很不确定的状态，我最讨厌这种状态 (The whole process is like an adventure, and one thing I've realised is that I can do nothing as reliable as when I was in China, or as that certain. In China, no matter what I did, I would always set up the goal I wanted first, then I would figure out the process, as well as try everything I could to achieve that goal. However,*

*coming down here, I feel like everything is to be confirmed. I feel like I am at this uncertain status every day, and I hate this status)* (张冕 Zhang Mian, line 114-120).

There is increased awareness of the importance of internationalising the curriculum in the higher education sector. At the policy level, internationalization of the curriculum aims for ‘the incorporation of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study’ (Leask, 2009: 209). The contradictions between the internationalization of the curriculum across policy and practice have been discussed by several researchers. In research addressing the discrepancies between policies that encourage internationalization in the curriculum and the experiences of international students in Canadian HE, Guo & Guo (2017) indicated that international students rarely encounter study material which reflects their cultural traditions and learning experiences. In the current research, especially from 韩 (Han)’s experience, it can be seen that engagement in class activities by Chinese students, as an expected cultural resource, are limited by the curriculum design. As it is discussed in Chapter 8, neither Vinyl Records nor Doctor Who were topics within Chinese students’ cultural reference. This finding provides support for Leask’s (2015:11) critique that ‘one common misconception about internationalization of the curriculum is that the recruitment of international students will result in an internationalized curriculum for all students’.

Scholars note the urgency for innovative support services from HEIs in order to sufficiently respond to international students’ needs (Choudaha, 2017). Research has shown that Chinese students at Western universities are likely to deal with learning conflicts using a range of pre-existed knowledge, especially during their initial stage of studying abroad. New understandings and behaviours of learning are also generated from their continued engagement with academic activities (Wu, 2015). However, these new behaviours cannot be simply considered as their adoption of the western learning system. The new understanding is also highly likely to differ from the expectation from the adoption point of view. As it is revealed from Heng’s research (2018), the challenges Chinese internationals tend to face need to be understood from the changing sociocultural contexts they are immersed within. This is an opinion being perfectly demonstrated from 张冕 (Zhang Mian)’s story in this research. As it can be seen from his utterance, how this Chinese participant defined ‘reasonable’, ‘rigid’ and ‘specific’ were still highly based on his learning experience from China. Furthermore, even he could follow some of the rules, he still could hardly see the rationale and necessity of them.

There is also evidence to show that new understandings of and attitudes towards western learning and teaching styles also emerge through continued frequent practices of Chinese students. 张月 (Zhang Yue) talked about some of her British classmates who asked quite simple questions, *有时候在课堂上会问一些很简单的问题，我觉得老师肯定在心理骂他智障之类的。他们也能说也敢说* (sometimes they ask very simple questions at class, I think the teacher might see them as retarded secretly in heart. Surely, they are good at talking and brave enough to represent themselves) (line 62-64). However 韩 (Han) held

quite different opinion about this as *我觉得这里的教学挺注重你主动的去互动,比较强调你去读这些东西然后你自己去思考然后去交流. 学生间互动很多, 但是可能因为我是外国人我口语没有那么好所以感觉互动的时候他们有点冷漠 (I think the teaching here focuses more on your active interaction with others. They put more emphasis one your activities of literature reading, thinking and communicating. There are quite a lot of these interactions among students whereas maybe because I'm a foreigner my spoken English is not very good, I feel like they are a bit cold when I'm trying to talk to them) (line 104-107).*

In summary, the difficulties Chinese students tend to face in academic areas, to a certain extent, actually reveal the barriers of IHE in UK HEIs, especially in relation to the limited practical guidance on how to internationalise the curriculum so that international students might be harnessed more effectively as cultural resources in support of an internationalising-at-home agenda. I argue here that for international students, studying abroad is a becoming, a withdrawal from what they have learned and known from their home countries and cultures on the one hand, and an emergence and rising up of what they can gradually realise from their host country and cultures on the other hand. As Heng (2018) argued, instead of simply identifying what are the challenges face by Chinese students, it might be more helpful to identify where the academic challenges faced by Chinese students come from. He further argued that the overlapping or collision in terms of the different expectations that arise from the multiple sociocultural and policy contexts in which Chinese students are embedded, are likely to shape these students' attitudes and behaviours during their mobility experience. My research not only supports this opinion but also reveals that students actively make sense of their learning, as well as making deliberate efforts to overcome the challenges that they encounter. Therefore, these students are not deficient, passive, or unmotivated as the media and mainstream research would have us believe (Abelmann & Kang, 2014).

### **Theme 6: Achievement**

What is interesting about the theme of my Chinese participants' achievements from studying abroad is that, even though studying and getting the degree seems on the top of Chinese students' objectives list, when they talked about what they thought they had gained from their experiences, only two of these participants mentioned their academic developments.

*学术上可能是获得更多 (Perhaps I've gained more in academic areas) (不曛 Bu Chen, line 342).*

*我喜欢戏剧嘛, 这边的戏剧资源相当丰富。还有就是英语提高很多 (I like drama, and there are abundant drama resources here. In addition, my English has improved a lot) (韩 Han, line 264-265).*

The rest of my Chinese participants talked more about personal developments instead of academic developments.

总的来说在国内的好处是外部因素，在国外的话好处是提升个人素质 (Generally speaking, the benefits of staying in China all come from external factors, the benefits of going abroad is more of a kind of self-development) (张月 Zhang Yue, line 24-25).

我在英国可以说是极度封闭。但是留学还是会带来变化的，... 就是人也训练起来了嘛，就能做到事情变多了效率变高了就这样。还有就是没来英国的话很多你觉得你能做到的事情是空谈，就一点点练出来了 ( I am having an extremely enclosed life in the UK. However, studying abroad still brings changes to me. It's like a self-training so I can do more things on my own, I can also do things with higher efficiency. All those things you thought you could do would be empty talking unless you actually come down here. Those are that kind of achievements you can make only from this daily practice bit by bit) (台 Tai, line 284-287).

比较能够接受挑战，你要一个人面对生活中的很多东西，一开始来你不知道怎么坐车，你不知道这个不知道那个，当你在这里待了很多年之后你就会习惯你就会都想不起来你是怎么过来的，你已经习以为常了 (I can take more challenges. You have to deal with various issues in life on your own, like at the beginning you didn't know how to take a bus, you didn't know this you didn't know that. After you've been staying here for several years you would be so used to everything that you could hardly remember how you went through all of these (简苗 Jian Miao, line 418-421).

比以前独立一点，初中高中不管去哪儿都要拉个人那种，在国外的话我也可以自己干很多事情 (I'm more independent than before. When I was in junior or high school, I had to find out a companion no matter what I did. When I'm abroad I can do many things on my own) (唐 Tang, line 269-270).

This chapter represents the one adventure taking by my 10 Chinese participants. This adventure started more with an explicit objective of learning and getting the degree, with some knowledge about the reputation of the UK HEs and the university ranking system, instead of British history or culture. The Chinese channel might offer some supports for this adventure, might make these students feel like their life in the UK were not that different from in China. However, the uncertainty and fear, the pressure from perceiving themselves as someone who knew nothing, who needed to learn almost everything from scratch, especially during the initial period of their adventure were still quite noticeable. The achievements they took from this adventure were greater self-possibilities and new self-becomings. What they already knew, the support they could receive in the UK were limited, however, they also 'make the most of it'.

Producing themes of Chinese participants' interview data was a process of sharing all the joys and challenges with these 10 students in the UK, which was similar to my experience of conducting thematic analysis of British participants' interview data. What was unexpected and unpredictable was, some of my British participants' utterances penetrated into this

research stage. This penetration seemed to happen in a form of communication between these two participant groups and their transnational practices. This communication became even more articulated when some of the Chinese words, which could also, to a certain extent, speak for some of the British participants' experience, were identified as key-words and even themes. In the next chapter, I discuss this unexpected and interesting communication between my two participant groups in detail, under the name of translation analysis.

## Chapter 10: Translation Analysis

In this chapter, 6 Chinese words are translated and interpreted. What needs to be mentioned in advance are, first of all, while I explore my translation and interpretation experience, I do not have a background in linguistics or translation studies. This chapter should rather be understood as a critical reflection on moments when data began to perform more active actions, and began to conduct communication with data from another participant group. It is also about the moments when language, translation and interpretation detached from a strictly representational point of role, took the role of being order-words, produced incorporeal transformation on me as a bilingual researcher-translator, penetrated into my life, made my life bigger by reminding me who I used to be. It is about the moments when from Deleuzian major and minor languages point of view, the treatments of the two languages involved in this research, English and Chinese shifted, my position as a Chinese student conducting ISM associated research shifted accordingly. Therefore, what you are going to read will not be a list of several neat correspondences between Chinese and English words or concepts. If you feel confused or disturbed at some points, then you're sharing my feelings. As a reminder, as introduced in chapter 5, 'order-words' refers to '... not a particular category of explicit statements, but the relation of every word or every statement to implicit presuppositions ... Order-words do not concern commands only, but every act that is linked to statements by a 'social obligation''(1987:79). Deleuze and Guattari also suggest that 'the order-words or assemblages of enunciation in a given society designate this instantaneous relation between statements and the incorporeal transformations or noncorporeal attributes they express' (1987:81).

The involvement of two languages, English and Chinese, in this research offers the possibility of inner-interpretation and inner-translation in terms of some concepts in these two languages. In the following section, these two aspects of conducting bilingual, ISM associated research are discussed respectively.

As mentioned in Chapter 4 of traditional qualitative inquiry, the identification of some key Chinese words triggered the communication between not only Chinese students' experience, but also between British and Chinese students' experience. With regard to inner-interpretation, in this research, it is an attempt to making connections between Chinese participants' experience of associated Chinese words, with British participants'

shared experience. It is about how the possibility of Deleuzian major language (English in this research) transforming to minor language (Chinese in this research), is revealed from linking some British participants' experience to some Chinese participants' experience. The translations of 3 Chinese words which are 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving), 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human), as well as 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles) can all be classified as inner-interpretation. Moreover, considering that under some conditions there does not really exist perfect correspondence but more likely connections between the experiences of British and Chinese students, the potential deviation triggered my self-reflection as a cross-cultural researcher who might be closer, or more as an insider to one group instead of another. Speaking of these three words, the word 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving) reveals how both Chinese and British students support each other especially at the early stages of going abroad, how they help each other to produce the initial Deleuzian striated space in their adventure in host countries. The translation of 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human) shows more of the commonality between the two participant groups of this research. The translation of 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles) describes an important feature of international students' social networks. It is also a perfect example of what does mobility in this ISM mean, from the Deleuzian smooth and striated spaces point of view, for both of the British and Chinese participants of my research.

In terms of inner-translation, it refers to the process of replacing the utterance of Chinese participants with a whole utterance of some British participants. The translation of two Chinese words 不合群 (not fit into the communal life style) and 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) can be classified as inner-translation, as 'communal life' and 'foreigner' were both utilised by some of the British participants, in order to depict similar concepts and feelings Chinese participants tried to depict. As it is discussed above, the potential deviation in terms of not only English translation to Chinese words, but also between the experiences of these two groups of students, also triggered my reflections about the in/outsider positionality. Moreover, the translation of 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) to a certain extent reveals the perceived otherness, especially for British students in China.

And finally, with regard to the translation of 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility), this is the only translation in which no British participants' utterances and experiences were involved. It indicates that this is a feeling which, at least based on the current research, can only be assigned to Chinese students.

## 10.1 Inner-interpretation

Inner-interpretation refers to the process of making connections between Chinese participants' experience of associated Chinese words, with British participants' shared

experience. This is also a process of identifying some of the shared feelings between the British and Chinese participants of my research.

### 10.1.1 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving)

This word 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving) was utilised by one of my Chinese participants 冷 (Leng) when he was describing his feeling of relying heavily on others for surviving during the initial time of his adventure in the UK. As he said, *刚来的时候有点相依为命那种感觉, 刚来的时候可能害怕什么都不懂嘛* (We had this sense of relying heavily on others for surviving, because when we just got here we felt we knew nothing, we were a bit afraid) (line 135-136). Another Chinese participant 张冕 (Zhang Mian) also described the similar feeling of relying on others especially during the period after they gradually left home, before they landed in the UK. It was a period described by him as the hardest time of his adventure, as a time when everyone had this mixed feeling of excitement and fear. Apart from my Chinese participants, some of my British participants mentioned this experience also: of a group of people relying on each other, supporting each other. For example, Hayley introduced me to this core group of six people who were, for her, like family. They did almost everything together. They almost forgot about homesickness, about culture shock, about all the tough things they had to deal with in China, precisely because they had each other. Alex also mentioned a group of British students with one guy who could speak better Chinese than everyone else. During the first weeks for their ISM they had to stick together and did everything with this guy's help. However, once the classes started, they kind of split out into different friendship groups. This segment from Alex's story is just like a different version of 冷 (Leng) 's experiences. There were 5 exchange students coming to the UK together, they were 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving) at the beginning of their adventures, then they started to have their own lives. However, what I am not sure of, which is also something triggered by my thinking of researcher positionality here, is that, this feeling of 相依为命, from Chinese students' point of view, is to a certain extent, associated with them considering themselves as someone 'knowing nothing', as someone who needed to learn. The need for 相依为命 is intermingled with the feeling of fear, of more or less the deficient position by which they perceived themselves explicitly or implicitly. Try as I might, I do not have a final answer here. In addition, I could not tell from my British participants' talking whether, they shared this fear with their Chinese peers. There did exist a sense of frustration, shock, and even slight depression. Simultaneously, there also existed some need for supporting each other in overcoming something. However, it remains unclear whether this 'something' was 'knowing nothing', or 'being shocked by something' for my British participants.



### 10.1.2 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human)

This word 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human) was utilised by one of my Chinese participants 台 (Tai) when he stated that he did not consider foreigners as a very different kind of people. As he said *我不像很多同学吧像他们就觉得老外文化氛围不一样啊，但我觉得就是人呐，做事都在人情事理里面，你看他们谈个恋爱啊失恋干嘛的，跟我们高中没有差别太多* (Not like some of the Chinese students who would attribute all of these to different cultural environment or things as such. I think we are all human beings, it's all about the emotions and rationalities of being human. You see what they would do when they are in relationship with someone or when they are lovelorn, are not really that different from what we would do when we were in high school) (line 143-146). This 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human) implies the opinion of seeing every single person as an equal person regardless of the culture or language differences. Or the suggestion of perceiving misunderstandings or conflicts as a kind of misunderstandings or conflicts between two individuals instead of between two cultures. Another Chinese participant 冷 (Leng) expressed a similar opinion even though he did not utilise this word exactly. As he said, *但是我觉得在我的印象里我觉得 culture shock 这种东西，是人和人之间的吧。我没有感觉到和一个英国人，这个整个人怎么样。我跟这个人又冲突就只是跟这个人，跟这个文化是没有冲突的* (I think, in my opinion, culture shock generally happens between one person and another one. I do not feel the shock or conflict with all the British people as a whole group. If I have conflict with this person, then it is just about this person, I do not have any problem with this culture) (line, 172-175). The utterances of one of my British participants has resonance with this Chinese concept 人情事理. When Billy compared Chinese people with British people, he concluded that *Deep down the personality is all the same, the characteristic is all the same. You know you have outgoing people in England you have outgoing people in China, you have shy people in China shy people in England, you have all the same* (Billy, line 407-410).

### 10.1.3 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles)

The translation of this 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles) was quite a moment insight for me. This is how 台 (Tai) described his social circles as one person existing here whereas another one appearing quite far over there, with two sport mates, three dissertation mates, other four mates living, cooking, eating and playing video games together. 台 (Tai) was not the only Chinese participant who described this feeling to me. As it is discussed in Chapter 6 about Chinese participants' social life in the UK, 韩 (Han) and 冷

(Leng) both mentioned this situation. One of my British participants also described this situation. As Connor (line 161-176) said *'I made a really good Japanese friend ... This Japanese guy is very nice, he lived next to me. ... We did some sports together and we had classed together so we were really good friends. And I had a French friend, she was a beginner when I started learning Chinese, and she was the only French girl there, and there were very fewer westerners so she was my western friend and I helped her to learn Chinese. And I had a Chinese friend. ... We always ate food together, he was like my food partner'*. However, even though this inner-interpretation translation makes connections between the Chinese word 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles) to Connor's experience, even though Connor mentioned about his distributed friend circle, I still wondered, that if this having a scattered social circle can be generalized to both my Chinese and British participants. Because none of my British participants utilised 'scattered' to describe their friendship circles during their ISM in China. This is understandable considering that, this is a literal translation from Chinese language. However, if British young people sense something similar or the same, if living in China is also getting to know gradually in this 'unknown', in what way they would prefer to put it?

Furthermore, it is not the literal translation that bothered me. I have a similar feeling about the nature of my friendship circles in the UK. However, when I was conducting self-reflection, I was not sure whether, back in China, my friendship circles would be any different or my Chinese participants' friend circles would be any different to the scattered friendship circle they had in the UK. What is unsettling is not what kind of friendship circle they actually build in the UK being under the name of 比较散 (scattered) but why they had this feeling. Utilising this metaphor, if their friends are distributed like little stars in the sky, then where does that black space comes from? This transnational experience is like building a life space for these Chinese participants. Before they landed the UK, they knew almost nothing, and I suppose they did not even really know what they needed to know in order to have their lives in this country either. The UK was like the Deleuzian smooth space for them. Then life started from some different points for different people. It started for me from that second in a cold, rainy and gloomy afternoon with me sitting in a cab looking out of the window and thinking oh this does not look like a happy place. It started for 张冕 (Zhang Mian) when his friends and he were all on the plane and went through the hardest part of going abroad as after leaving China before they landed on the UK.

Back in China we do not think about the 'start' of life, because our lives in China are and have always been there. We do not need to get used to or integrate into anything because we are part of it. However, in making the move to and in the UK, we could identify clearly which part of our lives have been built properly, in which space we have located out our position, in which space we are still wanderers. We could feel clearly about our lack of understanding of British people or culture, our uncertainty in academic area, as well as the comforts and supports we could gain from the Chinese network. Furthermore, apart from what we have built, from the Deleuzian smooth spaces which have been conversed to striated spaces, all the rest of the world is unknown for us, all the untouched spaces are part of the black sky for us.

During this translation process, what I am more interested in is how integration into the host country, building life space in host country, as part of ISM, is described gnomically by some of my participants, in both Chinese and British. What I am also trying to explore, is how the usage of language intrudes a further set of unsettling 'slippages' for me as a bilingual researcher-translator of ISM.

In summary, through inner-interpretation, I am trying to build connections between some Chinese participants' experience of associated Chinese vocabularies, and some British participants' similar experience. During this process, translation as betrayal is also revealed. For 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving), the unsettling arises from the different reasons for relying on each other for British and Chinese participants. For 比较散 (scattered), the unsettling arises from the potential difference in the expression of a similar feeling. Furthermore, these three Chinese words, as well as the associated transnational practices of both British and Chinese students, to a certain extent reveal that, for international students, how the sense of being mobile emerges from the multiple relations involved in the different stages of their adventure; what efforts they make in order to build and expand their life spaces in new settings.

## 10.2 Inner-translation

In terms of inner-translation, it refers to the process of replacing the utterance of Chinese participants with a whole utterance of some British participants.

### 10.2.1 不合群 (not fit into the communal life style)

This 不合群 (not fit into the communal life style) was utilized by 简苗 (Jian Miao) when she was describing her concern about being judged as not good at getting along with people. In Chinese, this '不合' means not fit into, and '群' means crowd or group. **By the way, this '群' is also my first name. My mother put this Chinese character into my name in the hope that I could get along with people well, unlike her.** The communal style of living in China was mentioned by Emmize when she talked about what she enjoyed in China as *that communal kind of living in the dorms, having people around all the time, being able to go out to badminton, go out to watch movie* (line 299-300). In some online dictionaries, '不合群' is translated as 'unsocial' or 'a fish out of water'. It seems to me that none or any of these translations is able to indicate what specifically needs to fit into in 简苗 (Jian Miao)'s utterance. It is Emmize's talking that has resonance with 简苗's opinion in terms of it being a way of living with people, having people around all the time that matters here. However, what is unsettling and unsettled here, are the implicit and nuanced differences between what composes this 'communal life' for Hayley, and what is required to be a member of this '群', of this crowd or group, for 简苗 (Jian Miao), for me, for every single Chinese person. It

seems that more privacy sharing, more of that kind of pain of living in China as *'all of your businesses are other's businesses'* (简苗, line) more or less counts for this communal life for 简苗, but not for Emmize.

The issue of privacy, is a wider zone of unsettlement shared by some of my Chinese participants and that imbricates me in the translation processed as part of this research. For example, 童 (Tong) mentioned a conversation between a customer and a cashier in Sainsbury's. Basically, the cashier asked the customer what was she planning for the night and the customer answered that she was going to make a cake. 童 (Tong) just could not see the meaning of this conversation, as she said *就随便说说而已, 双方也都不在乎。我觉得中国人和他们对于'privacy'有点理解的不一样。就是比如你今天干了什么, 中国人觉得没有必要跟你说, 这是我自己的事。但是他们就觉得这是平常的日常 social (It seems they just talk about it very casually, and no one really cared about it. I think Chinese people have different understanding in terms of this 'privacy'. For example, things like what you have done, Chinese people would reckon it as something not necessary to be shared with you, it's my business. Whereas British people might think this is part of their daily social practices)* (line 277-180). On the other hand, there is also instance as daily social practice for Chinese people whereas it is their own business for British people. As 韩 (Han) mentioned *我很好奇的一点是他们很少会主动去问你, 关于你国家的东西他们不会主动问, 中国人会一直会聊这些就外国人跟中国人在一起不会愁没话说。跟英国人有的时候莫名其妙地没话说。我觉得中国人会问问题对有些外国人来说可能有点儿侵犯隐私但是我觉也没什么坏的呀你不愿意说也可以啊 (One thing I feel very curious about British people is, they barely ask you about anything proactively, anything about your country for example. Chinese people would always find out something to chat with you, so for foreigners, I suppose they never need to worry about nothing to talk about with Chinese people. However, sometimes I feel, without any reasons, that I've got nothing to talk about with British people. I reckon that for some foreigners, asking questions might be an invasion of their privacies whereas I don't think it's really a bad thing. It's Ok you choose not to answer)* (line 121-126). 周 (Zhou) summarised this deviation between 'privacy' in English and '隐私' in Chinese, regarding the correspondence between them from literal translation point of view. As he indicated *有时候你觉得是一个很无关紧要的事情他们就突然就沉默了, 有时候你觉得就是他的事他们就会告诉你 (Sometimes you think it is not really a big deal whereas they just keep silence to of sudden; sometimes you think it is their personal issue whereas they do not mind telling you about it)* (line 296-298).

Considering the limitation of research scope, the connections and differences between 'privacy' and '隐私', as well as between 'communal life' and '群', in these two languages and cultures are beyond this research. What I am trying to demonstrate here, is the possibilities and limitations of translation from the major language as English, to the minor language as Chinese point of view. It is not two languages but two different treatments of

language as I am trying to extract variation from Chinese on the one hand, placing English in continuous variation on the other hand, through this English becoming more Chinese process.

### 10.2.2 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner)

老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) is generally to be translated as ‘foreigner’ in dictionary or some literature. In this research, it is interesting to see not only what does 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) mean for my Chinese participants, or what does foreigner mean for my British participants, but also what do my British participants think this mean when they heard Chinese people saying it.

For my Chinese participants, even though they were staying abroad, even though they were actually the foreign students in the UK, they still called all the non-Chinese people, especially people from the west 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner), which also includes British people. On the other hand, kaite explained her understanding of foreigner as *We don't have like foreigners, we don't say foreigners. For example, if I meet you in the UK, you could be British people, if we go to school we have Indian, black, Asian. We are so used to it. So we don't really have this kind of divide maybe. I mean we do, but it's still much more common for us* (line 344-348).

This 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) is also familiar for western students in China, as they can frequently hear random Chinese people in the street calling them this. Some of my British participants expressed their understanding on this sort of nicknames that Chinese people give them: *I've got red hair and blue eyes so I'm the opposite looking to Chinese people* (Connor, line 192-193). Furthermore, it seems that there exist different levels of ‘foreignness’ for Chinese people, which is something spotted by one of my British participant Alex. As Alex explained:

*When I say foreigner, I think I mean someone who is not from China, especially who looks obviously not Chinese, maybe someone who is white or someone who is black or someone who is from like India someone like that. But I think like Japanese people and Korean people they maybe don't get treated the same degree of foreigners as westerners and people from Africa and like other places* (line).

It is 周 (Zhou)'s utterance that *在英国人种太多元了, 外国人很多* (They've got so many people of different races here in the UK, so many foreigners) (line 128) that made me realise what around this Chinese word ‘老外 or 外国人’ is not the discourse around this English word ‘foreign’ as a major language. For 周 and for almost all the Chinese students, foreign students are all the non-Chinese students, especially those who looks obviously non-Chinese. However, when the UK governments, NGO's, and UK-based HEIs refer to foreign students, it is not based on the standard of appearances. **It is both Alex and 周's utterance that triggered a memory from my own experience: one time I talked to my British classmate when I was still doing my Master's, at a point in my own transition when I was still unaware**

of what I took for granted. I said to my classmate 'I think you foreign students ...'. I cannot really remember what was in the rest of my utterance. However, what I can remember clearly is what, my British classmate responded: 'oh now we are the foreign students'. Things didn't really start at that second, just as things didn't really end up at this second. This piece of memory became matter because of what these participants told me, because of this translation process, because of this research. Here, data penetrated into my life, data made my life bigger.

### 10.3 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility)

The word 诚惶诚恐 (*with profound respect and humility*) (line 123) was utilised only by one of my Chinese participants 唐 (Tang) when she was describing her feeling of talking to native English speaker.

因为我不知道为什么就，可能是因为我自己性格有问题吧，就是我不是很敢去跟英国人讲话，就别的国家可能还好吧，但是欧美那一块我有点怕，就总是有点诚惶诚恐的感觉 (*I don't know why, maybe it's a defect of my personality. I do not dare to talk to British people. I'm fine with people from other countries whereas it's like a fear of people from Europe and America, like a feeling of profound respect and humility*) (唐 Tang, line 121-123).

As it is discussed in Chapter 4, this was not a sense only about language. The sense of 诚惶诚恐 (*with profound respect and humility*) can be seen when she was worried about offending people even though she was not a very careful person at all when she was in China, in Hangzhou, in that city where she grew up. As she said 出国之前我是一个不是很怕什么事情的人，... 出国之后就为人处处比较小心。因为在国内大家一个高中嘛，大家一起成长起来，就感觉不会有什么事情。但是出国之后你要认识各种各样的人，就你很怕，比如说你不小心冒犯到他 (*I used to be barely afraid of anything before going abroad, ... I am much more careful after going abroad. Because in China, we went to the same high school, we grew up together, so nothing serious would happen. But after going abroad, you would know all different kinds of people, you would be afraid, for example, you would offend people unintentionally*) (line 256-260).

However, what I had not realised at that 'getting to know my participants' stage was that, this 诚惶诚恐 (*with profound respect and humility*) was not a sense only assignable to her. 台 (Tai) also mentioned that Chinese students tended to be quite unconfident when applying to universities because of the high ranking of most of the UK universities. 冷 (Leng) stated several times during the interview that he felt he knew nothing when he had just arrived in the UK, which consequently made him put some pressure on himself as well. **In terms of myself, I do not feel 诚惶诚恐 (*with profound respect and humility*) anymore and I**

cannot really remember if I used to have the same or similar feeling when I just arrived in the UK five years ago. I should, because I can still remember one of my friends, who, doing her Master's in Manchester and returning to China three years ago, told me that central thing that she learned from her life in the UK is: if you do not know something, you've just got to ask people. Don't be afraid if they would laugh at you because this might be something everyone is supposed to know. Don't worry about their accent and your terrible English. If you can't understand what they say, ask them to repeat politely. This is their country; it is natural that it seems there are lots of things you don't know which they've already known since they were born. I've changed gradually but unperceivably. I might have become bolder and even more cheeky. However, this word 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility) triggered my memory, reminded me who I used to be, how I might have changed. This is the effect on my body produced by this statement, the incorporeal transformation brought by this Chinese word 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility). The similar change may have also happened to 唐 (Tang), who is doing her Masters at UCL currently, as after she has been staying in the UK for three or four years, she may also forget how careful, how 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility) she used to be.

This 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility) is one of the order-words: it is about all the actions and feelings that can be attributed to it. If you can understand this feeling, this feeling of being a student who came from a developing country to the UK, a developed country. The feelings of aiming to learn some advanced knowledge, in some universities occupying quite high positions on the ranking system, with most of the classmates who can speak much better English. Even though it's quite possible that you would stay here long enough to realize some of these assumptions are not necessarily to be true. Then you might be experiencing some incorporeal transformation as well. Then this 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility) is an order-words to you as well.

#### **10.4 Theoretical Reflection: data started to talk to data on the other side**

Through the translation analysis, data on the Chinese side started to talk to the data on the British side. My research space also became more complicated but also fascinating during the breaking of boundaries between British and Chinese participants in forms of geography, language and culture. A space of shared experiences under the names of British and Chinese students emerged, not only for the purpose of conducting translation, of the becoming minor of major language, but also on behalf of producing an ISM associated vocabularies in both English and Chinese. During this process, my researcher position shifted several times through data making me realise I used to be someone else; I used to take granted of something. From this point of view, this chapter is the demonstration of 'how data could discover, invent, and displace the subject' (Koro-Ljungberg, 2013: 275).

Raised speaking Mandarin, I have always remained insecure about the linguistic competence and fluency of my English. Although most of the time I do not have big problems in communication with people in English, this language still gives me a sense of strangeness and distance occasionally. At the same time, I actually enjoy English. When I read or talk in English, I feel both the awareness of my own activity of encountering with a 'foreign' language, as well as the pleasure of being able to express and understand sensations or emotions, capture meaning as a whole with ignorance of some linguistic details. On the other hand, Chinese, my first language, also never ceases surprising or confusing me. Therefore, being a bilingual researcher for me is more complicated than which one is the 'first' which one is the 'second', or I am better at which one than another one. It is more like me as a speaker feeling more intimate with one for a while, feeling more comfort with another one for a while, and even feel strange and distance from both of them for a while. And this feeling can also be told from the translation process of this research.

When I was preparing for this research, setting up interview question list, I did not think about the possibility of existing any commonalities between my British and Chinese participants. When I was at the stages of 'getting to know my participants' or 'producing themes', I did not really have any time to think about the potential connections between the transnational experiences of these two groups of transnational practitioners. It was during this translation stage, an ISM associated vocabularies space for British students in China and Chinese students in the UK started to emerge. This is a space initially focusing on the representation of Chinese students' experiences in the UK, however, this is not a space limited to Chinese vocabularies. One of the distinctive features and advantages of this research, is the involvements of two languages, English and Chinese. This feature on a certain extent led to that, when I was trying to translate some of my Chinese participants' utterances into English, some of my British participants' utterances appeared as footnotes or language assistances to helping my translation to be more like authentic English. When the translation process went further, the translations between these two languages gradually transformed to the communications between the life experiences of these two participants groups. It is also because of this data on the Chinese side making connection with data on the British side process, the statement I made at the outset of this research, that I did not hold any particular researcher positionality, became hardly practical, considering that my cultural and linguistic backgrounds do affect me. However, the realisation of my own positionality gradually became matter during my research process, as well as shifted during the inner-interpretation and inner-translation processes.

After proposing the five 'inevitable operations' (as it is discussed in Chapter 4), Poblete (2009: 637) further indicated that considering the aim of translating interview is to present them to the academic community, what he seeks is 'to construct "equivalents" which enable the reader to understand the other's discourse better'. From the producing knowledge, facilitating communication, achieving understanding point of view, all the operations being utilised in this section are Deleuzian striation. This striation helped to understand what it is felt like to be a kind of international student who perceives him more or less as deficit, or another kind of international student who has such a strong sense of otherness. However, at the same time, as what is stated at the outset of this chapter, I also aim to trouble the traditional version of translation, I also hope to generate the Deleuzian smoothness from the striation. Therefore, the annoying red bit keeps popping up and



messing the neatness every time when it seems we are almost there. And this Chapter 10, Translation Analysis, is the multiple demonstration of the chaotic but exciting becoming in terms of this thesis, as well as this research, this 3 year of journey. Even though, mobility does not really contain clear cutting lines for starting and ending, neither does this research.

The consideration of my researcher-translator position is based on the Deleuzian order-words, incorporeal transformation and noncorporeal attributes, which is discussed in Chapter 4. From this point of view, it is not me as a researcher occupying a specific, pre-existing in/outsider position, which determines if I would be able to represent the life reality of one group better than another one. What instead happened is that, language, order-words, regardless of Chinese or English affects me, announces me as one of the social practitioners belonging to one of, or both the two of, or none of the two participants groups of this research, in the contexts of IHE and ISM. This announcement in turn gives or not gives me the right to make the same statement made by my participants such as 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving) or 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility), as well as determines my shifts between the in/outsider position with regard to both of these two groups. In this research, the shift of my researcher position happened through the incorporeal transformation brought about by order-words both in English and Chinese. It is also from this point of view I state that the stable and specific in/outsider binary for cross-cultural research is to a certain extent problematic as one of the meaning of conducting research is to understand people, to make the unfamiliar become familiar.

When I was translating 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving), I stood more closely to my Chinese participants. Although some of my British participants described a similar feeling, I do not know, as it is discussed, if the need to rely on each other came from 'knowing nothing' or 'being shocked by something' for them. However, even now, when I think about some of my Chinese friends, no matter whether they are still in the UK or have already gone to Chinese, I can still feel, or actually we are still relying on each other. And yes I used this word 'we'. My shared experience with the several Chinese participants who expressed this feeling made my voice also part of the several voices being spoken by 相依为命 (relying heavily on others for surviving). My insider position with Chinese participants was of the most obvious when I was translating 不合群 (not fitting into the communal life style). (Of course, this Chinese character 群 is even in my name). This expectation of fitting into the bigger family, the social community, the Chinese society is such a topic being frequently discussed not only by some Western researchers but also by Chinese people ourselves (see for this particular instance I used this word, ourselves).

When I was translating 诚惶诚恐 (with profound respect and humility), my reflection was I was not feeling it any more. At the same time, considering there is no British participant experience involved in this translation, the binary positionality issue did not exist in this translation. Therefore, my feeling was more like being apart from both groups.

The translation of 人情事理 (the emotions and rationalities of being human) is a relatively easy one considering that this word itself represents the commonality for both British and Chinese students, as well as the connections between English and Chinese languages. Therefore, when I think about this word, it's not like I belong to any of these two groups or both of these two groups, but that there is no even separation between the two groups anymore. The translation of 圈子比较散 (quite scattered social circles) is interesting but not in terms of researcher positionality, as this is a shared experience for both my British and Chinese participants for whom mobility is a voyage, of the ceaseless transformation between the Deleuzian striation and smoothness.

The translation of 老外 or 外国人 (foreigner) is such an interesting but chaotic experience that I felt I was wandering between these two groups whereas not really belonging to any group. 周 (Zhou)'s utterance reminded me what I used to take granted when I said 老外 or 外国人. Kaite's utterance, on the other hand, helped me to understand what does this 'foreigner' mean. At the same time, Alex explained to me what she thought it mean when Chinese people said 老外 or 外国人, and she explained all of these in English. It is like the functions of language as exerting incorporeal transformations and expressing noncorporeal attributes both work on me. It is also like the two treatments, as extracting constants from the major and variables from the minor intermingled and crossed over so closed, that I cannot even tell which language is the major with one is the minor. This translation process is not only a communication between the Chinese word '老外 or 外国人' and English word 'foreigner', but also an encounter of my two groups of participants. This unexpected encounter troubles my researcher positionality. However, it also makes my life bigger through this troubling, through this understanding of the perceived otherness especially for British students in China.

As discussed in Chapter 8, the specificity of this current research brought about by me, who is not only a transnational and bilingual researcher, but also a Chinese student studying in the UK, is fully displayed in this chapter. On the one hand, my understanding of both British and Chinese students' mobility experiences, as well as my mastery of both English and Chinese languages, made producing this chapter, presenting commonalities within and across participant groups, transforming some Chinese students' utterances to order-words for both British and Chinese students possible. On the other hand, my better understanding of Chinese students' mobility experiences, as well as my relative familiarity of Chinese culture and language, compared to English, determines that the translation process presented in this chapter, is not the traditional translation focusing on identifying correspondence between words or concepts. It is more of a process of making connection between two seemed separated groups, whereas telling potential deviations from commonalities at the same time. Furthermore, through the process of identifying and articulating the unsettlement in translation, I became more aware of the shift of my researcher position. This is not that kind of position being generally defined and associated with being an insider/outsider of a particular group therefore tending to see things from this particular and given perspective instead of that one. It is more of a process of sensing if

there is a perspective, and engaging with the possible perspective. It is a process of making position productive in the form of data taking actions and starting to penetrate into my life, reminding me who I am, who I am not, who I used to be, who I could possibly be. 'At the moment the subject discovers the object, the object makes a reversible, but never innocent discovery of the subject. More, it is actually a sort of invention of the subject by the invented object (Baudrillard, 2000: 76).

If in this chapter, data started to make further connection with data in another research sub-space, in the next chapter, data is intermingled with my readings of policy documents, my making sense of the ISM associated policy and practice context in the UK and China.

## **Chapter 11: Making Sense of Making Sense: Understanding Students' ISM Experiences through the Lens of UK and Chinese Policy and Practice Contexts**

In this chapter I present my reading of interview data through the lens provided by the identification of ISM associated policy and practice contexts outlined in Chapter 3. This reading helps to make better sense of individual student's experience in these specific (UK and China) policy and practice contexts. The chapter also contributes, more widely to the thesis, in making connections between the experience of ISM from the individual perspective, and policy and practice contexts within which such experience is made sense of by my participants and through this research. Furthermore, this chapter helps to locate my emerging understandings of ISM within a wider background of globalization and IHE as well.

As a reminder, in Chapter 3, I present my readings of four of the most recent issued ISM associated policy documents in the UK and China. These four documents to a certain extent reflect timely the wider background against which both my research and my research participants' transnational practices were conducted, as globalization, IHE, the further opening up of Chinese HE, as well as the more frequent education cooperation between the UK and China. The structure of this chapter is as follows: in the first section, I attempt to present how individual students make sense of the UK and China's policy and practice contexts identified in chapter 3. Furthermore, and as a way of demonstrating my understanding of ISM experience in the policy and practice contexts of the UK and China, I include a sub-section on some theoretical reflections focussed on the reading presented above, and in which, I reflect and discuss how the interview data that makes up the core of this project affords series of connections with my reading of these relevant policy documents.

As discussed in Chapter 3, my reading of four ISM associated policies (two in the UK and two in China) reveals that, first of all, from the UK point of view, the government aims to build an education industry attuned to the different needs of different customers. It is also

evident that the UK HE sector is a reputation-driven industry. In addition, the concept of 'China' -- as a 'wholeness' -- which needs to be understood and engaged with by British youth, is also noticeable from my reading of the select policy documents. Thirdly, from China's point of view, and in line with my reading of a small selection of relevant policy documents, internationally mobile students are expected to be promoters of Chinese culture and, language and have a role in promoting a positive image of China. Based on this fairly explicit set of intentions, and a more service-oriented education system that the Chinese government is trying to build, both Chinese HEIs and internationally mobile students are required to play their roles and take different responsibilities. For HEIs, there are clearly laid out requirements in taking care of students' daily life needs. For international students, the requirements are somewhat more complex and complicated. It seems to me that the kind of student that international students are expected to be whilst in China, is different from the kind of student Chinese students are expected to be when they are either in the UK or in China as home students. This 'international student in China', is required to take part in different activities associated with Chinese language and culture. However, they are also subjected to a relatively looser standard in respect to both academic and social life than their host counterparts. In this chapter, therefore, how individual students made sense of these contexts are discussed in more detail.

## **11.1 The UK International Education Industry**

In this sub-section I discuss how the UK government's intension of building an international education industry which is market-driven and reputation-driven, is revealed from my Chinese participants' individual experiences.

### **11.1.1 Market-driven**

As discussed in chapter 3, and from the Neoliberalist perspective, international education tends to be seen as market and reputation driven. This resonates with the UK government's ambition for UK HEIs to build an international education industry meeting the different needs of different customers. This is also an industry that is promoted by the brand image -- either at national or institutional levels -- via the many world ranking systems that govern contemporary Higher Education globally. In addition, the figure of the international student that emerges implicitly from these policy contexts, is one in which the student is seen merely as a customer who originates from and tends to be classified roughly by nationality. In this discourse economy, international students are also constructed, as figures whose aspirations and needs should be attended to, largely based on this classification of nationality.

It is from some of the utterances of my Chinese participants that these views of an education industry and of the international student becomes most visible. The ways in

which this industry affects the transnational practices of Chinese students whilst studying in the UK can also be identified in some of the interviewees' responses.

For example, 台(Tai) mentioned a situation when all the students in his faculty were Chinese. *我们小班25个人，全是中国人，我来的时候也诧异呢，全是中国人，外国人也不来报这个 (There are 25 students in our small class and they are all Chinese. I even felt surprised when I just came here and realised this. This is not a major (Fashion Management and Marketing) foreigner would apply for) (line 51-53). Equally, 不嗔 (Bu Chen) described the architecture major in UCL as *一百零几个人然后八十几个中国人。就是课外完全没有交流障碍，上课的时候，上课的时候其实交流障碍还是挺重的 (we've got more than 80 Chinese among these more than one hundred students. It's like there is no communication obstacles at all outside of the classroom. However, when they are having lectures, the obstacles are still quite noticeable in classrooms) (line 52-53).**

A similar situation can also be spotted in 童(Tong)'s story as she stated that *我们班没有英国人 (We haven't got any British students in our class) (line 96).*

*我没有认识除了同学之外的其他人。我认识的第一帮朋友是在谢大的五周语言班认识的人，16个人，只有一个韩国人，这些人之后就都是我的同学，因为谢大的五周语言是按专业分的 (I haven't got to know anyone apart from my classmates. The very first bunch of friends I knew were from the five weeks of language class of Sheffield University. There were 16 students, only one Korean. These students all became my classmates after this language class because this language class of Sheffield University were divided based on different major) (简苗 JianMiao, line 129-131).*

From the data in this current study it would appear that there are some contradictions between the experiences of these participants and the explicit aims outlined in UK IHE policy terms. It seems that for the purpose of meeting the different needs of different customers, the curriculum designed on behalf of UK IHE, rather than paying attention to promoting cultural and linguistic integration for home and international students in academic activities, in actual fact tends to segment students by recruiting them to particular academic subjects, as, these subjects would appear to be more attractive to the Chinese participants of my research. Furthermore, this segmenting of Chinese students even starts from their pre-university language courses, especially given that such language courses are primarily aimed at students from a certain range of countries, for example, from China.

### **11.1.2 Reputation-driven**

With regard to the reputation-driven nature of the UK Higher Education system, many would argue that the aim of building and retaining UK HE as a brand and as a benchmark of global education quality can be seen as successful. Chinese students and their recruitment agencies relied heavily on, and were affected by, the global ranking system, when deciding on and preparing for studying abroad and applying for universities. Some of the students

kept on paying attention to the ranking system when they graduated, left the UK and started to work in China, as they shared links about new ranking on WeChat sometimes. Although this latter observation is based on my own experience as a member of several Chinese student WeChat groups, the influence of university ranking can be seen in the data too. How this economy of HEI reputation affected my Chinese participants, especially when they were applying for universities in the UK, is particularly evident from 台(Tai) and 冷(Leng)'s utterances. However, it should also be noticed that the effect of these university rankings became less profound for these participants after having already lived, studied and experienced in the UK for a period of time.

*因为那个时候人不自信嘛，因为我觉得大学申学校的话可能那时候申过来大家都还有点不自信觉得差不多学校可以了。大学本科都可能学校都有点排不上号，过来申英国可能随便一个学校都是全世界前百啊干嘛干嘛的，现在过来了就没这种心理障碍了 (I was not very confident back that time, I think this is the same for everyone applying for Masters. We wouldn't be too picky about the universities considering that our universities can even hardly be found on the ranking system whereas many UK universities are on the top 100 or top 200 or something like that. Now since I am already here, this is not an obstacle for me anymore) (台 Tai, line 28-33).*

*我现在意识到中国学生的信息也很有限。就主要看名气，看排名。过来了才意识到其实有些学校虽然排名不高，但是课程设置其实挺实用的 (Now I've realized that the information we could get access to is quite limited. We mainly relied on the university's reputation, on the ranking system. I've realized since I've been here that some universities, even though they do not occupy very high positions on the ranking system, their curriculum designs are actually very practical) (韩 Han, line 222-224).*

### 11.1.3 Summary

In conducting this section, and in viewing the UK HE sector as an industry which is strongly implied by the UK policy documents outlined in Chapter 3, several points might be said to emerge in reading my Chinese participants' utterances against this policy context. First of all, the situation of Chinese students being in the majority whilst studying certain majors in a fairly limited range of disciplines, might, to a certain extent, be associated with the UK government's strategies in tention for UK HEI's as being capable of meeting the different needs of different customers. Secondly, the pressure for some Chinese students – especially before coming to the UK–, is to a certain extent associated with the reputation of the UK as a desired education destination with a large amount of universities occupying high positions on the global ranking systems. Thirdly, one of the stated objectives for international student recruitment – a supposed benefit for both UK HEI's and the domestic students – is the integrations of mobile and non-mobile students. There is ample evidence in the current data to suggest that a different form of relationality is in place: the mobile student majority on the one side, and the non-mobile student majority on the other hand. For example, one of my Chinese participant 童(Tong) stated that *我们专业没有英国人 (There is no local British*

*student in our major*) (line 103). In another Chinese participant 台(Tai)'s class, the 25 students are all Chinese students. The major he was studying seems to be that kind of major that non-Chinese students would not apply for. The word 'majority' here by no means only signifies a statistic or quantity. Of course, in overall numbers, domestic UK students are in the majority. However, I also use the word 'majority' here when describing the Chinese students in the UK HE landscape. Here the word is taking up a more Deleuzian sense: in this way, Chinese students in UK HE might be said to be the majority because these students, occupy or adopt subject positions with a part of the education industry specially built for them as a customer categorised on the basis of nationality. In this sense, although not the numerical majority, they occupy a position as the majority.

## **11.2 The expectation of being China-ready**

Policy documents set out a series of aims and objectives. They do this by making statements, or in Deleuzian terms, by uttering order-words, by utilising language as 'a doing'. In the British policy documents examined as part of this research, China is configured as 'the whole China', an emerging power, a new kind of culture that needs to be understood, to be engaged with especially by young British people who are entering a future global labor market in which China will be one dominant force. Also, in the same British policy documents, British youth are expected to be 'China-ready'. However, on the other hand, it is only through the social activities of every individual British student that meaning is afforded such policy statements. It is only through and reflecting on such activity, such 'doing', that these students: whether they experience China as, different or, indeed, as a wholeness. It is also from such individual experience, and the (re)telling thereof, that we can get a glimpse into the kind of engagements that these students actually conducted with/in China.

### **11.2.1 The engagement with China**

In the Generation-UK document, China is described as an emerging power with a whole different kind of culture and language. It seems that the 'imaginative geographies' (Beech, 2014) constructed in this document does affect students, both before and after they have landed in China. Not only do some of the British participants frequently use the word 'different' in referring to China, but also they attributed some unexpected situations they encountered whilst in China as being 'different'. Despite this dominant configuration – both in policy and in the expressions of the interviewees, there was some recognition that this 'difference' is neither total nor absolute. For example, Hayley states that *I think people think China is so different but it's not actually that different* (Hayley, line 367-368).

Equally, the high levels of diversity of China evident from individual British student's utterances represents the collapse of the 'whole China' configuration that is evident in the policy documents analysed as part of my research. This collapse occurs in the students' engagement with China in all the unexpected ways it presents itself. It is in the ways in which China surprises these students, annoys them, amuses them, challenges them. But it is also in the forms of comfort offered them under the guise of Chinese people, the culture, and language that they experienced, the cities that they lived in, the food, weather, festivals

and all the other material and cultural encounters that they engaged with whilst trying to build and have a life in china. These encounters allowed them to engage with the 'real' China, if, indeed, a 'real China' does exist.

*'I'm very glad that I was placed in Wuhan because it is kind of like, we don't have tourists, so we have to learn mandarin and it was like real China really' (Hayley, line 68-70).*

*Beijing is a place like taking to them (foreigners) I guess ... Because I was foreign obviously, people would try to sell this impression of China to me, which they thought I might have come from abroad, or maybe I want to see. So it's hard for me to really experience the city (Thirza, line 168-172).*

*'You know in China being a foreigner is quite interesting to them. I did feel at first different a lot you know, now I don't think anyone cares about me at all but I used to' (Kate, line 404-406).*

In terms of the sense of being a minority arising from British students' engagement with China, as one of my British participants said, *I found it quite hard to make friends with Chinese people. In a way that they like to ask a lot of questions, they always want to ask me so many things. What does your mum do, what does your dad do, what does your uncle do, what is everything? I think they ask too many questions too quickly' (Connor, line 180-183).*

On the other hand, it is also interesting to see what some of my Chinese participants think in terms of why Chinese people would just approach foreigners directly and talk with them. For example, one of my Chinese participants 韩(Han) said, *'我觉得英国人对外国人的态度跟中国人对外国人的态度真的差别很大。我觉得大多数中国人特别是大学生对外国人应该很友善，你口语不好他也很喜欢和你一起玩，但是英国人一般不太爱搭理你，只有极少数性格特特别好的人'.* (I do think the attitude British people hold for foreigner is very different from how Chinese people think about foreigners. I believe most of the Chinese people, especially university students would be very friendly to foreigners, no matter you can speak better Chinese or not. But I feel British people do not bother to talk to you, apart from some of the very nice people) (韩, line 116-120).

周(Zhou) also mentioned that *但是有很多中国人愿意交外国朋友然后就会主动去帮他们。我看有些小视频就是，什么外国人在中国，在北京那种，感觉的。在英国人种太多元了，外国人很多* (I feel like quite a lot of Chinese people are very willing to make foreign friends and help them actively. I've seen some video online, things like foreigners in China, in Beijing. They've got so many people of different races here in the UK, so many foreigners) (周,line 126-129).



### 11.2.2 Summary

Based on my identification of some of the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China, this chapter has presented some indications of, how individual experiences came, as retold by participants, reveal these policy and practice contexts. Considering that my research is largely oriented towards individual accounts of ISM experiences, the range and depth of policy reading is limited. However, this chapter still offers some thoughts about how individual experiences are shaped by and reflect the contexts from and in which that experience is located. These findings offered here, at the very least, demonstrate how ISM as a concept and landscape -- including both individual mobility experiences, as well as policy and practice contexts -- can be studied mostly usefully through a lens that engages more fully with the interminglements between these two aspects -- the micro and the macro.

In the next sub-section, based on particular theoretical reflections, I discuss how data -- the data generated for this project, data that represents complex and heterogeneous lives and that takes on a life through the processes by which I make sense of these lives -- affords a series of connections with my reading of the policy and practice contexts in which ISM experience is located. In addition, I also attempt to demonstrate how this data -- the abstract substance, and the processes by which it comes into being and in how it makes sense -- made my life 'bigger'.

## 11.3 The China Education Service System

### 11.3.1 A different kind of students

As it is discussed in Chapter 3, it seems that the kind of students my British participants needed to be in China, is not the same as that kind of student which Chinese students in China are trying to be. Moreover, the differences configured for and by the international student in China, are attuned to the attributions of the IHE policy-space in China, which aims to utilise international students as promoters of 'good Chinese stories' and 'good China's voice' (Opinions, 2016). With regard to the priority of Chinese language, it seems that the Chinese government is not really expecting in-bound international students to learn Chinese properly or, to be proper Chinese speakers. Chinese language acts more like a diplomatic tool, or one of the ways to attract international students going to China, to promote international collaboration, as well as to enhance international relationships and status. And this unspoken, but clearly understood intention, can be seen, to a certain extent, from the experiences of some of the British participants of this research. These students were, in comparison to their host counterparts, required to achieve less in the academic arena, were allowed to have a much more casual and relaxed relationship with their Chinese teachers, and were also involved in more lectures and activities associated with Chinese culture. This is demonstrated amply in the following quotes:

*The teachers I think were a lot more personal and friendly, ... But they seemed quite sociable in that respect whereas teachers in the UK, it's a lot more professional, kind of, I'm the teacher you're students, this kind of thing. ... Maybe cos we were doing language I don't*

*know but it was quite good. ... We had language partners, and one of them was telling us their classes were quite different, they were quite strict. ... And we had culture classes, so they did, like, Chinese history, calligraphy, musical instruments (Emmie, line 77-96).*

*And in China it is easy to get high marks because the teachers they understand you are a foreigner, you are learning their language so they are quite happy to give you good marks if you put any effort into your homework (Leona, line 40-43).*

*In terms of Chinese teachers, I think our teachers were less harsh than normal Chinese teachers. Because they were teaching foreigners, and they knew they couldn't have the same standards (Connor, line 69-71).*

*And I took all the extra classes, I took all of them, I took the calligraphy. And I took the, there was one more, business Chinese, just to learn business vocabulary (Connor, line 121-123).*

*The language partners were Chinese students who would be more likely studying TCFL (Teaching Chinese as a Second Language) (Emmie, line 196-197).*

In this policy and practice context in China, in-bound international students are also a special group who, in order to be served properly, require a particular and distinct system of HEIs in China. Furthermore, some compromises are also being made in order to attract more international students studying in China, which can be seen from the different accommodation arrangements for international students coming to China. As it is illustrated in Chapter 9, 张月(ZhangYue) mentioned the two concepts as 走班上课 (living outside of campus) and 寄宿 (living in student accommodation in campus). In China, students, especially undergraduate students are not allowed to live outside of university campus. This arrangement aims to make students realise that as soon as they step into universities, they are nobody but students, and they do nothing but study. As 张月 explained: *中国学生好像，集中在一段时间上学，只是上学，也不工作什么的 (It seems that Chinese students, we tend to spend a certain amount of time focusing on studying, only studying, no working, nothing apart from studying) (line 115-116).* However, it seems the Chinese HEIs somehow realise that they cannot, or maybe they do not need international students to be the same kind of students as their domestic equivalents. As Billy mentioned: *My experience for this past year on the programme is that it's difficult to speak to Chinese people because they were all kept in different buildings, and they had a different day to us, they had a curfew at 11pm and then they were really busy. So it's quite difficult for them to kind of have time to make friends with lots of foreigners (line 402-406).* Connor also said that 'I suppose they know if they apply the same curfew to international students then no one would want to live in the dormitories anymore' (Connor, line 280-281).

### 11.3.2 Summary

In summary, the different kind of student my British participants needed to be in China can be seen from both their academic and social lives. In the academic life, these British students were expected to be less committed to study, which is associated with the intension of Chinese policy makers as using language as a diplomatic tool. These students were also expected to take part in some cultural activities, which is also associated with policy maker's intention as using international students as culture promoter. And finally, the different living arrangement for international students, as one of the compromises made by Chinese HIEs in order to attract more international students, to a certain extent contributes to the building and maintenance of the otherness of international students in Chinese universities.

### 11.4 Theoretical Reflection: Data Made Connection with Policy Reading, Data Made My Life bigger

In taking seriously some of Koro-Ljungberg's disruptive and productive ideas on data (2013). thinking about how data becomes data; how data talks to other data; how data invents the subject, I feel that it is now time to consider some of the possibilities by which data might be seen to make connections with my policy readings, as well as in how (this) data has made my life bigger.

In thinking about how data made connections with and for the policy readings presented in this thesis, I turn to 张月(Zhang Yue) and 周(Zhou), two (con)figurations that appear or are generate in this research labour. These two people/characters -- used to be the two Chinese participants who did not appear as very distinctive individuals at the 'getting to know my participants' stage -- initial stage of data analysis and as represented in the pen-portraits presented in chapter 6 and 8. However, having said that, I would argue that at the 'producing themes' stages of my data analysis process, no individual, no matter whether British or Chinese, was more noticeable than any of the others. Notwithstanding that reflection, in Chapter 11, 张月 and 周 became more and more active to me. 张月 offered interesting insights into the distance between local and Chinese students which partly results from the very distinctive living arrangements made for and imposed on domestic and in-bound international students in China. Similarly, 周 had quite a lot to share in terms of how Chinese and British people perceive 'foreigners'. The opinions of both these participants were so refreshing that when I think about them now -- and this is an impression that gained precedence as I progressed through the data analysis process, I come to think of them in ways that make them particularly distinct from some of the other Chinese or British participants and what they had to say. In thinking about and through this data-analytic process, it is somewhat surprising that for me to note that not like other participants who have transformed from individuals or dots to one of the several voices behind that one voice that speaks to and of the experience of ISM. These two participants

appeared directly as having somewhat distinct opinions, as the witnesses of some of the issues associated with the ISM landscape for both my British and Chinese students, as well as for myself in my attempts at trying to draw that landscape of ISM here in this thesis. As I discussed in previous chapters, when my data transformed from 20 individuals to 2 adventures taken by British and Chinese participants respectively, my research space also transformed from 20 dots to 2 sub-spaces. However, there is another highly complex distinction going on here which involves something about being an individual but not only a dot. 张月 and 周 are still individuals, but not the same kind of individual as other participants in this research – those who ‘become’ in their ISM experience, and again in their relating their distinctive experiences as part of this research. These particular participants, it seems to me, coexist with what becomes to matter in their relationality to and with the policy and practice contexts of ISM in the UK and China. These two participants, not only occupy two dots in this research space, they also make some of the connections. Indeed, I would argue that, they *are* some of the connections between ISM experience and the policy and practice contexts in which that experience is located. As such, I would argue that these participants, the stories that they tell in the interviews, and how I make sense of these stories, are also a demonstration of how data makes possible and clear the connections between individual stories about ISM experience with policy and practice contexts and my readings of these latter. In this way, I begin to (re)see data in ways that accord more closely with Koro-Ljungberg. In this respect, data takes on a liveliness, a form of agency in its relation with me, the researcher, as I attempt to make sense of and from the stories told to me by my participants.

When I was reading the Generation-UK policy, this sentence in Generation UK document appeared in front of me and stood out in particular: ‘for the whole of the UK to enjoy a strong and prosperous relationship with the whole of China’ (British Council, 2013:1). It reminded me of one of the British participants, Kate, who said that China interested her as a whole but that she knew nothing about Chongqing – the particular city in which she was taking part in mobility. That was the instant when I realised one of the limitations of the current research in terms of understanding what sense my British participants might gain from and about China during their mobility. What does this ‘as a whole’ mean? What are the possible contents of this ‘whole’? China is not a whole for me and the UK is not either. Maybe it used to be. But not anymore. I have been studying and living in the UK for almost five years. I have crossed the geographic border between these two countries and yet stayed with some distance to each of these two countries for most of that time. For me, the social, political and geographic boundaries between these two countries have become more and more blurry. They both have meaning in reference to some cities, to places I have been; some people I have met; some memories and expectations I held and am holding, as well as to some of the many connections that I have built and rebuilt. However, these is nothing that I might think of or refer to as ‘a whole’ when thinking either about China or the UK.

Another example of my limitation in terms of understanding the sense of China my British participants might gain, is about what Kaite mentioned that *But Chinese people are very open and friendly. They seem to be. I don’t know if they just wanted to meet someone and practice their English. They would ask any question, any question. They even ask me how much I weight* (line 111-114). When I write down this utterance right now, just at this very

second, I even feel like I do not know what Chinese people are like, or what kind of thing they would do, at all. And, I am Chinese. British students in China, who look so different, who stand out when walking on the street, get treated differently by Chinese people. Sometimes I feel like I am not the kind of Chinese people they described to me, and yet, sometimes I feel like I am. Sometimes I feel like when my British participants, and I, say 'Chinese people', we are talking about the same kind of people. Sometimes I feel like even the Chinese people they mentioned, are just as much strangers for me, as they are for them. This 'Chinese people' is not a whole for me either. There is nothing as a whole for me – certainly as a result of my own mobility, but also as a result of working on and with (the participants in) this research.

Kate mentioned meeting her Russian boyfriend in Chongqing at a foreign bar. She described this as *I met him at a bar, you know how normal people meet* (line 125). Her utterance made me realise that we all live in a bubble. This international bubble exists not only in China but also, from my experience, in and around UK universities. However, from the point of view of Chinese students, who are surrounded by Chinese, we can hardly sense this bubble at all. It seems, in this invisible bubble, we – Chinese students in the UK -- are always the majority, even though it is more likely to be the Chinese majority in an international bubble. Therefore, for us, all the non-Chinese students, are foreign students; all the people we meet who are not Chinese, are foreigners. In this bubble, Chinese students can still call any non-Chinese students 外国人 (foreigner), even though it is they who are actually being labelled as 'foreign students' in policy documents. Still, and on the other side of this ISM movement, in this international bubble, British students can also find a bar playing that kind of western music that they prefer, make friends over there, as well as believe that's how normal people would meet in China. It is nothing to do with if what they believe is right or wrong, if they properly adapt to and adopt the local ways of speaking, thinking and socializing. This bubble is, to a certain extent, part or even all of what the locality is for us; it is from where our feelings of belonging and settling into come from. This bubble is the expression of our engagements with host countries, which would not exist at all without the participation of either international students or the local inhabitants who are configured as 'other', as distinct from but in relation to this bubble. This bubble is the evidence of the collapse of the two sides labelled as 'the foreign' and 'the local'; this bubble is the becoming, a becoming of neither more foreign nor more local, it is just the becoming. Thanks to this research, this 3 year of PhD, I recognise this bubble while remaining in tension with it. I also gain my awareness of being not only a witness *to* this becoming, but also *of* this becoming.

Therefore I announce again, data makes my life bigger, this research makes my life bigger. Data makes my life bigger, not least, in terms of being troubled by these conceptualisations of 'whole China' and 'Chinese people'. This 'bigger' is also manifest in how the research makes me realise the differences, as well as the connections, between the ISM associated realities for British students in China and Chinese students in the UK.

And finally, what is worth mentioning is that, it is interesting for me to notice that this attitude of being open to different cultures is commonly expressed by my British participants whereas it is barely mentioned by almost all of my Chinese participants. An exploration of the reasons for this phenomenon is beyond of the current research scope. However, what I do realise from this research is that almost all of these concepts and

discourses, those most commonly associated with ISM -- cosmopolitanism, global citizen and even culture shock -- are largely based on western traditions and philosophy. These phenomena, appearing as being in relation to people moving around, facing challenges, overcoming some of them, trying to understand and live with some of them, do exist and matter. However, in what ways and under what names they exist and matter differs for different people and nations. Here is where I most sense my limitation, my positionality. I do not fully know how this understanding of a different culture, of encountering and accepting different ways of doing and thinking -- as part of the transnational practice -- is explained, conducted and reflected by my British participants. I do not know if they highlighted it to me as a part of their telling me about practices either. All I know is that, as a Chinese student who undertook undergraduate education in China and did a Masters and, now, PhD in the UK, this conceptualisation of 'cosmopolitanism' has some resonance. Even as I do some things that, to a certain extent, attune to and with what I sense is a spirit of cosmopolitanism, (for example, being open to diversity, being willing to engage with others), it is not a matter to me; it is not something in I think about as cosmopolitanism. I think that this is also the case, for almost all of my Chinese participants. With regard to some research about how international students, or in my case more specifically Chinese students transform into cosmopolitans through transnational education, (see Chapter 2) I am arguing here that what such research is more likely to demonstrate, is that these students are, in fact, doing something else but are doing so under the name of cosmopolitanism. This example of how transnational practices are intextuated – largely from a western perspective – highlights for me both the limitations of this research and the lure of the western lexicon in making sense of and for those practices considered a part of ISM.

## Chapter 12: Summaries of My Research Findings and Contributions

In this chapter, I articulate the main findings of this current research. I also outline what I think are the contributions my research makes to the extant literature and knowledge on ISM. I do this with a particular focus on two aspects which are: the practical issues associated with ISM, as well as the methodological issues associated with ISM related research. First of all, as a reminder, I summarise how my literature review of ISM from the individual perspective, and my readings of the policy and practice contexts of ISM in the UK and China, along with my self-reflections on the literature review, informed and shifted my research questions and aims. Secondly, I introduce the method and methodology I adopted in this current research. Following this, I discuss how the traditional qualitative research methods I adopted help to answer my research questions. Fourthly, I discuss how the methodological disruptions and theoretical movements in my approach are also embedded in my answers to research questions, how these disruptions and movements also offer possible new ways of seeing and researching ISM.

### 12.1 Academic Literature and Policy Contexts of ISM

Through my literature review about ISM from the individual perspective, I realised that, it seems most of the literature can hardly represent my experience as an individual Chinese student in the UK. Previous researchers tended to over-generalise ‘international students’ as homogeneous student groups and rational actors who decided to study abroad in one point in time alone. They also tended to see taking international education as a separated life episode with clear cutting points from both the time and geographical boundary points of view. Moreover, previous research, especially those for the purposes of making suggestions for supporting international students and facilitating IHE in HEIs, tended to see international students as passive figures who are in deficiency and need to deal with various adjustment issues in both the social and academic domains of host countries. However, a further trend identified in the literature understands international students as people who are willing to take control of their own transnational lives. Some recent research informed from Geography, and particularly Lysgard and Rye (2017)’s research (see Chapter 2), offers valuable theoretical perspectives for my research, which mainly focuses on the daily experience of international students. The shift in literature changes my own view from seeing mobility as a separate life episode involved simple relocation, to considering it as a life trajectory embedded in individual’s past experiences and future expectations. Different individuals tend to gain the sense of ‘being mobile’ from the different relations they build in both home and host countries, with both their past and their future. I also explore ISM from the ‘mobility as a becoming’ point of view, which sees international students as active figures who are willing to make their own choices, to use their affirmative agendas, to expand and create their new life spaces, as well as to explore more possibilities.

In addition, in order to make compliment to the literature of ISM on the individual level by identifying the policy and practice contexts, I present my readings of four of the most recent issued ISM associated policy documents in the UK and China in Chapter 3. These four documents reflect timely the background against which both this research and my participants' transnational practices were conducted: globalization, IHE, the further opening-up of the China HE, as well as the frequent education cooperation between the UK and China. My policy readings help to identify some significant ISM-associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China. It also contributes to understand how individual British and Chinese students make sense of these contexts.

## **12.2 Method and Methodology adopted in This Research**

My research is an exploration of studying ISM by combining traditional qualitative research methods with the use of onto-epistemological framings that disturb those traditional methods. On the one hand, I conducted face-to-face interviews and transcriptions in my participants' first languages in order to get access to their multiple life realities of ISM. I also attempted to follow the 6 phases of thematic analysis as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). On the other hand, my use of these methodological approach was greatly influenced by my engagements with the alternative onto-epistemological framings that I discuss in chapter 5. For example, based on the Deleuzian assumption about language as a doing, as well as the ontological flatten between enunciations and bodies, statements and actions, I focused on how my participant' utterances revealed the transnational practices my participants conducted that is linked to the statements they made, within the ISM-associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China. With regard to the application of Koro-Ljungberg's thinking of data in my research, it is one of the main conceptual frameworks for understanding, in a more complex and nuanced way, how data in this current project transformed, how this transformation also triggered the shifts in my research position in complex and dynamic ways. And finally, Deleuzian 'smooth and striated space' and 'becoming' inspires me to see and research ISM from a more productive point of view to consider it as active engagements international students conduct with the stability and instability, the settling and the unsettling produced by education mobility. Deleuzian version of becoming also shifts my thinking about this research to a more inclusive and dynamic process of engaging with not only my participants' but also my own experiences against the wider landscape of globalisation, IHE and ISM.

In the following section, I restate the aims of my research. I also demonstrate how, especially the use of traditional qualitative research method in this research helped to achieve the aims of my research.

My research adopted an individual-focused research orientation that aimed to explore the everyday life and study mobility experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK. The research questions I set at the outset of my research were:

- To gain a better understanding of international students' everyday life and study experiences in host countries. To explore the resources students are able to draw



on to negotiate their identities, social networks, as well as meaningful cultural repertoires in host countries.

- To identify some of the political, economic, cultural and practical contexts surrounding international student mobility in the UK and China.
- To compare the natures of the transnational practices between both participants of Generation-UK, and Chinese students in the UK.

## **12.3 Answering My Research Questions by Adopting Traditional Qualitative Methods and Methodologies**

### **12.3.1 Responding to my first research question**

When I answered my first research question which is, to gain a better understanding of international students' everyday life and study experiences in host countries, aligning with my self-reflection on the literature review, I put emphasis on, first of all, avoiding the over generalization and seeming inaudibility of individual students' voice in traditional ISM research. In addition, instead of seeing taking transnational education as a separate episode for individual students, I considered it as a life trajectory embedded in individual's past experiences and future expectations. In order to achieve these two research aims, in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8, I produced 'pen-portraits' of the 10 British and 10 Chinese participants of my research through the first phase of my thematic analysis. These portraits, which were produced firmly located on interviews data, demonstrate perfectly how partaking in transnational education differs for different individuals based on the distinct features of them. The specificity of each participant of my research was identified under the comparison with other participants from the same country. For example, among my 10 British participants, Alex seemed to be quite relaxed one considering that her previous study abroad experience in Japan made adapting to China relatively easy for her in comparison to some of her contemporaries. On the contrary, for Kate, studying in China was her first time to live in a different country for such a long time. The more struggle she went through during the initial period of her adventure, the bigger she could make Chongqing for herself afterwards. Kaite was the one British participant who admitted to study hard, and as such, she talked more about how structured and organized the teaching and studying in China could be, how studious Chinese students could be. She set out how these features of studying in China aligned with her own approach to study. On the contrary, Hayley admitted taking part in Generation-UK more for the potential fun and the life experience the it afforded. Positioning herself in this way allowed her to appreciate how the non-study aspects of her mobility, for example, having her eyes opened to new places and experiences, were the main benefits of her mobility experience. Leona was the British participant with the highest Chinese language proficiency. It seems that this proficiency facilitated more and deeper engagements with local Chinese people, Chinese culture and Chinese way of thinking as part of her mobility experience, and that this was in contrast to

other British participants. These engagements also helped her to gain deeper understandings about what Chinese people value, appreciate, focus and enjoy. Thirza was the British participant who had been to lots of different areas in China. Studying abroad gave her an opportunity to sense the 'whole China', the fast-changing pace of the country across time, and the vastness and the diversity of China.

In terms of my Chinese participants, among these 10 students, 简苗 (Jian Miao) and 台 (Tai)'s stories demonstrate how individual students' previous experiences can impact on how they live as part of their mobility and their willingness to engage with others in the new setting. Again, these two participants demonstrate some clear distinctions in how they think about and relate their mobility experience in contrast to other Chinese participants. For 简苗 (Jian Miao), who had worked before and was older than most of the other Chinese Master's students in the UK, taking transnational education seemed to mean nothing more than getting the degree and gaining a broader life perspective for her future career. On the other hand, 台 (Tai) brought an alienated attitude and an enclosed life style to the UK. This attitude was something he learned from his previous studying experience in Taiwan and which he carried with him to the UK. 韩 (Han) and 唐 (Tang) were the 2 Chinese participants who studied social science, unlike most of the Chinese students in the UK who choose business or science disciplines as their major academic discipline. Consequently, the barriers and challenges in studying majors associated with the of the history, culture and language of the host country was, for these Chinese students, an aspect that penetrated their stories throughout the interviews. The relationship 童 (Tong) had with her family was so complicated that, to a certain extent, she considered studying abroad as a chance of gaining some peace away from the family. In terms of 张冕 (Zhang Mian), the uncertainty he perceived in both his academic and social life spheres during mobility, seemed to be relatively uncertain compared to the familiarity he perceived in and of his life when back in China. Like Alex, 不嗔 (Bu Chen) was a quite relaxed Chinese participant. Also like Alex, he had some previous studying abroad experience as he received his undergraduate education in America. From the studying ISM point of view, these pen-portraits I produced in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 demonstrate why and how education mobility matters for every practitioner who is actually in mobile. These pen-portraits are also the basis for the further discussions and explorations on ISM, from no matter the institution, the nation-state, or even the global perspective. By making individual international students' voices heard, ISM is not an abstract concept anymore. The distinctions and differentiations from students are one rich but also complex element embedded in ISM, in 'international student'. In the following section, by exploring ISM from the 'mobility as a becoming' point of view, I discuss another complex element in ISM, which is 'mobility'.

When I answered my first research question which is, to explore the resources students are able to draw on to negotiate their identities, social networks, as well as meaningful cultural repertoires in host countries, instead of seeing international students as passive figures who are simply affected by external forces and working to adjust to the dynamics of

an ISM landscape, I explored ISM from the 'mobility as a becoming' point of view. To be more specific, first of all, I attempted to grasp how the sense of being mobile can be linked to students' life events and daily practices. In addition, I attempted to explore how new possibilities can be produced from the multiple connections students made in new settings. In order to achieve these research aims, in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9, I produced thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with the British and Chinese participants of my research respectively.

It seems that for my British participants, one of the most significant elements of their transnational education experiences is their engagement with China. It is not the concept of China as a wholeness, but the diversity of China that is a dominant feature of their ISM experiences. They spoke about their difficulties with the Chinese language, which most of my British participants were not very good at. They spoke about the tensions and contradictions they experienced in relation to those Chinese people who they encountered during their ISM experiences: those who bothered them because of their 'foreignness', but also those Chinese people who helped and supported them during their time in China. In these reflections, it is clear that the students had moved beyond an understanding of China as a wholeness. And yet, their reflections continued to be haunted by this configuration of China redolent in cultural constructions of distant, far-away places and reinforced, not least, in the policy and practice contexts as demonstrated in Chapter 3 in this thesis.

Another significant element of British students' transnational practices is in their everyday bordering. In my research, bordering refers to the construction of boundaries through various discursive daily social actions (Kolossoff & Scott, 2013). The Theme 2 in Chapter 7, everyday bordering, is a perfect example of how bordering not just happens around geographical borders, how it actually happens in mundane ways in social life. To be more specific, for my British participants in China, the language barrier and being a minority are, in effect bordering practices of their transnational experiences. The sense of being mobile was also produced through British students' bordering practices: these bordering practices are most notable in the participants' reflections on, how the language barrier made their life harder, and in their recounting stories of being the minority in China who stood out and drew too much attention. However, regardless of these borders and boundaries, British students still managed to expand their life spaces actively and creatively by using various resources offered by both the UK and China. They even transformed challenges to opportunities, transformed the Deleuzian striated spaces into spaces of smoothness. For example, the Chinese language can be a barrier, but it can also be a common language in the international bubble; being the minority can be annoying, but it can also be a reality check. At the end, different students made different achievements from their transnational education experience. They explored new possibilities, no matter in the form of fitting into China or settling in China.

For my Chinese participants, having scattered social networks and living with uncertainty seem to be two of the most significant elements of their transnational practices. The scattered social networks of the Chinese students whilst studying in the UK is a very noticeable feature of the stories told by my Chinese participants. These networks are

composed by several 'dissertation mates' who only meet them in the library, several 'eating and drinking mates' with whom nothing serious would be doing together, and most of them are Chinese. As discussed in chapter 9, Beech's (2018b) proposed that creating social networks with other students mainly from their home countries could be a conscious choice made by international students, which involves the convergence of several characteristics including shared values and interests. In my research, this scattered social networks is part of the familiarities, organisations and certainties Chinese students build in the UK from 'knowing nothing' (冷 Leng, line 38), from needing to 'heavily relying on each other' (冷 Leng, line 135). Chinese students gathered information from other Chinese students in order to build the imaginary geography of the UK as a destination of education mobility. Chinese students were each other's witnesses when going through the hardest period of studying abroad. Chinese students also helped each other to be familiar with different cities in the UK and supported each other to face various challenges in their lives.

In Chapter 10 of translation analysis, I further discussed this 'scattered' social networks. There exists a seeming contradiction between a scattered network and a concentration within other Chinese students. However, the sense of 'scattering' came from being mobile students, from the process of identifying, for my Chinese participants, which 'scattered' parts of their lives in the UK have been built, which spaces are still filled with uncertainties for them. For example, Chinese students' academic life was still filled with uncertainties. (A detailed discussion about the interminglement between this sense of uncertainty and the ISM-associated policy and practice contexts in the UK can be seen from my responding to the third research question). This sense of 'scattering' is embedded in being the Deleuzian becoming. In the context of ISM study, the 'scattered' social networks built and maintained by my Chinese participants demonstrate how, from mobility as a Deleuzian becoming, a becoming which emphasises the transformation point of view, international students utilise what they can utilise to achieve the transformation between Deleuzian smooth and striated spaces, to try to have a life, create and expand life spaces in host countries as a function of their mobility experiences. And, despite of the uncertainties and challenges, these Chinese students still managed to retain a sufficient social life through the supports provided by family and (mainly, Chinese) friends. In engaging in these complex and challenging dynamics of ISM, they became the people who, without this education mobility experience, they could not become.

### **12.3.2 Responding to my second research question**

As discussed in Chapter 3, my readings of four of the most recent ISM-associated policy documents in the UK and China reveal that, from the UK point of view, the government aims to build an education industry attuned to the different needs of different customers. It is also a reputation-driven industry. From China point of view, international students are expected to be more of promoters for Chinese culture, language and positive China image. Based on this intention, the education service system Chinese government is trying to build requires both Chinese HEIs and international students to play their roles and take different responsibilities. For HEIs, they need to take care of students' daily life, they also need to select teachers suitable for the teaching of international students. For international students in China, it seems to me that the kind of student international students are expected to be in China, is different from the kind of student Chinese students are expected to be in China.

International students in China need to take part in different activities associated with Chinese culture. They are also offered relative looser standards in both academic and social life than their Chinese, domestic counterparts.

### 12.3.3 Responding to my third research question

In this sub-section, I respond to my third research question by presenting the interminglements between the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China, and my Chinese and British participants' life and study experiences in the host countries. I also discuss how my research participants made sense of these contexts through their individual experiences.

From the UK government's point of view, its intention of building an education industry attuning to the different needs of different customers, to a certain extent contributes to recruiting Chinese students in a certain range of disciplines and gathering Chinese students together. It also, to a certain extent, makes gain information associated with studying in the UK from other Chinese students easier. Furthermore, for some Chinese students, the life in the UK is even *not very different* (唐 Tang, line 115) from the life in China. The social and political contexts of Chinese students staying in this 'Chinese channel' is complex whereas the UK government's intention of building an education industry with a sub-system to attract particularly Chinese students, is very likely to contribute to retaining this illusion of being the Chinese majority for Chinese students.

With regard to the perceived uncertainty for my Chinese participants, especially in the academic area, it to a certain extent reveals the barriers of IHE in UK HEIs. My research findings have resonance with the arguments made by some other scholars of ISM, and in some of the explicit messaging evident in the UK policy documents outlined in Chapter 3. There is an ideal expectation on the part of UK IHE in using international students as cultural and language resources for internationalising-at-home, by simply recruiting more international students (Leask's, 2015). However, it is clear that curricula designed and delivered, especially in social science and humanities disciplines, mean that Chinese students are immediately at a disadvantage: they lack a sufficient knowledge of British cultural references on the one hand, whereas they have very limited chances to introduce their cultural references in the class activities on the other hand. Furthermore, Chinese students' seeming adaption issues in academic areas need to be understood from the changing sociocultural contexts they are immersed with. However, these is still very limited practical guidance on how to internationalise the curriculum so that international students might be harnessed more effectively as cultural resources in support of an internationalising-at-home agenda.

From the Chinese government point of view, the government's intention of building a professional education service system for particularly international students, to a certain extent contributes to the perceived 'otherness' by my British participants. In this policy and practice context in China, in-bound international students are a special group who, in order to be served properly, require a particular and distinct system of HEI's in China. It seems that for my British participants, being a foreign student meant living in an international

bubble, having different living arrangements, facing a more relaxed academic environment, and recognising that they were expected to meet looser academic standards than their Chinese host peers.

With regard to the priority of Chinese language, it seems that the Chinese government is not really expecting in-bound international students to be proper Chinese speakers. Chinese language is utilised more as a diplomatic tool to attract international students going to China. Instead of being proper students, international students are expected to be promoters of Chinese culture, positive Chinese image and voice. And this intention is, to a certain extent, intermingled with the perceived 'easiness' especially from some of my British participants' academic life in China. As is discussed in Chapter 11, one British participant Emmize described her Chinese teachers as 'more personal and friendly' (line 77) than her British teachers. One British participant Connor believed that his Chinese teachers held different standards to international and home students. Another British participant Hayley even admitted that partaking in Generation-UK is *more experience and fun* (line 163-164). However, she also said that *it gives people an opportunity to see China from a different perspective, in a more positive way. ... and I think it makes people want to learn Chinese (line 263-266)*.

### **12.3.3 Contributions of my research to extant ISM associated literature**

In this sub-section, I articulate the contributions of my findings to existing ISM literature from mainly two aspects: firstly, the significance of involving individual international student's voice and experiences in ISM associated research. In addition, I demonstrate how, valuable insights about ISM, about international students' experiences, can be produced from mobility is a becoming point of view.

In terms of the contributions of my findings to existing ISM literature. First of all, my research demonstrates that it is not only possible but also necessary to involve individual international student's voice and experience in ISM associated research. No matter how complicated the concept ISM is, at the micro level, individual international students are the most significant participants who decide to take and then live through the experience of transnational education. It is these students who are actually mobile, who make sense of education mobility based on their own features, who are challenged but also supported by various actors involved in ISM associated activities, who are affected but also make their own decisions based on the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in host countries. What needs to be mentioned here is, the specificity of individual participants in my research, came from the comparisons among the 10 British and 10 Chinese participants respectively. Therefore, the individual emerged from my close reading of interview data, is not the individual of rationality and sovereign from the traditional western notion which accounts for the truth of being human. It is the individual coexists with British students studying in China and Chinese students studying in the UK, within the wider landscape of globalisation and IHE. It is also the individual coexists with the British and Chinese participant groups of this research, which is set against the background of education cooperation and education mobility between the UK and China. It is not any individual but the ISM associated individual. From this point of view, the voices made by these 20 participants, are the basis for further discussions and analysis of commonalities within and

across the two participant groups. These are also the voices from which how the ISM associated policy and practice contexts are intermingled subtly but closely with students' everyday practices in both the social and academic can be tell. These are the voices which make the expansion and creation of ISM associated vocabularies, no matter in English or Chinese possible, as well.

In addition, my research argues that international students are not passive figures, partaking in transnational education is not simple as stepping into a strange territory and working on adjustment either, as what is presented in some of the existing ISM literature. The individual-orientation of my research helped me to gain better understandings of my participants' mobility experience in detail. By identifying the social relations and activities from which both the sense of being mobile, and being settled, are gained by international students, my research reveals how several rigid concepts such as border, mobility and adjustment are not given, but are actually constructed and, as such, are actively negotiated and constantly shift through and in the various social actions that these students conduct in the everyday of their transnational practices. These findings reinforce some of the views taken from a more critical human geography lens in understanding ISM, which considers place not as fixed entity but rather as an actively constructed life space with various relations involved in and by it. By considering international students as active figures who are willing, and are able to, make their own choices, take their own roles in making their transnational education experience meaningful and fruitful, my research also reveals how boundary and connection, challenge and opportunity are not binary opposites but are both extant simultaneously. These concepts are inter-transformable through the process of international students utilising various resources (from the past, in the present, thinking through futures) to build their life spaces in new settings. These findings have resonance with Lysgard and Rye (2017)'s research, which applied the Deleuzian smooth and striated spaces in, approaching ISM as a process of students developing their own spaces as mobile, temporal and at times stabilised and fixed. With regard to ISM-associated academic research, studies targeting the challenges students are likely to face whilst undertaking mobility are undoubtedly important. However, it is also helpful to focus on how and what resources students actively collect and utilise to deal with these challenges, what kind of new possibilities are produced by these students from this process of 'becoming' as a part of mobility. Taking such a focus may add to our understanding of, the kinds of facilitative role HEIs and/or Generation--UK could play in this process of mobility. Moreover, to explore this more nuanced and complex understanding of ISM can also help HEIs, ISM associated policy makers and other related actors to support both inward and outward student mobility with a different approach. This is, I would argue, a more fruitful and effective approach which can fully recognise and encourage the engagement of students' own active and affirmative agencies in their approach to and experience ISM. This is also an approach working on a becoming of ISM, a becoming which involves a wider range of ISM associated actors and institutions, especially those who are more closely involved in the support and construction of students' life spaces, and those who are more knowledgeable about students' everyday transnational practices.

In summary, the traditional qualitative methods and methodologies adopted in this research: face-to-face interview, thematic analysis, policy readings, help to answer my research questions by producing individual students' 'pen-portraits', presenting shared experiences of British students in China and Chinese students in the UK, identifying the ISM associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China, and revealing some interminglements between these contexts and individual transnational practices. In the following section, I discuss how the methodological disruptions and theoretical movements in my approach are also embedded in my answers to research questions, how these disruptions and movements also offer possible new ways of seeing and researching ISM.

## **12.4 Responding to My Research Questions by Disturbing Qualitative Research Methods**

In this section, I discuss how Deleuzian notion of 'order-words', Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data, and Deleuzian 'smooth and striated space' and 'becoming' are embedded in my answers to research questions, how these theoretical movements also offer possible new ways of seeing and researching ISM. To be more specific, firstly, I demonstrate how Deleuzian notion of 'order-words' plays a significant role in my producing of themes and my conducting of translation analysis. Secondly, I articulate how Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data inspires my exploration of a more dynamic researcher positionality in transcultural research generally, ISM associated transcultural research particularly. Thirdly, I summarise how Deleuzian 'smooth and striated space' and 'becoming' shifts my thinking about this research from the traditional qualitative representationalism point of view, to a more inclusive and dynamic process and engagement point of view.

### **12.4.1 Producing themes from the Deleuzian 'order-words' point of view**

As discussed in Chapter 5, 7 and 9, my research explored how departing from a strictly representationalism and correspondence view of language and translation, and instead, considering language and utterances through the lens of Deleuzian 'order-words', can offer not only a more complex and nuanced but inclusive role in producing themes. To be more specific, the 'themes' emerging as a result of my attentions to Deleuzian notions of 'order-words' and that are outlined in my research, I would argue, do not speak for any individual student. Instead, I suggest that these 'themes' coexist with all the social actions, or all the transnational practices conducted by British and Chinese students, who have the right to make such statements against the related background of education cooperation between the UK and China. Every individual student's voice can be heard from these 'themes', every single 'theme' is the one (and many) voice speaking for the 10 voices of the particular participant group. Each 'theme' is the one voice speaking for several voices under the name of ISM, within the wider landscape of globalization and IHE. Furthermore, adopting the idea of 'order-words' – as a way of thinking about themes, or similarities within each of the two groups of students – allows me to ponder more deeply whether and how we might challenge the very deeply rooted Western humanist notion of the rational intentional and



sovereign. Through this research, I call into question the idea that the individual is the point of origin or the individuated source of experiences of ISM. I also propose a potential research possibility which puts emphasis on the shared ISM experiences/practices conducted by various ISM practitioners.

#### **12.4.2 Translation analysis**

As discussed in Chapter 4 in which I outlined my approach to traditional qualitative inquiry, the qualitative research methods applied in the current research allowed me to produce individual sketches of each of the participants in my study, and to present the shared experiences and two distinct adventures of my two participant groups respectively. However, these methods also played an indispensable role in the conception of Chapter 10 of which represents an enrichment of my understanding of ISM across these two groups of students, through further data analysis that was based on a closer consideration of with cross-cultural languages in a research context. In doing so, I came to realise that the translations involved in this research stretched the bounds of traditional notions of translation that relies heavily on ideas of direct correspondence when working across and between languages. As outlined in Chapter 10 where I present a number of 'order-words' used by the Chinese participants and that have resonance across all the participants. This process of recognition, of conducting translation through Deleuzian ideas of language, has also inspired for me a more unsettled but flexible way to think about conducting ISM associated research going forward. Chapter 10 consequently presents my attempt to expand and create what I think are useful additions or alternatives to existing ISM associated vocabularies. This exploration of translation through the notion of 'order-words' indicates to me that, even though partaking in transnational education can have different meanings for different individual students, commonalities also exist across the two groups. These commonalities, could be a more nuanced basis for policy makers to consider further when promoting outward student mobility to China and supporting Chinese students in the UK.

#### **12.4.3 Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data and my researcher positionality**

Deleuzian philosophy of language, of order-words, as well as Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data have additionally inspired my thinking about researcher positionality issue in transcultural research. As Koro-Ljungberg argued, 'Rather than asking what Real data is, what does Real data mean, or what do qualitative researchers want from Real data, I ask how have we come to know certain objects as data, what data may want, how data might take initiative and create itself in connection with other data, and how data could discover, invent, and displace the subject' (2013:275). This is the main conceptual framework for my (re)understanding of how data associated with this current project appeared as and in different forms across the different stages of the research.

In this current research, I came to know certain objects as data, when individual students started to emerge and became presentable as identifiable phenomena, at a particular stage in the data analysis process and that I attempt to represent in Chapter 6 and Chapter 8

through outlining the individual sketches of participants. At this stage in the analytic process, I was the researcher who tried to become familiar with a range of fairly fixed points: 10 British dots on the one side, 10 Chinese dots on the other side, and then, me! However, this degree of fixity started to shift when these segregated data made connections with other data; when I was attempting to decipher the two discrete adventures taken by the British and Chinese participants of this research that were subsequently presented in Chapter 7 and Chapter 9. In this movement, the motions of finding pattern and theme, the research space simultaneously transformed from being filled with several dots to two sub-spaces under the names of British and Chinese ISM experiences respectively. At this stage I was the researcher, so closely engaged with all the lines running through each of the two spaces that I did not feel that I occupied any specific position; just as, at that stage also, there did not exist any individual students' voices either. The connections between data emerged further and in greater intensity as I attended more closely to the issues of (language) translation which I attempt to represent in Chapter 10. At this stage of the research, the 'data' seemed to forge relations between the two sub-spaces that had, up to that stage, and in keeping with a more national-specific frame for thinking about ISM, kept relatively separate. In these movements of data, in the mobility and fluidity of thinking-doing (translation) analysis, the data seemed to transcend their discrete and national-specific boundaries. In effect, at this stage of the analysis, British and Chinese participants started to share some of their transnational education experiences. Consequently, the research space became messier and more interesting as some of the lines of connections going across the two sub-spaces started to emerge; my researcher position also changed in unpredictable and dynamic ways. By attending to some of the Chinese words used by my participants as order-words, I seemed to fluctuate in becoming a member of neither and/or both of the two participant groups. Since I am a Chinese student and transcultural, bilingual and mobile researcher who experienced this research journey across disciplines and geo-political borders, this fluctuation is not only understandable but also an advantage of my research. In researching and understanding ISM, my exploration of a dynamic, not fixed researcher positionality makes it possible to shift my research emphasis at different research stages. My emphasis shifted from on individual research participants, to on my British and Chinese participant groups, to on the connections between my research participants' transnational practices, and to on the interminglement between individual experiences and policy and practice contexts (see Chapter 11), at different research stages. This dynamic researcher positionality also helped to demonstrate the individuality, the commonality, the contexts involved in ISM, as well as the complexity and richness of ISM.

#### **12.4.4 Becoming as a summary**

In summary, my exploration of a new becoming in method and methodology in ISM associated transcultural research, actually offers a way to (re)consider conducting research with more focus being paid to this endeavour as a process. I would argue, not least on the basis of my reflections presented in this chapter, that knowledge of ISM can be enriched and that there are possibilities for producing different knowledge through attending more

closely to *how* knowledge is produced. Through attending more fully to the process of research, and in adapting that one's onto-epistemological approach to research is reflected not only in and by the methods and methodology applied, but also from a deeper reflection on the engagements between the researcher and those being researched. This shift in focus, a movement towards attending more closely to the *how* of research, regardless the setting of an original research plan, attunes the researcher to any and all unpredictable shifts that might happen in the process of research. Moreover, I suggest that this processual point of view demands that, instead of seeing the researcher as someone holding a fixed position from which those being researched are understood and explained, the researcher is, instead, seen as someone who is an active participant in and of the research; someone who is changing dynamically throughout the different research stages; someone who is in a continual 'becoming' as researcher. From this point of view, I would argue that my research demonstrates how the boundaries between the research, the researcher and the researched can be disrupted and blurred, how conducting ISM associated research can be a kind of mobility experience itself. I argue here that, my explorations of, and speculative presentation of a new 'becoming' in method and methodology in ISM associated research, actually offers a way to blur some of the boundaries in existing ISM literatures. I am suggesting here that, at least mainstream literatures relevant to ISM tends to be steeped in a series of taken-for-granted conceptual frames, such as the micro/macro level, the individual/institutional/national points of view, as well as sometimes implicit but insistent voice that argues for international student to be classified by their different nationalities. In blurring these boundaries through the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted in this study, I suggest that ISM can be more speculatively and productively discussed through the frames of (unsettled and unsettling) 'connections' and 'interminglements', rather than on those frameworks that located and view ISM has happening on any particular level or from any specific angle.

In this chapter, by making responses to some of the questions I raised from my literature review in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, as well as my exploration of methods and methodological issues in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. I announce my findings and contributions to the existing literature and practice of ISM from mainly two aspects. First of all, my research helps to gain alternative, richer and nuanced understandings of the transnational life and study experiences of international students generally, British students in China and Chinese students in the UK particularly, from the individual perspective. In addition, my research demonstrates how conducting ISM associated transnational research can be a process, a becoming, which not only blurs some of the boundaries which tend to be taken-for-granted in some of the existing literature, but also makes conducting research itself a mobility experience. In the final chapter, I make conclusions of this research based on my exploration of ISM from mainly three 'becoming': ISM is a becoming, IHE is a becoming, ISM research is also a becoming.

## Chapter 13: Conclusions

Based on all the discussions in previous chapters, in this chapter I present my conclusions from mainly three aspects. First of all, by listening carefully to the voices of the individual British and Chinese participants, I reflect how international students use their affirmative agendas, engage with the Deleuzian transformation between smooth and striated space, as well as expand new life possibilities in new settings. I also discuss how my reflection suggests that, ISM is a becoming. Secondly, by identifying some ISM-associated policy and practice contexts in the UK and China, I reveal the interminglements between these contexts and my participants' experiences. I also discuss how my revealing suggests that, IHE is a becoming. Thirdly, I outline my theoretical reflections on how Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, and Koro-Ljungberg's thinking about data, disturbed my utilisation of traditional qualitative research method, but also offered new possibilities in terms of my engagement with these traditional methods. I also discuss some of the limitations of the current research. By doing this, I suggest that, ISM research is a becoming.

### 13.1 ISM is A becoming

As is discussed in the literature review, Beech's research argued that students are not passive figures who wait to be supported or shocked. On the contrary, it is international students, rather than any institutions or organization who initiate actions as part of their transnational practicing: collecting information, gathering companions for their voyage. If host countries can be represented in Deleuzian terms of 'unfamiliarity' or 'smoothness', then students start to have a taste of this smoothness even before their departure from home countries. If studying abroad is a voyaging, then they also start to build some striations in terms of their idea(l)s of the host country, even before their landing there, even before they cross any geopolitical borders. In this research, Chinese students started to build this Chinese channel before they left China through various social mediums. The sense of knowing nothing made 冷 take the 6 weeks of language preparation course even though he did not really need to. British students, also started to learn simple Chinese from websites or watched BBC documentaries, in order to understand a bit about Chinese culture or history prior to travelling. As Emmize mentioned: even as a child, she was already used to and surrounded by so many Chinese things such as bamboo or panda.

To make it an even more complicated but interesting discussion: try to imagine that these students, would not really know in advance what kind of support is necessary for them in dealing with the difficulties that they might encounter in their host countries. They would only know when they actually encountered such unfamiliarity or confusion, only when they had some recognition of that which made their life difficult in host countries: an identification of those obstacles standing in front of them in all the expected or unexpected ways. This can, to a certain extent, explain why, when talking about the pre-departure

briefing that the Generation-UK organized, most of my British participants could barely remember what was it about. Joe also said that *but there are things you need to know but you wouldn't think of asking unless you've spent some time in China* (line 96-97). From this point of view, it is quite hard to identify when mobility actually starts to happen for these students.

On the other hand, as Billy said *so sometimes, I tell people when I am in China it feels like people in England are on mars and moving, like, at a different speed to me* (line 332-224). In addition, Kate described the sense of being *a little bit distant from my own culture* (line 336-337). Other students mentioned that even though they tried to maintain relationships with old friends in their home countries, it was difficult as they could feel the obvious distance between themselves and these former peers/friends as their lives became increasingly different as a result of their mobility experiences. Therefore, it is also hard to tell when mobility ends. Studying abroad – challenging but also fruitful – does not operate on the basis of two zones: as one over there steeped in familiarity and another one here characterised solely as strange and distant. From this point of view, studying abroad might be more fruitfully conceived of in terms of a gradual encounter, a meeting with this country, this culture. It might even be considered as a meeting of this world 'halfway'. It is a voyaging, a process of spatialization halfway.

Pink (2012:28) argued that we need to resist conceptualising the everyday as static or mundane and instead, view it as 'a dynamic and changing site'. In this research, students built striated spaces for themselves through their everyday transnational practices. By utilising one line in terms of language proficiency; one line as the scattered circles of different friends they engaged with for different activities; one line as all the tiny joys that could enhance their experience a bit; and one line in creating a sense of settling down or fitting in, students built their striated space of certainty. At the same time, they also voyaged smoothly when they were bothered by language barriers and their minority status when they drew so much attention from local people, when they complained about they did not know what academic standards they were supposed to meet. Furthermore, ceaseless transformations happen between striation and smoothness. For my British participants, their horrible Chinese language can be and create a common commination tool in the international bubble. For my Chinese participants, a new understanding of what is expected by this UK HEIs can also be generated from their more engagements in class activities.

In the end (if there is indeed an end), if these students settle, they can only settle with/in the transformation, they can only settle in the unsettling. This dynamic transformation saw Connor stated that nothing would be crazy for him anymore in China. This dynamic transformation made Emmize say that *even though I was familiar with China, it was still like OK, I can do this. It's like I was trying to do this with what I know and trying to make sure I use Chinese as much as possible even if I say it so bad* (line 271-274). Mobility is more like learning to become comfortable in the uncomfortable, to settle in this unsettling. Through this becoming, they encountered novelty, confusions, discomfort and unsettling. Through this becoming, how they perceived and felt comfort as it also continually changed and shifted. This changing process also differs for different people. Furthermore, this becoming brought about by and through mobility happened regardless of whether students stayed in homogeneous groups for most of their time abroad, or if they conducted what is more

traditionally seen as active transcultural communication. The sense of belonging can, I argue here, also be produced regardless whether it is associated with settling down, fitting in or remaining at what might seem like somewhat removed.

Therefore, based on the voices of my British and Chinese participants, some suggestions in terms of supporting British students in China in general, and participants of the Generation--UK programme in particular, as well as Chinese students in the UK, can be made. First of all, the diverse challenges individual students are likely to face means no one can prepare them for every unexpected incident they are likely to encounter in China. Of course it does not mean we just leave them and expect them survive on their own. Supports could be provided that are more specifically tailored to the students' previous experiences. For example, for British students, students who had been to a certain area or city in China could make connections with and help those new students who are going to or are staying in the same area or city. As well as speaking to and re-framing international students who are mobile, the findings of the current study also have implications for HEIs, not least because UK universities will no doubt continue to make recruitment of international students a top priority, including those from China. In addition, the British Council will most likely also keep working on increasing out-ward student mobility, including those heading to China. The ability and creativity students show in the transformation between striated and smooth space is central to their personal growth, to their becoming. HEIs might need to consider what more could be done to not only support these personal developments, but also engage with this becoming, be a part of this becoming in a different way. This 'different way' could be about attuning more closely to international students as real and distinctive individuals, instead of a group of customers classified roughly by nationality in the global education market.

### **13.2 IHE is A Becoming**

As discussed in chapter 8, this current study conceives of Chinese participants as living in a Chinese channel. The effect of this Chinese channel can be seen in both Chinese students' academic and social lives. With regard to their academic life, this channel is, to a certain extent, associated with the UK government's intention of building an education industry attuned to the different needs of its different customers. As for some of the Chinese participants, even though they were studying in the UK, they actually barely had or took any chances to conduct intercultural activities with local students. According to an internationalisation-at-home agenda associated with in-bound mobility, international students are seen as a set of cultural resources considering the different cultural, linguistic and academic references they learn from their previous experiences and subsequently take with them to UK HEI's. Individual Chinese student's voice also reveals that, studying in a foreign setting, albeit temporarily, entails much more than mere exposure to 'new' pedagogical styles, interacting with a 'different group of learners, and studying in a 'foreign' environment (Elliot et al., 2016). However, if the academic activities and curriculum design in UK HEI's leaves limited or even no space for them to demonstrate, apply and reflect on

these experiences, then the internationalisation-at-home agenda that is seen as central to western IHE is little more than empty talk: rhetoric rather than reality. Furthermore, as Turner (2009:2) indicated, 'HEIs clearly cannot insulate themselves from wider environmental influences, however, and need to thoughtfully consider ways in which they establish the mechanisms of inclusivity'. Therefore, understanding the variations in international students' experiences can help to avoid the over-generalisation of international students. It also helps HEIs to work toward a more inclusive higher education system which not only appreciates but also utilise the cultural diversity brought about by ISM.

### **13.3 ISM Research is A Becoming**

In this sub-section, I firstly discuss the limitations of this current research. In addition, I make suggestions for the future ISM-associated research. Finally, I articulated the becoming of ISM research.

#### **13.3.1 Limitations of this research**

Even though my later encounter with Deleuze and Guattari inspired my rethinking about language, data, individuality, place, space, border and positionality, my research started from the perspective of traditional qualitative inquiry, and was focussed on an individual orientation in terms of ISM. As such, in the design and conduct of the study, I put most emphasis on individual students' experiences; I conducted face-to-face interviews with 20 participants; I set question list for interviews based on my own personal experiences as a Chinese student studying in the UK; I separated two participant groups, conducted interviews in two languages and in two countries. At the level of traditional qualitative research methods, my application of these methods and strategies might have implications for how to 'generalise' or even speak in any authoritative way about ISM. For example, my focus on the transnational practice conducted by particularly participants of Generation-UK implies that my British participants' shared experiences might not be shared by British students studying in China in different forms. The question list set based on my own experience might limit the space for my participants to express their own views and reflections related to ISM. Even though the translation analysis of this research makes building connections between the experiences of my two participant groups possible, conducting cross-bordering interviews in participants' first languages still limited further communications between these two groups. Moreover, my research focused on individual students' experiences. Even though I conducted policy readings in order to present the wider contexts of my research, the depth and scope of the policy and practice contexts identified in my research are still 'light-touching'. The interminglements between individual experiences and contexts, which is discussed based on the identification of ISM-associated contexts, are also limited.

### 13.3.2 Suggestions for future ISM research

On the purpose of further blurring the boundaries existed in ISM research generally, in this research particularly, some suggestions for future ISM research can be made. For example, British and Chinese participants can sit together and talk about their transnational experiences regardless potential language barriers. They can choose the language which can express their reflections the best, no matter English or Chinese. They can also read the ISM-associated policy documents by themselves and make sense of them based on their own studying abroad experiences.

### 13.3.3 ISM Research is A Becoming

My research journey has been a becoming: striation and smoothness were also in dynamic transformation for me as a researcher. Striated space was produced across the three years of the PhD in the form of meeting a set of on-going 'milestones': for example, going through RD1 (registration), RD2 (transfer to PhD), completing RD9 (supervision meeting) forms, participating in annual independent reviews and having a final viva. It also followed the research plan outlined in the original research proposal: conducting 20 interviews with 20 participants, 10 of them with British students studying in China, 10 of them with Chinese students studying in the UK. However, and precisely at the same time, smooth space never ceased to bother me. When I crossed geographic, cultural, and linguistic borders to conduct my interviews, the train might be delayed, or I was 'stood up' by one of my participants so that some of the research trips turned out literally as nothing but a trip. Speaking of interview, striated space was produced from my question list, the pilot introduction about my research I made in advance, the recording, and the routine of introducing myself at the start and saying thank you at the end of the interview, no matter whether in English or Chinese. At the same time, interviews did not (exactly) start from the very second of two people sitting together and getting ready to talk. Equally, they did not end up at the very second when the interviewer said: 'That's all. Thank you very much'. I am still living with and am haunted by some of my participants' utterances and stories. Moreover, during these 3 years, my way of thinking about research has shifted. At the beginning, I was guided by an objectivist point of view that stems from my formative discipline in Biology. As such, and as an example, I was invested in attempting to identify some pre-existing causal relation between institution policy related to the internationalization of higher education, and students' individual experience. Then I encountered Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy about language, about 'order-words', which helped my thinking to escape from some pre-existed concepts I used to take for granted. My research focus also shifted from identifying causation to exploring interminglement between ISM associated policy and practice contexts and individual experience. Because of my encounter with Deleuze and Guattari, for a while, things seemed completely out of control as I could not even escape from their thinking. Sometimes I could not stop wondering if I kept on doing this research, in which direction I might head. However, as part of the striation of this research, I still managed to present both the smoothness and the striation of my research in this thesis.



St. Prerre (2017) called for a post-qualitative inquiry that sets aside 'the old methodologies of the old empiricisms' (1087), as well as poststructural theories and methods which could avoid the awkward combination of what might be seen as incompatible approaches to research. As an example, she forwards the idea of combining 'an interview study and a Foucaultian genealogy' (1087). However, from the point of Deleuzian 'becoming', and especially in thinking about smooth and striated spaces, I would argue that we do not really need to forget or leave anything behind when conducting social science research. Becoming is the becoming minor of the majority, the ceaseless transformation between the smoothness and the striation. My research is not a withdrawal from qualitative inquiry, interpretivism, or the long lasting of relying on language as a research and communication channel. I recognize the impossibility of anyone being able to conduct this kind of (imagined) withdrawal. I did conduct interviews and create transcriptions of these interviews; I did repeatedly read the transcripts in order to be more familiar and intimate with my participants; I did conduct thematic analysis in order to represent a coherent story for not only my readers but also myself. And fundamentally, I did rely on language for the inquiry, I did admit the existence of data and engaged with it wholly during this whole 3 years of PhD. This research is not in any way a demonstration of the separation between traditional qualitative research methods on the one side, and Deleuze & Guattari's philosophy with Koro-Ljungberg's inspiring but also subversive thinking about data on the other side, either. Neither is it a repudiation of traditional onto-epistemological frameworks in approaching social science research. It can be seen from Chapter 6 and Chapter 8 that themes were generated from my attempts to work with the data and to find patterns through a thematic analysis framework. However, at the same time and adopting theoretical frameworks from Delueze & Guatarri and from Koro-Ljungberg, these very themes played a role in the identification of those order-words which emerged from my work as researcher/translator. In adopting these latter frameworks, as innovations and provocations to traditional qualitative methodological approaches, I argue here that this research moves beyond an economy of representation. I argue here that these order-words coexist with participants' social actions instead of simply representing their life reality. Theme, order-words, language as a doing also affected me, announced my belonging to one or both, or neither of the two of my participant groups. New possibilities of theoretical thinking are the smooth spaces: not the kind of space that preexists, over there and waits to be discovered by researchers, by us. New possibilities of theoretical thinking might instead be thought about as that space being drawn by us in our desire for understanding ISM differently; that space which would not exist without us. From this point of view, we are, in fact, the space, we are the becoming. From this point of view, doing research is, in itself, to be 'in mobility'.

As I stated in the earlier red bits, Deleuze and Guarrari's philosophy, with Koro-Ljungberg 's thinking of data offers me a chance to (kind of) escape from the Positivism that is, to some degree, ingrained by and through my background in the natural sciences. As a transcultural and bilingual researcher, I will still focus on researching and exploring ISM, I will still be interested in how to engage with traditional qualitative methods on the one hand, how to explore new possibilities in the engagements on the other hand. Would there be other unsettling, disturbing but also inspiring thinking offers me another chance to (kind of) escape from the onto-epistemology assumptions I explored through this current research,

through this three-year PhD journey? I wonder how my engagements with traditional qualitative methods, and the disturbances in my engagements in the future, would change my way of thinking about and researching ISM. How the ongoing shifts in ISM research, from both practical and theoretical perspectives, would also inspire more possibilities in my way of thinking about and researching ISM.

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**Appendix 1: Ethical Approval**

**MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF HEALTH, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL CARE**

**M E M O R A N D U M**

***FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS COMMITTEE***



To: Qun Zhao

From: Prof Carol Haigh



Date: 20/09/2016

Subject: Ethics Checklist 1384

Title: Exploring transnational practice for participants of Generation UK programme and Chinese students in the UK.

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Thank you for your ethics checklist.

The Faculty Academic Ethics Committee review process has recommended approval of your ethics checklist. This approval is granted for 42 months for full-time students or staff and 60 months for part-time students. Extensions to the approval period can be requested.

If your research changes you might need to seek ethical approval for the amendments.

Please request an amendment form.

We wish you every success with your project.



Prof Carol Haigh and Prof Jois Stansfield

Chair and Deputy Chair

Faculty Academic Ethics Committee

## **Appendix 2: THE UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC ETHICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1. Introduction**

1.1 This document sets out a framework through which staff and students of the University give consideration to the ethical implications associated with any academic activities with which they engage. The framework and its application will be kept under review by the Academic Board's Ethics Committee and, where considered necessary, further Guidance Notes consistent with the principles and requirements of the framework will be produced so as to inform and disseminate good practice.

### **2. Preface**

2.1 The Board of Governors approved the establishment of the Academic Board's University Academic Ethics Committee (UAEC) in February 1999. The key functions of the Committee are to propose ethical guidelines which will inform the work of the University and to advise the Academic Board on policies in relation to ethical issues.

2.2 This framework has been informed by practices and processes operating within the University, many of which themselves draw from the principles and requirements of external bodies.

2.3 This ethical framework must be read and operated in conjunction with such other policies of the University's Board of Governors or Academic Board as may have a bearing on the matters raised herein.

2.4 This framework does not attempt to define or alter the obligations of staff or students under English law (please refer to Appendix 1).

2.5 The framework points to a set of obligations to which all staff and students should normally adhere as principles for guiding their conduct. The purpose is to make staff and students aware of the ethical obligations that may arise in their academic activity, and to encourage ethical behaviour. The framework does not, therefore, provide a set of answers to all ethical dilemmas, and the researcher is required to make specific decisions on the basis of careful consideration of all contributing factors.

### **3. Ethical Statement**

3.1 In its Vision the University aims to "behave professionally and ethically in all [its] activities". The University therefore requires that its staff and students engaged in scholarly and other activities are aware of the ethical implications of such activities and are committed to discharging their responsibilities to the University in an ethical manner conforming to the highest professional standards of conduct.

3.2 Issues of morality, safety and personal and institutional liability affect the University at many levels. The University must be seen to be acting with propriety and care for the welfare of staff, students and the wider public.

3.3 The practice of ethics is about conducting one's business in a disciplined manner within legal and other regulated constraints and with minimal impact on and detriment to others.

3.4 It is the responsibility of staff within the University to consider the ethical implications of all academic activities using the framework as a guide to fulfilling their obligations.

#### **4. Definitions of Terms**

In the context of this framework the following definitions of terms apply:

##### *4.1 Academic Activity*

Research, project, investigation, enquiry, survey, placement, or any other interaction with sentient beings, including the use of data derived from that interaction.

##### *4.2 Researcher*

A member of staff or student engaged in academic activity.

##### *4.3 Participant*

Individuals and/or organisations that come into contact with the University through academic activity.

#### **5. Principles for the Consideration of Ethical Issues**

5.1 Staff and students shall be made aware of their responsibilities and obligations to consider ethical issues arising from their activities or study at or on behalf of the University.

5.2 The ethical implications of academic activities shall be assessed through, inter alia, a consideration of:

5.2.1 any sensitive data that may be collected, with particular regard to matters such as age, colour, race/ethnicity, nationality, disablement, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, personal medical records and political beliefs;

5.2.2 the arrangements for the security of data, participants and confidentiality;

5.2.3 the arrangements for ensuring the anonymity of participants;

5.2.4 whether any payments are to be made to the participants or other rewards granted and the integrity of that provision;

5.2.5 whether any special indemnification arrangements may be required;

5.2.6 the desirability of an objective assessment being conducted of the ethical implications of the proposed academic activity by a competent person who has no direct association with it or the researcher(s) involved;

5.2.7 the ethical issues/guidelines of any third party involved in the University's activities, e.g. as a provider of research funding.

5.3 Where applicable, academic activities must comply with the following requirements:

5.3.1 the size of sample proposed for any group enquiry shall not be larger than justifiably necessary;

5.3.2 lines of enquiry must be pertinent and must not cause undue distress;

5.3.3 any relationship, other than that required by the academic activity, between the researcher(s) and the participant(s) must be declared and shall not normally result in approval of the academic activity;

5.3.4 participants shall be made fully aware of the true nature and purpose of the study except where there is satisfactory justification (such as the likelihood of the end results being affected) for withholding that information;

5.3.5 participants shall have given their explicit consent except where there is satisfactory justification for not obtaining this consent;

5.3.6 participants must be informed at the outset that they can withdraw themselves and their data from the academic activity at any time and they must not subsequently be put under any pressure to continue;

5.3.7 due processes shall be in place to ensure that the rights of those participants who may be unable to assess the implications of the proposed work are safeguarded;

5.3.8 risks to the researcher(s), the participant(s) or the University shall be assessed;

5.3.9 any potential risk to the University must be outweighed by the value of the academic activity;

5.3.10 if any academic activity is concerned with studies on activities which themselves raise questions of legality there must be a persuasive rationale which demonstrates to the satisfaction of the University that:

- the risk to the University in terms of external (and internal) perceptions of the worthiness of the work has been assessed and is deemed acceptable;
- arrangements are in place which safeguard the interests of the researcher(s) being supervised in pursuit of the academic activity objectives;
- special arrangements have been made for the security of related documentation and artefacts.

5.4 Effective procedures to consider ethical issues within the University shall be established at the Faculty /Department/Group or Unit level which shall comply with any specific requirements by the Academic Board or the UAEC on its behalf. Such procedures shall provide for:

- an Ethics Check Form for affirming that ethical issues have been satisfactorily addressed and, where appropriate, granting assent (a common university proforma is to be used for this purpose);
- published requirements which describe the approvals process to which each academic activity is to be subject;
- published information on designated staff with responsibilities for managing the procedures;
- procedures for intervention where breaches of guidelines are alleged;
- the need to submit to the UAEC statistics relating to academic activities which have been subject to such procedures;
- the review of mechanisms for considering ethical issues to ensure their currency, effectiveness and consistency with best practice.

## **6. Mechanisms for the Consideration of Ethical Issues**

6.1 An appropriate entry to be included in the Staff Manual drawing the attention of every member of employed/contracted staff to their obligations and, if and when approved by Academic Board, associated University policies;

6.2 The incorporation within faculty handbooks of a statement informing students of their ethical obligations and responsibilities;

6.3 Faculty Research Degrees Committees to affirm that ethical issues in relation to each individual research degree application have been satisfactorily considered. Such affirmation may require the assent of a committee (which may be an ad-hoc one) established by the relevant Faculty Board to consider ethical issues across the faculty;

6.4 The Academic Board's Research Degrees Committee to affirm that ethical issues in relation to each individual research degree application for the PhD by published work have been duly addressed;

6.5 Where individual students propose to undertake an academic activity as an element of assessment within a taught programme of study, procedures must operate to ensure that the relevant Board of Examiners shall be apprised that ethical issues have been satisfactorily addressed. Such confirmation may require the assent of a committee (which may be an ad-hoc one) established by the appropriate Faculty Board to consider ethical issues across the faculty;

6.6 Where a course team proposes to introduce an element of curriculum or assessment which gives rise to ethical issues, such issues shall be considered by the committee or group charged with considering the academic validity of the proposal, i.e. the Programme

Approval/Review/Modification Panel or Faculty Academic Standards Committee or other relevant body as determined by the University's quality assurance procedures;

## APPENDIX 1

1. This ethical framework does not attempt to define or alter the obligations of staff or students under English law, for example:

Data Protection Act 1998

Children Act 1989

Human Rights Act 1998 (Amended 2001)

Race Relations Act 1976, The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Disability Discrimination Act 1995

Disability Rights Commission Act 1999

Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001

Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination (Indirect Discrimination and Burden of Proof) Regulations 2001

Freedom of Information Act 2000

2. Staff and students should also be cognisant with, and abide by, the published codes of conduct, ethics principles and guidelines of those professional bodies associated with their discipline.

## Appendix 3: Consent Form



Name  
Course  
Department  
Building  
Manchester Metropolitan University  
Tel:

**Title of Project: Transnational practice for participants of Generation UK programme and Chinese students in the UK**

**Name of Researcher: Qun Zhao**

**Participant Identification Code for this project:**

**initial box**

**Please**

|  |                          |           |
|--|--------------------------|-----------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated .... for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure. | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| 2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| 3. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis for this research project.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| 4. I give/do not give permission for my interview recording to be archived as part of this research project, making it available to future researchers.                          | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| 5. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| 6. I agree to take part in the above research project.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| 7. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |           |
| _____  | _____                    | _____     |
| Name of Participant  | Date                     | Signature |
| _____  | _____                    | _____     |
| Researcher   | Date                     | Signature |
| <i>To be signed and dated in presence of the participant</i>   |                          |           |
| <i>Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.</i>   |                          |           |

#### Appendix 4: Information of Participants

| Name   | Gender | University                 | City      |
|--------|--------|----------------------------|-----------|
| Alex   | Female | Hangzhou Normal university | Hangzhou  |
| Connor | Male   | Yantai University          | Yantai    |
| Billy  | Male   | Huadong Normal University  | Shanghai  |
| Emmize | Female | Tianjin University         | Tianjin   |
| Kate   | Female | Chongqing University       | Chongqing |
| Kaite  | Female | Dongbei Normal University  | Haerbin   |
| Hayley | Female | Wuhan University           | Wuhan     |
| Leonna | Female | Qingdao University         | Qingdao   |
| Thirza | Female | Suzhou University          | Suzhou    |
| Joe    | Male   | Chengdu Normal             | Chengdu   |

|                    |        |                                    |              |
|--------------------|--------|------------------------------------|--------------|
|                    |        | University                         |              |
| 简苗 (Jian Miao)     | Female | University of Sheffield            | Sheffield    |
| 台 (Tai)            | Male   | University of Southampton          | Southampton  |
| 韩 (Han)            | Male   | University of Manchester           | Manchester   |
| 冷 (Leng)           | Male   | University of Bradford             | Bradford     |
| 唐 (Tang)           | Female | Manchester Metropolitan University | Manchester   |
| 童 (Tong)           | Female | University of Loughborough         | Loughborough |
| 张 冕<br>(ZhangMian) | Male   | University of Birmingham           | Birmingham   |
| 不嗔 (Bu Chen)       | Male   | UCL                                | London       |
| 张月 (Zhangyue)      | Female | University of Warwick              | Warwick      |
| 周 (Zhou)           | Female | University of Edinburgh            | Edinburgh    |

## Appendix 5: Interview Protocol

My research aims to explore the real life experience of participants of Generation UK programme and Chinese students in the UK. Semi-structured interview will include questions from mainly four aspects: First of all, decision making process. Which include questions like, why do they decide to study abroad or take part in this programme, why do they decide to come to the UK or China, where do they gain imagine of host countries from. How do they make meanings of cultural icons before they land on host country, and so on. Secondly, new social network building in the new setting. Which include questions like, how do they make your first friend here, how do they build up friendship, gain a sense of belonging and group identities gradually in a new setting, and so on. Thirdly, cultural shock. Which include questions like, how do they make sense of disturbing experience, misunderstand during intercultural interactions, have they experienced homesickness, and so on. And finally, cultural adoption. Which include questions like how do they build up cultural reference during their transnational practice. How do they gain more cultural understanding in the host country, and so on.