Thesis

Exploring the challenges for expatriate student adjustment.

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Doctor of Business Administration
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DECLARATION

Statement of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

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Abstract

With a background of increased globalisation of education services, this thesis examines the adjustment experiences of Chinese student's sojourn to Australia to undertake postgraduate studies. This study has brought together existing literature on expatriate managers and international education and used these to form a suitable framework and reference points for this study to answer the research question - What are the critical challenges for expatriate student adjustment? The purpose of this study was to explore the adjustment of sojourn Chinese international students in Australia, to further assist in the understanding of student perceptions and adjustment processes when attending a university in Australia. A qualitative study was undertaken using basic pattern analysis across interviews with descriptive coding of responses and the data was interpreted based on aggregate analysis. This study has provided reference points of culture including language, cultures of learning and the dimensions of culture to develop an understanding of the students' adjustment processes. The preparedness and adjustment processes of the students were analysed, using a timeline basis, comparing the students' anticipatory adjustments (accurate expectations based on acquired knowledge and may include training) against their students' initial experience upon arrival and ongoing adjustment experiences in the areas of Interaction/socio-cultural adjustment, learning adjustment and general adjustment. The important findings of the study included that a lack of anticipatory adjustments contributed to culture shock; this included an overestimation by the students of their language proficiency and the students had little knowledge of the different culture of learning in Australia, which compounded their culture shock. Culture shock was evident in the early stages of the students' studies and was placated as their English proficiency grew (through language classes held at the university and daily usage) and understanding of different learning requirements of the university compared to those in China. The
students clustered (lived, associated and studied together) as a reaction to culture shock and to minimise adjustment problems. There was poor utilization of the adjustment assistance services offered by the university, other than the language classes and services, a major reason given was their cultural background (low level of Assertiveness and In-Group Collectivism). This exploratory study will assist the management of universities in an understanding of their client base and their quest for educational excellence, by giving rare insights into their customers’ perspectives on critical adjustment challenges.
Acknowledgments

There are many accolades I could bestow on my supervisor, Dr Brendan Boyle. In light of this study, an appropriate saying by Confucius sums Dr Boyle capabilities as my supervisor ‘The superior (advanced) man is modest in his speech, but exceeds in his actions’. Thank you Dr Boyle.

I would like to thank the University of Newcastle for providing a collective of people that are helpful, considerate and friendly (especially Sam Doherty). These sentiments were consistent with the students’ comments about the people within the university. I thank the students for their candour throughout the interview process.

To my friends, especially Rod and Dianne, I thank you for your support.

Dedications

To my children. I am proud of you and just keep being the people you are.
Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

1.0 Overview, Rationale and Purpose

This study draws on the field of expatriate management to present a rationale to examine the adjustment challenges of international student’s. While many lessons can be drawn from the expatriate management literature in relation to organisational practices to facilitate successful international mobility, the expatriation experience of ‘new migrant profiles’ differs greatly from the experience of business executives sent abroad by MNCs (Yijälä, Jasinskaja-Lamb, Likka & Stein, 2012). Within the broader international mobility literature a variety of expatriation is identified as in need of further research, including sojourners (Bochner, 2006) and/or self-initiated foreign employees (SFEs) (Fu, Shaffer & Harrison 2005). Sojourners are individuals who ‘travel abroad to attain a particular goal within a specified period of time’ and consists of groups such as self-initiated expatriate workers and international students’ (Bochner 2006, p. 181). The latter, international students, are ‘expatriates’ that face unique challenges in international mobility and whose acculturation and expatriation experience are of great consequence to the host organisation/university to which they expatriate. A research gap/problem in the international mobility literature is perceptible, with which this study seeks to engage by exploring the experiences of adjustment for a new migrant profile – expatriate international students, through reviewing expatriate management literature.

The challenges for the expatriate students include acculturation to a host cultural environment in parallel with acculturation to the learning environment that is often in stark contrast to that from which they have expatriated. Chinese expatriate students currently pursuing study abroad, in higher education institutes in key host countries like Australia, must adjust to culturally distant environments while seeking to achieve learning goals in cognitively distant learning systems (Chan, 1999).
The ‘organisational’ imperative to explore their adjustment is evident by their importance to the universities and indeed the nations to which they expatriate. For example, education represents Australia’s top services export and third most important overall (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Similar to MNCs, higher education institutions are faced with a number of challenges that will need to be met to facilitate successful expatriate student adjustment - not just from a pastoral care perspective, but a business one (Pratt & Poole, 2000). The challenge for the university that wishes to tap into the lucrative full-fee paying migrant student market is to facilitate adjustment to a level that maintains an educational experience/service of repute and produces a graduate of international standing.

Universities offering education export services to international students need to understand their client’s adjustment challenges and how the client’s evaluate the service quality and ultimate satisfaction of the service (Simpson & Tan, 2009). The research purpose is to explore the adjustment for sojourn Chinese international students in Australia, and will further assist in the understanding of student perceptions and adjustment processes when attending a university in Australia. The principal research question - What are the critical challenges for expatriate student adjustment? - Has been established based on this research purpose.

1.1 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework – An in-depth review was undertaken of the extant literature on expatriate management literature and international students. The conceptual framework was drawn from the existing literature in relation to organizational practice that facilitated successful international mobility of expatriate managers. However, as the sojourn experience of international students differs greatly, this study explored the adjustment process in a context–specific manner to explore idiosyncrasies of the international student experience. Pertinent academic literature that is specific to
international students such as literature on cultures of learning, language efficiency and the university's involvement with their expatriation experience has been included to frame the research in the context of the students’ experience. Postgraduate Chinese students were chosen as the sample for this study as a critical case of international student expatriation to Australia as they represent a group from a culturally distant country that has historically had a very different approach to learning (Li & Cutting, 2011). Chinese students learning styles are explained to be in contrast to what they would experience in Australia – thus requiring adjustment (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011).

Based on the literature review in Chapter 2 it is concluded that, while the expatriation literature examining the experience of travelling managers has provided in-depth insights into the acculturation and adjustment challenges, and the organizational consequences of expatriation, a number of idiosyncrasies of expatriate students are worthy of special consideration. In Chapter 2, these research ‘gaps’ are presented as a rationale to explore the experiences of adjustment for this class of expatriates – international students. The importance of the sojourn student (and this research) to the success of universities is clearly articulated as are the specific objectives.

1. To explore the barriers, challenges and antecedents of adjustment as perceived by the students.

2. To explore the barriers, challenges and antecedents of study adjustment to a cognitively distant learning system as perceived by the students.

3. To explore the students’ interaction and social-cultural experience as perceived by the students.

4. To explore the student’s perceptions and experiences of the host universities assistance given for the adjustment process, and what was the most successful to enable adjustment in their living and study environment.
In the interests of clarity, the term used in the findings and discussions chapters in this study is *sojourn student(s)* except where quoting or referring to previous works related to this study that use other terms.

**Chapter 3: Research Methodology** - In this chapter it is argued the importance of a methodology that acknowledges both context and process and justifies the qualitative methodology used for this study. The research design is outlined with an explanation of why in-depth qualitative research is most apt to address the research problem. It is explained how analysis of the interview data followed a process from basic pattern analysis across interviews with descriptive coding of responses followed by an aggregate analysis using interpretive analysis of how this sample of sojourn Chinese students further our understanding of how the aforementioned idiosyncrasies of sojourn students' adjustment.

**Chapter 4: Findings** – The data presented in this chapter demonstrate that the lack of anticipatory adjustments and awareness contributed to culture shock of the students and provided problems to the students. An overestimation of language proficiency relative to what was required in the program of study was a reoccurring theme when discussing various aspects of adjustment. While it was found the university provided all the services and assistance programs expected in the literature. The students clustered with Chinese peers to replace these services and ease adjustment, and stress (self managed remedy to culture shock). The findings chapter also reports that the majority of the students did not to engage with any purpose with the host society after the initial culture shock. This allowed the sojourn students to concentrate on their learning goal of achieving a Western degree through a second language. Adjusting to a different culture of learning was a major theme in the data. A lack of anticipatory adjustment was identified by the students in relation to
what’s expected around the differences in the cultures of learning - these differences were unexpected and only learnt through experience at the university.

**Chapter 5: Discussion and Implications** - A detailed assessment of the significance of the findings is presented in chapter 5 where the implications of the findings are considered in the broader context of our extant understanding of international sojourner adjustment and the practical implications for the many Western universities who seek to enrol international students from China and elsewhere. The contributions of this study are articulated both in the context of scholarly research and the business of education delivery in a contemporary international market in which the number of tertiary students enrolled in universities outside their own country currently stands in excess of three million students (OECD, 2011). The limitations for the study and avenues for future research are also reflected upon while articulating the contributions of this study.
Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

2.0 Introduction - overview

This review will analyse the consequence of international students studying in Australia by giving a brief overview of the contribution to the Australian economy and the importance of Australian tertiary education institutions to remain competitive in their service provision for international students. It will be outlined how the international student market is a global multi-billion market and how the understanding of the adjustment processes of sojourn students to the host nation’s cultural and learning environment is of great interest to universities and students. It will be explained why culturally, sojourn Chinese students provide a good example of cultural and learning adjustments in a country that is culturally distant and has a very different learning approach to Australia.

Once a sound business rationale for the study is established, a summary of what is important to sojourn Chinese students in selecting a tertiary institution for their higher education is briefly presented and the challenges they face are considered. As there is limited literature specifically related to this exploratory study, a platform of available literature is discussed that emerges as closely related to the research. A review of the current literature available related to expatriate adjustment for managers is carried out identifying the challenges of expatriate adjustment. This includes consideration of the cultural dimensions as outlined by the Globe study, that may have an impact such as, Performance Orientation, Uncertainty Avoidance, Future Orientation, humane orientation, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness and Power Distance (Chhokar, Brodbeck, & House, 2007), adjustment and acculturation challenges. The university input is reviewed using current literature as is the literature on sojourn students.
The major research factors relating to expatriate managers adjustment are identified that are suitable for this study and extrapolated to form the research framework for this study. The factors of the framework are anticipatory adjustment and initial experience, and ongoing adjustment factors of interaction/socio-cultural adjustment, learning adjustment and general adjustment. The factors of the research framework are detailed using pertinent literature of expatriate managers and sojourn students and gives detailed literature support of each of the factors of the framework. The framework is represented in an exploratory model to clearly identify the structure of the research.

2.0.1 Summary of the study context and rationale

The study context and rationale for research in this area is presented through consideration of the globalisation of education (2.1), general adjustment challenges (2.2), university input to assist in adjustment challenges of the students (2.3), specific adjustment challenges the sojourn students’ face (2.4), building the research framework (2.5) and finally an exploratory model representation of research factors and their underlying premise (2.6).

2.1 The Globalisation of Education and International Student Adjustment

Globalisation has provided significant changes to political, economic, and social forces, and hence the way people live their lives. Providing the core forces of change to modern
social life, and in unison has provided many business opportunities for Multinational Corporations (MNC's) and a variety of other multinational enterprises (MNE) (Scholte, 2000). Today we see globalization through advances in communication and transportation technologies, providing the conduit for condensing the world in both time and space, enabling easier cross-border mobility (Kim, 2010). Globalization has provided an environment for individuals of different cultures to experience intercultural adjustment such as sojourners. The expatriation experience of travelling managers has provided in-depth insights into the personal motivations, interaction/acculturation challenges, and organizational consequences of a sojourn experience. An important issue realised in the existing literature is the effect of management strategies designed to facilitate an effective sojourn. The last few decades have provided increasing interest in expatriate management adjustment and as a result, there have been increased studies in this area (Takeuchi, 2010). Research has shown the individual and organizations input to the adjustment process has several key stakeholders, the individual and their family, the organisation and support from host country nationals (Takeuchi, 2010). An efficient adjustment in this setting can be defined as the success of the expatriate manager to assimilate to the new host environment in both work and socio-cultural environments (Bhaskar-Shrinivas, Harrison, Shaffer & Luk, 2005). The high cost of expatriate managers to employers predicates they need to be managed effectively, so they can adjust to their new environment and become effective as soon as possible (Haslberger, Brewster & Hippler, 2013). Many lessons can be drawn from a company’s organizational practices to facilitate successful international mobility of international students and the growing number of universities’ welcoming international students to their campuses need to reflect on this.

This is particularly significant in tertiary education which Kim (2010) notes have enabled cross-border mobility of students, teachers, programs, and institutions. The development
in the education of international students has provided a key component of the economies of many Western democracies (Simpson & Tan, 2009). At a global level tertiary students represent a significant portion of cross-border education with more Asian students choosing to study overseas than non-Asian students (Kim, 2010). Similar to MNEs, universities are faced with a number of challenges that will need to be met to facilitate successful expatriate student adjustment - not just from a pastoral care perspective, but also a business one (Pratt & Poole, 2000).

Australia quickly responded to the opportunities globalisation offered, especially in cross-border higher education. For example, in 2006 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in their paper identified Australia had the highest percentage of overseas students in tertiary education (2004 figures used) with 16.6% compared to the OECD average of 6.5%; the major intake of foreign students being from China, India, New Zealand, and South Korea (OECD, 2006). Australia had increased this worldwide percentage by 4.9% (2008 figures) to 21.5% of full fee-paying students worldwide that were international students buying educational services in Australia (OECD, 2011). The percentage dropped to 19.8% (2011 figures used by OECD) of international students buying educational services in Australia (OECD, 2013). The increase in the Australian dollar against the CHN (Yuan) of 5.5 in 2010 to a high of 7.1 in 2011 (AUD increase of 29%), fees & living cost become proportionately higher, providing a currency risk for the Chinese student. The currency risk exposure directly relates to the students' experiences of cost of living and the affordability of education fees. This could contribute to a minor downturn in Australia’s market for education and makes research into the successful international students' experiences, very timely. Education services are still Australia’s largest service export (ABS, 2013) and needs to be investigated to ensure the service remains competitive (in terms of service and value) with the rest of the world.
Australian institutes must continue to ask themselves the question, what factors attract international students and impact on their experience in Australia? This is especially important in the case for the lucrative Chinese market, which is Australia’s biggest market for education exports (ABS, 2013).

Some of the factors influencing Chinese students’ choice of where to study abroad can include, the perception of higher quality education, the reputation of the destination institution, and its resolve to provide high quality education and support for its international students. Other factors include recommendations from family and friends, relative costs of tuition, living, travel and social cost, environmental considerations such as weather, lifestyle, crime and racial discrimination, closeness to China, personal and education links with those in Australia (Bodycott, 2009). Whatever drives the choice of coming to Australia to study these students will be presented with adjustment challenges. The next section introduces a number of potential challenges with a specific focus on cultural distance as this can be rationally expected to create a considerable barrier to adjustment.

2.2 Adjustment challenges for the international student market

2.2.1 The case of Chinese international students.

The Chinese sojourn students have the adjustment challenges of a culturally distant environment in Australia, while seeking to achieve learning goals in a cognitively distant learning system (Chan, 1999) with the added challenge of achieving this through a second language. The greater the cultural distance between the origin, culture and the host culture, generally the higher level of adjustment is required (Sam, 2001). The cultural distance may be problematical to Chinese sojourn students as the culture in which they were raised impacts their behavioural patterns and expectations in their new environment and this may have an impact on their adjustment.
2.2.2 Cultural adjustment challenges

Culture can be defined as ‘shared motivations, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from the common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations’ (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 15). Cultures are operationalized at multiple levels these levels are referred to as dimensions. Chhokar et al. (2007) adopted nine dimensions of societal culture in their GLOBE study and the findings were operationalized through qualitative measurement. The ranking of these dimensions is compared in the following table for China and Australia’s societies. The figures under China and Australia identify the ranking each society had out of the 61 societies analysed for each dimension. Australia is used as the baseline for the difference e.g. Assertiveness, Australia is ranked 22 of the countries surveyed, China is ranked 51 identifying China is a less assertive society ranked 29 countries below Australia and In-Group Collectivism Australia is ranked 52 of the countries surveyed, China is ranked 9 identifying China is more collective in their societal structure, and ranked 43 countries above Australia identify Australia is more individualistic.

Table 1 – Cultural dimensions comparison table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural dimension</th>
<th>China Ranking</th>
<th>Australia Ranking</th>
<th>Ranking Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Egalitarianism is the extent to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences while promoting gender equity and the equality of genders</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviours such as planning,</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Dimension</td>
<td>Definition</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Performance Orientation</strong></td>
<td>refers to the extent to which high level members of organizations and societies encourage and reward group members for performance improvement and excellence</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humane Orientation</strong></td>
<td>is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individual for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, kind to others, and exhibit and promoting altruistic ideals.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Uncertainty Avoidance</strong></td>
<td>is the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by relying on established social norms, rituals and bureaucratic practices to decrease the probability of unpredictable future events that could adversely affect the organization or society, and also to remedy the potential adverse effects of such unpredictable future events</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Power Distance</strong></td>
<td>is the degree to which members of an organization and society encourage and reward unequal distribution of power with greater power at high levels</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Collectivism</strong></td>
<td>reflects the degree to which organizational and societal, institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Group Collectivism</strong></td>
<td>reflects the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations, families, circle of close friends, or other such small groups</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Based on the above table the first insight from extant literature informing the conceptual framework for this study is that the cultural distance between Australia’s biggest markets for international students is significant. This may have an impact on a variety of adjustment.
challenges that international student will face and therefore, is certainly worthy of consideration. Beyond culture, the literature of expatriate travelling managers has provided in-depth insights into a variety of factors in the adjustment process, including the personal motivations, acculturation challenges, and organizational consequences of expatriation, as well as the management strategies designed to facilitate effective expatriation (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005; Black, Mendenhall and Oddou, 1991; Takeuchi, 2010).

### 2.2.3 Other adjustment challenges, performance and failure

In the case of individuals posted to overseas work assignments there is a time lag in adjustment whilst the individual learns about the host country’s business as well as going through a socio-cultural adjustment (Aycan, 1997). During this adjustment period, the individual's productivity at both a personal and job level can be diminished (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). From the expatriate manager's perspective the assignment can be a high-pressure situation, where their well being is reliant on them to adjust as quickly as possible (Haslberger et al., 2013). The expatriate manager's behaviour stems from their culture, values, aspirations and the right attitude to adjust to the new environment (Baruch, Steel & Quantrill, 2002). This can be termed the person-environment (P-E) fit, which addresses the interaction between the individuals own abilities and actions to fit into the new environment and the environments reactions to the individual actions (Haslberger et al., 2013). The P-E relationship is dynamic and interactional and research has shown ‘the individual (here the expatriate manager), the environment, and the situation in which the interaction occurs that necessitates adjustive behaviour’, (Haslberger et al., 2013).

Identifying some form of adjustive behaviour would occur by the expatriate manager in the new environment.

This adjustment period does not necessarily produce the required results, and negative results may occur, such as continued poor performance due to the expatriate manager.
being unable to make the necessary adjustment to the foreign social and cultural environment (Takeuchi, 2010). Puck, Kittler and Wright (2008) identifies at a corporate level that expatriate management failure impacts on the foreign subsidiary's performance including market penetration and the loss of new opportunities. At an internal level of the corporation the cost may be counted in the poor perceptions by the employee of the company, if the expatriate returns prematurely. A loss of confidence may occur through loss of self esteem and loss in prestige amongst fellow workers, this may result in the corporate revisiting the value of expatriation and employees viewing the roles of overseas posts as possibly risky (Aycan, 1997). In the business world the importance of successful cross-cultural interactions have been highlighted in the discussion of expatriate management failure (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). In contrast Harzing (1995) in her review paper on non-completions of assignments prior to the expatriate manager’s assignment has finished, resulting in expatriation failure, found an inconsistency in the research on expatriate failure studies/articles. Moreover, she also identifies most academic articles are not supported by empirical evidence, and failure rates vary considerably depending on the home country of the expatriate manager and identified that articles relating to expatriate failure have been misquoted or taken out of context. From this we can conclude that while expatriation failure has been overstated, it is a topic of considerable academic interest. Furthermore, if cross-cultural interaction is a cause, where expatriate managers do return from their overseas assignments because of the inability to adjust to the new culture and work environment or disillusionment with the company, can be costly to themselves and their company (Takeuchi, 2010). Similarly a sojourn student performing poorly in their studies or returning to their origin country before finishing their studies due to being unable to adjust successfully to the new culture and learning environment or disillusionment with their university provides considerable financial and emotional outcomes for the student.
The results can be costly to the university by losing a client (revenue lost), and possible detriment to its reputation as a provider of education services to the international student market.

2.3 University input into sojourn students’ adjustment

International students are individuals facing unique challenges in international mobility and whose adjustment and sojourn experience are of great consequence to the host university to which they expatriate.

The identification of successful adjustment processes of sojourn students; can assist Australian Universities and the sojourn student’s direction in the adjustment process. In exploring sojourn student adjustment, the role of the university will be seen as a subset of the adjustment process as extant literature has identified a role for the organization (Aycan, 1997; Suutari & Burch, 2001). Assisting students to prepare and adjust to their cross-cultural adjustment by the university is fundamental to the student’s success and by definition the success of the university. The adjustment challenges can be placated to a certain extent by the university not expecting sojourn students to adjust fully to their new environment. Students do not need to lose their cultural identity, i.e. research has identified ‘this does not mean that one must give up one’s identity, values, or culture. Many individuals (e.g. International students) may effectively manage culture shock without making major changes in their personality or pre-existing lifestyle’ (Winkelman, 1994, p. 123). Other research has identified the practical implications for universities to assist in cross-cultural adjustment ‘in an attempt to eliminate segregation and prejudice, institutions should focus on managing diversity rather than individual cultural groups within the student body’ (Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009, p. 154).
The individual also has a responsibility for their own adjustment. Expatriate management literature identified that the success of the expatriation process depends on the managers' competencies and skills, but also the support from the parent company and the local unit, prior to and during the period of expatriation (Aycan, 1997). The expatriate management literature also identifies the training and support of the host unit is a more common form of training than pre-departure training (Suutari & Burch, 2001). Suutari and Burch (2001) identified the usefulness of pre-departure training for expatriate managers is limited based on the short period of time from selection to departure. And identified ongoing training and support provided was less than required by the expatriate managers. The sojourn students are in a different position where pre-departure training is the responsibility of the student to initiate their own training and awareness of the adjustment challenges to be faced. And ensure the adequacy of the training and awareness is sufficient to minimize the possible challenges ahead. Where anticipatory adjustments (accurate expectations based on acquired knowledge and may include training) by the self-initiated expatriate have not occurred prior to departure to the host country, all adjustments need to occur upon arrival (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). In the student's situation, organizational support can take the form of the universities services and programs which are designed to assist the students in their adjustment process, both immediate and ongoing. Furnham (2004) identified that there are many programs and services available in Australian Universities to assist foreign students in their adjustment process. Depending on the university these may include educational awareness - related to different education systems, support systems to assist students in their needs, orientation and ongoing assistance with orientation, with well documented booklets of available support systems and assistance in acculturation. Furnham (2004) also identified that less emphasis should be placed on international students integrating into the host environment due to the short period of time the students
are in the host nation. In particular for Chinese learners it may be beneficial to use the induction/orientation as these activities are designed to increase students' confidence in their quest for autonomous learning, concentrating on their initial fears and their rate of adjustment (Rastall, 2006).

2.4 Sojourn student adjustment factors

Language is learning, cultural implications (Kato, 2001) as the ability in host nation's language has a considerable impact on the academic success of obtaining a Western degree and overall adjustment (Sam, 2001). Xu, (2012) found Chinese research student's sojourn to Australia used various approaches to strengthen confidence in their use of the English language. Xu (2012) identified, students in their transition into Australian linguistic and cultural community, all the participants sought different English mediated activities to build self-confidence in their transition experience. Their efforts were to read newspapers, watch TV, informal contact with locals such as having coffee together, work experience, advanced classes in English (private), and living in a university multilingual residential college, that gave the opportunity to practice English.

It has been identified there is a relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and cultural distance, where the greater the cultural distance the more difficult the cross-cultural adjustment (Sam, 2001; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). The cross-cultural adjustment of Chinese sojourn students may comprise the following barriers - linguistics, social interaction, and academic adoption such as lack of abstract thinking, and behavioural differences such as saving face and the need to compromise in group situations (Chan, 1999). Saving face in this context, it is better not to say anything that might cause discomfort to anyone, including themselves, so participation in classes can be stymied through not offering an alternate opinion (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006).
In addition, successful adjustment can be impacted by other general factors such as gender, age, status, self-esteem, and prior cross cultural experience (Rosenthal, Russel & Thomson, 2007). Having overseas experience may help the sojourn students to understand the importance of the adjustment process, and provide an enormously beneficial experience that remains with the student for the rest of their lives (Furnham, 2004). Other than homesickness and financial difficulties Church (1982) also identified foreign student’s language proficiency, adjusting to the new education system, adjusting to the new social system of customs and norms was important. Those findings are not dissimilar to Black et al. (1991) factors of adjustment for expatriate workers of, general adjustment to the environment, work adjustment and interaction adjustment with host nationals.

The multi-dimensionality of expatriate management adjustment has support from many academics (Takeuchi, 2010), similarly the sojourn experience of students can benefit from academic writings over the last twenty years of expatriation management experiences. Literature on expatriate managers has provided significant evidence of the relationship between adjustment factors and specific antecedents of adjustment and the outcomes for expatriate managers (Lazarova & Thomas, 2012). In the next section, some of these insights are considered.

2.5 Building a research framework for this study based on extant research

To understand the complexity of expatriate adjustment and the multidimensional constructs that can impact on the expatriate adjustment, the expatriate management literature was reviewed to identify a research framework for this study. Black’s (1988) study first theorized three major factors of adjustment categorised into 1) Individual factors, 2) Work factors and 3) Outside factors not related to work. Black’s work forms the base of many further studies’ theorizing. Such as a study by Shaffer, Harrison and Gilley (1999),
who tested the factors of job, organization, position, non-work and individual and meta-
analytical reviews of articles of antecedent-effect relationships such as Hechanova, Beehr & Christensen (2003). Whilst these studies are relevant to the expatriation of managers, they are not necessarily appropriate to assist in understanding sojourn student adjustment. Blacks’ (1988) study was later further re-conceptualized by Black et al. (1991) in their theoretical framework for studying expatriate managers adjustment, they identified four facets of adjustment – anticipatory adjustment prior to leaving the country, and in-country adjustment to the general environment, interaction adjustment with host nationals, and work adjustment. These factors are used as a foundation for this exploratory study on sojourn student adjustment as they provide a useful broad frame to investigate the experiences of a relatively unexplored category of expatriates. The factors of adjustment are anticipatory adjustment (training and acquiring knowledge about the host country, culture and its people and initial experience in this study), general adjustment (adjusting to the uniqueness of the foreign culture and environment) work (or study in this case) adjustment and interaction adjustment/acculturation.

The following factors of the research framework are summarised below utilizing existing literature on expatriate management and sojourn students.

2.5.1 Anticipatory adjustments and initial experience

Pre-departure training/awareness is designed to develop the awareness of the manager once expatriated to the divergence in the culture of the host nation to facilitate quicker adjustment (Puck et al., 2008). Awareness of the host country can make the sojourn students’ adjustment to the new culture and environment less difficult and enable them to concentrate on their goals (Kitsantas, 2004). The use of anticipatory adjustment through education and awareness programs may be beneficial to sojourn students, providing a more rapid settling period, giving the individual the opportunity to maximize their output.
Cross-cultural training programs do not teach an individual how to act, but enhances their cross-cultural skills (Puck et al., 2008) where research has found the pre-departure training resulted in ‘reducing pre-mature departures and disruptive incidents’ (Kitsantas, 2004, p. 448). This may also be the case for sojourn students.

Language proficiency is one common aspect of pre-departure training cited in the literature (Bhaskar-Shirivas et al., 2005; Puck et al., 2008; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005) and has been found to have a considerable impact on international students and their academic success and overall adaptation (Sam, 2001). Language proficiency enables expatriates to communicate with the host nation's people and mass communication on a daily basis, such as social interaction (Cui & Awa, 1992) and is a prerequisite for sojourn students to interact with other international and host nation students and lecturers in English. Research done by Peltkorpi, (2010) found expatriate managers' language competencies and cultural values jointly have an impact on intercultural communication (learning and socio-cultural interaction platform) and not to treat as independent variables. Similarly Selmer (2006, p. 352) identifies ‘Language affects and reflects culture just as culture affects and reflects what is encoded in language’, where language is the mechanism by which expatriates develop their understanding of the new culture (Selmer & Lauring, 2011).

There are many articles in the International Human Resource Management (IHRM) literature that concentrate on the relationship between pre-departure training and success or otherwise of cross-cultural adjustment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Puck et al., 2008; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005). Cross-cultural training has been advocated as a means to facilitate successful cross-cultural interactions by allowing the individual to adjust more effectively to the new cultural environment and therefore be more effective in their role sooner (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1986). The preparedness of anticipatory adjustments is the
There have been contradictory findings on pre-departure cross-cultural training. Pre-departure cross-cultural training has been found to have a positive impact on the managers’ individual skills, adjustment and job performance (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). Whilst Puck et al. (2008) found no significant advantages in pre-departure cross cultural training in general, interactional and work place expatriate manager adjustment, they did find there were a significant impact of host country language competence and the three dimensions of adjustment.

The use of anticipatory adjustments to promote their settlement period through education and awareness is also likely to be beneficial to the Chinese student studying in Australia, this is especially so for English training. By being proficient in English the students can face the academic challenges, including a new culture of learning, listening/understanding the lectures, writing assignments and interacting with other students in English, which will assist in interaction attempts.

The ability to communicate effectively is a pre-cursor to developing acquaintances and developing interpersonal relationships with counterparts (Hammer, Gudykunst & Wiseman, 1979). This exemplifies the necessity for the student not only to be proficient in the English language but to be willing to communicate and interact with other students using English.

To enhance interaction adjustment, it has been found that institutions have options such as using a mentoring system and/or using a co-worker system, providing direct learning possibilities and clarification of tasks at hand (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). There seems to be little known about the students' own efforts in their sojourn success, specifically their English language development in Australia (Xu, 2012). Therefore, the role of language and anticipatory adjustment language training will need to be considered and whether culture shock was prevalent due to anticipatory adjustment training was less than required.
2.5.2 Initial adjustment

Expatriates management adjustment simply does not just happen; it’s a process of understanding and interpreting their new environment, some for the better, some for the worse, providing a direct relationship to the level of interaction with their hosts (Haslberger et al., 2013). Where high levels of cultural distance are prevalent, the adequacy of the expatriate manager's behaviour is low which can provide interaction difficulties (Haslberger et al., 2013) and culture shock can occur. Culture shock can be defined as ‘people who are suddenly introduced to a culture that is very different to their own’ (Church, 1982, p. 540). Aspects of culture shock can be the strain provided by making psychological adjustments to encompass the new culture. These aspects are a sense of loss due to being away from friends and colleagues, being rejected by people in the new culture, confusion about values and role expectations when becoming aware of the cultural differences (Furnham, 2004). This can culminate in awareness that they are not coping emotionally with the new cultural environment (Furnam, 2004). Previous experience of living overseas, especially in the host country can assist in adjusting. To what level of assistance this experience supplies to the expatriate manager is open to conjecture and further empirical studies are required (Black et al., 1991). Whilst it is not expected for expatriates to settle in their new environment immediately upon arrival, it appears logical that it is incumbent on the host entity to assist in this passage of settlement. Programs can be developed to assist with issues such as local knowledge of the area, housing arrangements, facilities available such as banking, shopping and entertainment, health care and services offered by public authorities (Suutari & Burch, 2001).

Specifically sojourn students may be confronted with language problems on arrival, accommodation difficulties, separation difficulties, financial stress, loneliness, racial discrimination and dietary restrictions. University services can provide orientation, ongoing
assistance and provide information of in-country services available through booklets (Furnham, 2004). However, the effectiveness of these services is unknown.

If culture shock occurs the students are still faced with ongoing interaction and socio-cultural adjustment challenges.

2.5.3 Interaction/socio-cultural adjustment

An agreed meaning of acculturation and its operationalization has been elusive in the social sciences (Sam, 2006). An overarching meaning of acculturation can be seen as the changes occurring after initial and subsequent contact between individuals/groups of different cultural backgrounds (Sam, 2006) in a continuous and firsthand manner (Rudmin, 2003). A finding by researchers in the area of acculturation, a sub-set of the adjustment process for the purpose of this research, found those that integrate by combining their heritage, culture and the culture of the society they are in (dominant culture) adapt better than those that identify with one or the other culture or to neither culture (Sam & Berry, 2010). Cross-cultural adjustment has two forces operating, firstly the individual’s capacity to adapt to the process and secondly acculturation. Sam (2006, p. 16) sees the latter as psychological acculturation ‘where changes may include personal characteristics such as values, attitudes and identity’. Acculturation is where the emphasis is on the changes taking place between individuals and cultures resulting in cultural and psychological changes (Sam & Berry, 2010). There are generally four categories of acculturation an expatriate may encompass, and it is noted here the individual can move categories because of factors of time and what time brings, such as new friends, understanding of the new culture through experience (accepting or rejecting) and/or education, or simply comfort with what was once the unknown, to name a few. The categories are 1) assimilation where the dominant culture is favoured, 2) separation where the minority culture is favoured, 3) integration where the two cultures co-exist, and 4) marginalization.
where both cultures are diminished (neither culture is embraced) (Berry, 1997; Rudmin, 2003). In these categories, integration has been found to be the most successful in the adjustment process, followed by assimilation and separation strategies for adjustment. Marginalization has been found to be the least successful (Berry, 1997). It is acknowledged that the level of acculturation the students may encompass over time may contain one, some or all the levels of acculturation, and further the acculturation process is not a simple immediate process – but one that occurs over time.

Combined with the Interaction/socio-cultural adjustment the students have to adjust to a different learning environment in Australia.

2.5.4 Learning adjustment

Chinese students use a co-operative group orientated approach to study when in Australia, where Australian students use an individualistic approach, with the Chinese students being collaborative in their learning style (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). This study will further explore factors to why the students collaborate in their study efforts, to give a better understanding of the implications of their adjustment process.

Rote learning has been contributed to the legacy of Confucianism, which has a prominent impact on the Chinese culture (Li & Cutting, 2011). Rote learning is the mechanical repetitious processes of learning about a topic, so the topic that can be repeated from memory without necessarily understand its meaning. Yet there is research that ‘presents evidence that memorisation, has been misconstrued from the Western perspective, is more than rote learning’ (Tan, 2011). Tan (2011) identifies three stages of memorisation, memorise with little understanding, memorise to understand and understand and memorise.
Australia is an individualist society where the educators encourage students to form their own opinion about the information provided or sourced through their own efforts, rather than reproducing information (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011). The learning culture differences are well summarized in a study of Asian students undertaken by Gieve and Clark (2005) by a sojourn student stating ‘Chinese teachers teach the students' knowledge; English teachers teach the students how to get knowledge’ (p. 276). In China the teacher is the expert on the text(s) using a transmission approach through an authoritarian teaching style; this is a dichotomy to Australian teaching methods (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). This may account for researchers finding that Chinese students tend not participate in class, lack a questioning approach which provides no indication of their understanding of the topic (to the lecturer), and writings which reproduces information without critical or independent thinking and the lack of autonomy in their study practices (Clark & Gieve, 2006). Clark and Gieve (2006) found that these elements of the Chinese learner inconsistent with other research. Initial adjustment to the new way of learning may provide culture shock relating to learning styles and teaching methods (Ratsall, 2008). This may present problems of outcomes and student adjustment (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011). The different teaching and learning styles are known as cultures of learning and identify the different learning expectations of cultures (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). The difference in learning approaches also provides the students to have different thought processes; research has shown ‘societies can differ markedly in their system of thought’ (Nisbett, Peng, Choi & Norenzayan, 2001, p. 292). The different pedagogical practices in Australia are appreciated by Chinese learners once exposed to the culture of learning. However, this transition process takes time and effort, given the students cultural and pedagogical differences. This process can only be done gradually, and is a function of time (Song-Turner & Willis, 2011).
Robertson, Line, Jones & Thomas, (2000) identified the pressure of encompassing a cognitively distant learning system in conjunction with pressure from family to succeed, and the perception that academic staff did not understand them, can provide higher stress levels in these students more than local students. This should also be considered as part of the adjustment challenge.

Where there are language barriers, the expatriate manager language difficulties may be subsumed to a certain extent because of known technical abilities, the sojourn students’ language difficulties are compounded as they are being taught technical knowledge and in a new context where critical and abstract thinking are required. Chinese students attend classes in English in China prior to commencement and must pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to be allowed to study in Australia. The goal is to obtain a proficiency in the English language, but may not prepare the student for the different culture of learning of Australian Universities which emphasizes working independently, thinking critically, and looking for different solutions (Parris-Kid & Barnet, 2011). The learning style of the Chinese student is further exasperated by the notion of ‘saving face’ which may minimize class participation (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Therefore, the potential implications for learning adjustment are language combined with a new culture of learning can provide students with considerable learning adjustment challenges.

Consistent with this notion, research done by Peltokorpi, (2010) found expatriate managers' language competencies and cultural values (including culture of learning in this study) jointly have an impact on intercultural communication (learning platform in this case) and not to treat as independent variables. Similarly Selmer (2006, p352) identifies ‘Language affects and reflects culture just as culture affects and reflects what is encoded in language’, where language is the mechanism by which expatriates develop their understanding of the new culture (Selmer & Laruing, 2011).
2.5.5 General adjustment

Just like the other forms of adjustment discussed to this point, studies have identified that prior knowledge of the host country’s culture and environment, the ability of the expatriate manager in the host country’s language and the readiness to communicate with others in that language all contribute to the expatriate adjustment (Takeuchi, Yun & Russel, 2002). Expatriate managers need to adapt culturally appropriate behaviours in their quest to perform effectively in their task. (Osman-Gani & Rockstuhl, 2008). The adjustment is not a sudden process; however, it occurs over a period of time, as outlined by the U Curve. Perception of the host country is the ongoing adjustment processes of the individual sojourner. Initially described by Lysgaard, (1955) the U curve can be defined ‘as the sojourner’s level of adjustment as a function of time in the new culture’ (Church, 1982, p. 542). Briefly the U-curve adjustment can divide into four stages. The first stage is the honeymoon stage where the sojourner is captivated by the new culture, with a new and interesting environment they are now living in, including the physical environment and the social environment (the way people speak and act). The second stage is the culture shock stage where the sojourner needs to deal with day to day living within the new culture. This is followed by the adjustment stage, where the sojourner learns gradually to adapt to the new culture’s norms and expectations. The final stage is the mastery stage where the sojourner now has enough knowledge about the cultural expectation so they can fine tune their actions to produce improved functionality (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The relationship between adjustment and performance has not been proven through studies (Lazarova & Thomas, 2012).

Finally, the sojourners perception and responses may be affected by their Individual skills (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). The individual’s skills are the qualities the individual possesses to adjust to the host countries’ cultures. There are three dimensions that
categorize these qualities. Self dimension – the ability of the individual to maintain a balanced mental approach to the cultural setting they are placed in, including self efficacy; and secondly relationship dimension – the qualities required to start, maintain and foster relationships with host nationals and lastly relative dimension – the ability to understand the environment and the actors they are placed with, and act to accordingly (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). While the individual adjustment skills of the participants in this research will not be measured in this study, respondents’ perception of personal skills in the adjustment process should be considered.

2.6 Summary

Following from the review of the literature above, to explore the main categories of international student adjustment this study should consider; 1) Anticipatory adjustments and initial experience on arrival; 2) interaction/socio-cultural adjustment; 3) Learning adjustment; 4) general adjustment, (adapted from Black et al. (1991) where work adjustment had been changed to learning adjustment) and also relevant university assistance in these areas. These factors will be used as the framework for this research, and it is noted each factor is not mutually exclusive, but potentially inextricably interrelated in the process of adjustment of students. The following exploratory model maps the conceptual framework guiding this study.
2.6.1 Exploratory model of the research factors

The adjustment process (above) is the students' perceptions and reactions to how and why they adjusted in the following categories of adjustment over time. Initially upon arrival, and whether their anticipatory adjustments (accurate expectations based on acquired knowledge and may include training) were appropriate for the adjustment challenges the sojourn students faced on arrival and how they actually reacted to the ongoing adjustment challenges of – interaction/socio-cultural, learning and general. The university input component of the framework seeks the students' perceptions of the assistance the university provided for adjustment - on arrival and ongoing. The university assistance is represented above as the platform of learning. Identifying the particular input categories the university offers assistance in, that relate to this study.

Through utilizing the framework established from expatriate management literature and other expatriate literature such as self initiated expatriates I explore sojourn student adjustment. As we do not know how this literature relates to the specific experiences of international students there is the potential to provide new insights into the experience of sojourn students who add billions of dollars to the Australian economy annually. I also
draw on, existing literature specific to sojourn students, to explore what the students perceived as the barriers and antecedents of adjustment relating to learning. The objectives of the study can be stated as follows.

1. To explore the barriers, challenges and antecedents of adjustment as perceived by the students.
2. To explore the barriers, challenges and antecedents of study adjustment to a cognitively distant learning system.
3. To explore the students' interaction and social-cultural experience.
4. To explore the student's perceptions and experiences of the host universities assistance given for the adjustment process, and what was the most successful to enable adjustment in their living and study environment.

In summary, by exploring the experiences adjustment for sojourn Chinese students this study aims to assist in the understanding of student perceptions and adjustment processes when attending a tertiary institution of a host nation. Sojourn student adjustment is expected to be a multifaceted complex state of affairs, with many variables to take into account. This conceptual framework has identified the major overarching factors of adjustment prevalent to expatriate management experiences that pertain to this study providing an appropriate frame for this exploratory study. Integrating existing literature specific to International students allows a broad scope in which to understand the research. As such logic has not previously been applied to understanding international students, this study is exploratory.

Chapter 3 follows, detailing the appropriate research methodology used in this study to achieve the research objectives.
Chapter 3 – Research methodology

3.1 Introduction and Method Overview

This chapter is concerned with the methodology used to answer the research question and explore its related research objectives. As qualitative research is concerned with analysing people’s interpretations and quantitative research is concerned with the analysis of statistical data, qualitative research is considered most appropriate for this study. This study also seeks to understand the process of adjustment from the actors’ perspective and a benefit of qualitative research is its utility for the study of process (Yin, 2009). The tools used by researchers in qualitative research rely on observation, questioning and descriptions; these researchers are referred to as naturalists (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A naturalist constructionist believes people construct their understanding of the external world, through interpretation based on experience, knowledge and expectations (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). By contrast, quantitative researchers use tools relying on measuring and counting, where the assumption is reality is fixed, directly measurable, and knowledgeable, and there is one truth, one external reality these researchers are called positivists (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

Qualitative research has been chosen as the research method as it provides the ability to discover how people deal with situations in a real world setting and to assist in the contextual understanding (Yin, 2011). In other words, how people understand themselves (subjective) in the setting in which they are placed, which is beyond what objective evidence may supply. In general terms the study will address “how” questions through its research objectives, studying ‘real people, real problems and real organizations’ (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1155). The chapter will review the research purpose and resulting research question again to explicate why the study design is appropriate. The research design is detailed as will the ground to be covered, i.e. identifying the
selection criteria and sample and how the data were collected and analysed to support the methodology. This methodology fit can be defined as the ‘internal consistency among elements of a research project’ (Edmondson & McManus, 2007, p. 1155).

3.2 Research Purpose, Question and Objectives

A principle research question has been established based on the research purpose as outlined in the conceptual framework. The research purpose is to explore the adjustment for sojourn Chinese international students in Australia, and will further assist in the understanding of student perceptions and adjustment processes when attending a university in Australia. The following principal research question was established for this research purpose - What are the critical challenges for expatriate student adjustment? A number of related research objectives will need to be addressed. The following research objectives have been established as follows:

Research objectives

1. To explore the barriers, challenges and antecedents of adjustment as perceived by the students.

2. To explore the barriers, challenges and antecedents of study adjustment to a cognitively distant learning system as perceived by the students.

3. To explore the students' interaction and social-cultural experience as perceived by the students.

4. To explore the student's perceptions and experiences of the host universities assistance given for the adjustment process, and what was the most successful to enable adjustment in their living and study environment.

Although the study will be exploring fields of research derived from frameworks and theories on travelling managers’ expatriation experiences in a corporate environment, we
do not know how relevant they are to the international student experience. As identified in the conceptual framework the experiences of expatriate workers has been well studied and theorized. In the context of international Chinese students’ sojourn experiences this research will explore the distinct experiences of this class of sojourners.

3.3 Study design overview

The design of the study is of utmost importance in the successful completion of this study, as the design sits between the research questions and the data (Punch, 2006). A qualitative ‘case’ design is used, which can be defined as ‘an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident’ (Yin, 2009, p. 18). By using multiple cases (of Chinese sojourn students) multiple facets of the phenomenon could be revealed and understood (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The unit of analysis is defined in this study as the “case” of a Chinese student studying in Australia. The data compilation method involved collecting data from individual students, utilizing in-depth semi-structured interviews. This structure is flexible, where the person being interviewed is allowed freedom to express experiences in their own words within a broad pre-defined structure (their perceptions to the questions) and the length of their responses to each question. Semi-structured interviewing is a flexible procedure, especially in small research projects that provides rich empirical data (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

When appropriate, a naturalist researcher will use inductive theorizing, and search for evidence of context that shapes behaviour (Gilliam, 2005). In this study, the respondents “context” will be considered in that they will have travelled from one country and learning culture to a very new one in Australia. Therefore, what happens prior to departure will have a direct influence on what is happening during their time studying and adjusting in
Australia. As will be seen in the discussion of data analysis below, it is acknowledged that “it is very difficult to transfer to others a full picture” (Sake, 2006, p. 18), but in an effort to successfully capture the full picture, coding management and the approach to interpretation is presented in some detail. Before that, the unit of analysis and sampling approach is discussed.

3.3.1 Unit of analysis and purposive sampling

Every qualitative study has at its core the understanding of a social phenomenon; this study focuses on the understanding of Chinese international student’s adjustment experience. It has been identified in the conceptual framework; there is a considerable distance between the Chinese and Australian cultures in some areas. In light of this, Chinese international students represent a critical case of international student adjustment challenges and therefore, represent a purposeful sample chosen specifically to represent features of the broader international student population (Ritchie, Lewis, & Gillian, 2003). These features included a sojourn to a culturally distant nation, studying through a second language and experiencing a new learning culture as part of their new program of study.

Unlike statistical, scientific research methodology where a representative sample of the population is used to generalize, qualitative research strives for rich qualitative evidence derived from the actors to understand their perceptions of their experiences. Purposive sampling is where the members of the sample represent a setting or category in relation to key conditions characteristic of a population (Ritchie, et al., 2003). Sample size is generally much smaller in qualitative studies than quantitative studies, as the study progresses, the more data received does not mean more information is received and a point of diminishing return occurs where no new information is received. Frequencies are less important in qualitative research as it is concerned with the meaning of the data and
not the generalizations found in quantitative studies (Mason, 2010). Ritchie et al. (2003, p. 84) identified a number of issues relating to sample size that needed to be considered in this study: 1) where the population is relatively homogeneous a smaller sample is all that is required for internal diversity. 2) Selection criteria – the smaller the selection criteria the smaller the sample size, this study requires a post-graduate Chinese national that sojourned to Australia to pursue post-graduate tertiary studies and not international students from a variety of cultural backgrounds at different levels of education e.g. high school, undergraduate and postgraduate students. 3) The extent to which the nesting of criteria is needed – if criteria need to be interlocked or 'nested' for reasons of interdependency or for the requirement of diversity then this will increase the size of the sample size. This study is not assessing the interdependence of criteria or pursuing diversity in its sample. 4) Groups of special interest that require special study – if groups within the population require intensive study, this will require a larger overall sample – this study has no special interest groups to be studied. 5) The budget and resources required – each interview requires intensive resources for data collection and analysis. This study has one student researcher and one researcher/supervisor and is constricted by university rules on dissertation preparation for candidates.

As Sake (2006, p. 24) identifies, ‘the purpose of qualitative studies is to assist people and organizations function better’, which is the purpose of this research – to assist sojourn students and universities to understand the phenomena studied and function better. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences and antecedents of adjustment for sojourn Chinese international students, and will further assist in the understanding of student perceptions and adjustment processes when attending a tertiary institution of a host nation. This will include the students' knowledge and perceptions of the universities assistance programs. The services available as outlined by the university's website are a
dedicated learning, the development team of advisors to assist with writing, study and English skills, English language workshops, course specific peer advisors and Student Hub for advice on essential student services, International Office run by international students to assist with welfare concerns, referral for academic support and accommodation, email support and arranged social events. In light of the discussion to this point, it was concluded that to better understand the phenomenon of interest a purposive sample was suitable.

3.4 Validity and reliability

An epistemology emphasizing understanding how humans develop their relationship with the world, which are and are difficult to replicate or validate on another group (Morgan & Smircich, 1980), in turn, leads to difficulty in providing validity and reliability of findings. Therefore, in this section every attempt is made to illustrate the process of data collection and analysis to ensure that others can understand and potentially replicate the research process. Internal reliability refers to the extent other researchers, given the same propositions or ideas of this study would match them with data in the same way as was in this study and external reliability refers to whether independent researchers would find the comparable results in the same or similar setting (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). Internal validity is concerned with the extent to which the researcher’s observations and measurements are representative of reality and external validity is whether representations can be generalized across groups ‘beyond the specific research context in which it was conducted’ (Bryman, 2004, p. 539). One important bound on this research is that it is to an extent culture-specific and generalizations to other cultures are not necessarily encompassed in this study. However, as the goal of sample selection was to create a sample that purposely allowed for the exploration of adjustment challenges, exploring the experience of Chinese students studying in Australia is appropriate. Moreover, where
adjustment challenges are not believed to be culture-bound, further generalizations are possible.

3.5 The sample

The population of interest in this study is sojourn Chinese students studying. The sample was Chinese national students pursuing postgraduate studies at an Australian University. All were studying business related degrees; the sample was 17 students, of which 15 students gave their age, provided a mean age of 26 years old. There were 8 female participants and 9 male participants. As a non–probability sample there was no goal to make statistical generalizations and the sample size was small and primarily representative of the characteristics of the “population” of international Chinese students. (Hair, Babin, Money, & Samouel, 2003). The sample size was dependent on saturation. The initial sample size was predicated to be 20-30 participants - sojourn Chinese students studying in Australia. Following a review of saturation principles, (Mason, 2010) interviews were halted at 17 students. At this point, while some answers were expressed differently and some small minor variations due to unique personal experience were given, variations were no longer affecting the pattern of answers that was being established through analysis of the interview data on an ongoing basis throughout data collection.

An expression of interest invite was sent to post-graduate business student students from an administrator in one major Australian University who were willing to provide support for the research project. This message was sent to all students as part of the normal informational service provided by the graduate business school. Students were made aware that the research was being undertaken, what was required for the project and then students had the option to contact the researchers directly if they were interested in participating. Interested students were interviewed after their written consent was provided and confidentiality was assured. Interviewees continued until a saturation point reached –
resulting in a sample of 17 post-graduate Chinese international students.

3.6 Interview design

This is an exploratory study where open ended questions were designed for semi-structured interviews, to allow the sojourn student to enter into conversations with the researcher on their perception of the questions. Guided by the insights in extant literature reviewed in chapter 2 the questions were divided into two groups, firstly, what the sojourn students saw as barriers to learning, interaction/socio-cultural adjustment and general adjustment and secondly the antecedents of their adjustment to the new environments of learning and culture – the full interview schedule is listed in Attachment 1.

3.7 Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings

In qualitative research it is important that the analysis of the data is well documented and that the researchers are explicit and detailed about analysis strategies so rigour is evident (Ambert, Adler, Adler & Detzner, 1995). In light of this, a confessional account is taken to data analysis where the research provides insights into his/her interpretation as well as exemplar quotes from the data illustrate the findings from the interview transcripts.

Within the analysis and presentation of findings of multiple interviews themes emerged related to the research purpose. However, the preservation of the individuality of each case was also important to validate the empirical richness of the study (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Sake, (2006) identifies the importance that the analysis is void of ambiguities and biases and relies on the evidence gathered. In this study, the researcher was diligent in taking notes and coding from the beginning of the data collection to the end of the process. The process of analysis entailed the data coding of interview transcripts of the international students identifying basic patterns and then a descriptive coding of
emerging themes, followed by interpretive coding to allow analysis of what were the perceived barriers to adjustment and their actual experience.

In line with what Miles and Huberman's (1984) advice for analysing multiple interviews, the researcher first analysed each individual experience coding the interviewee's experience against the major categories of adjustment established in chapter 2, the conceptual framework. From this point (and to a degree simultaneously) responses were compared to emergent themes across interviewees. As it was found that codes and data coded at them, were very similar across interview transcripts the data could be confidentially presented as a themed response representative of collective adjustment challenges apparent in the data. The researcher also cycled between data analysis and consultation with the relevant literature, to ensure that it was recognized when findings were explained by and/or embodied by the extant understanding from the literature and/or concepts outside the original conceptual framework. Despite taking every precaution to capture variation through the above process, the experiences recorded in the next chapter and the consequences for our understanding of adjustment patterns amongst this sample were surprisingly uniform. Therefore, data are presented in the next chapter that accurately reflects these findings, i.e. the findings that were found across the sample are presented with exemplar quotes to illustrate the data the lead to conclusions through the data analysis process.

This chapter provided the research methodology undertaken to ensure the validity of the findings. Within the guidelines set out in this chapter the next chapter presents the finding from the interviews.
Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

As established in previous chapters different aspects of adjustment may relate to sojourn students such as ‘cultures of learning’ and the universities input into interaction/socio-cultural adjustment, learning adjustment and general adjustment process of international student’s. These factors account for adjustment issues known to be relevant to expatriate managers (based on the literature reviewed in chapter 2) as well of those that reflect idiosyncratic adjustment needs unique to international students.

From the findings that follow in this chapter it is identified that the adjustment process for Chinese sojourn students included idiosyncrasies not found in the literature on expatriate work based adjustment. Although it is not uncommon for expatriates of similar cultures to cluster with each other for various reasons in the host country for comfort, the data identified how the Chinese international students clustered and acted as a group to minimise adjustment challenges - includes living, studying and interacting with each other and was found to be motivated by commonality of language, history of their culture of learning as well as helping to overcome cultural distance and common/shared problems. Language, unrealistic expectations and cultures of learning differences are highlighted as major themes based on the data coded.

The findings are reported in a manner that reflects the major themes that dominated the interview data. In light of the manner in which interviewees reported their experiences and the insights gained on the overall adjustment process the following structure is used – the role of university assistance available, comparison anticipatory adjustments and initial experience of the students to identify problematical areas of their initial experiences, interaction/socio-cultural adjustment, learning adjustment and general adjustment/stressors of the students. In addition to providing tables to illustrate how
frequent data were coded at various themes in the data, illustrative quotes are presented throughout. Current relevant literature and theory have also been engaged with during the reporting of findings to provide comparisons to what is known and might be expected and the findings.

4.2 University assistance for sojourn students’ adjustment

There was an expectation in the literature that it was incumbent on the university to provide support and assistance to international students in their cross-cultural adjustment (see Chapter 2). These may include educational awareness related to different education systems, support systems to assist students in their needs, orientation and ongoing informal assistance with orientation (Furnham, 2004). The literature also identified in particular for Chinese learners - the use of the induction/orientation period to concentrate on study patterns, directing students to outside learning from the classroom, away from the classroom and of resources available to facilitate this, to endeavour to increase students’ confidence in their quest for autonomous learning (Ratsall, 2006).

This research has found the university provided all of the above facilities, according to the university’s website, including information and assistance to support the students’ interaction/socio-cultural adjustment, learning adjustment and general adjustment expected in the literature. Based on the responses provided by the students there were nine categories of university provided adjustment assistance that the students knew about or specifically utilized as part of their adjustment. These being orientation, informal functions, language classes, staff assistance both formal and informal, mentors, accommodation assistance, email advice, pamphlets/ booklets and multicultural events. While these services were seen positively, the data indicated that the use of the university provided assistance varied and was found to be dependent on each student’s circumstances, knowledge about the assistance available, motivation to peruse the
assistance provided, self-described personality traits of shyness and reported time constraints to partake in these services/programs. All these factors were reported as having an impact the students’ initial adjustment.

4.2.1 Students’ perceptions of university assistance

The data indicated that students had varying knowledge about the services/programs offered by the university. The following table summarizes the student’s recollection of assistance made available by the university, and the sojourn students’ comments in relation to helping their adjustment.

Table 2 - University Assistance: Summary of Data Coding

This table identifies the university assistance programs the students were aware of and the reported effectiveness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service/Program</th>
<th>Student awareness of assistance available</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Student found effective</th>
<th>Percentage of aware and found effective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation (initial)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language classes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff assistance both formal and informal</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal functions (BBQ, Pizza nights)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brochures/ booklets</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email advice</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation assistance</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural events</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On reviewing the above table awareness and effectiveness of university services reported by the students, it can be seen that there appears to be a lack of
awareness/understanding by the students of services available to them by the university, for adjustment to the new cultural environment (including learning). This is highlighted by the statement by Sojourn Student 02 ‘I didn’t know much about this except the orientation.... yeah and maybe talked to friends’ SOJSTU:02. And also identifies the student chose to talk to friends about adjusting in Australia. Those that did know about the services and utilized them (except mentoring) had an approval rating of 76% or more of the students. There could be several reasons for this, language (understanding), what is available and/or understanding how the services available to them can assist in their adjustment period. When discussing university programs and services available, orientation was mentioned by thirteen of the students as ‘very important’ for adjustment on arrival. The following comment by sojourn student 01 was illustrative of explanations of the assistance given at orientation and its value in relation to early adjustment.

‘Orientation is very important, because on the orientation day they will show you around the campus and introduce all the lecturers and all the facilities the university provides like health, assignments, language..... they will give us brochures and flyers which cover a lot of information we need’ (SOJSTU:01).

This student then remarked on the immediacy of students required performance and her solution - ‘Give us more orientation; give us more time to adjust. I think most of the time the university expects us already adjusted to living and studying the situation here, where actually we haven’t prepared well yet’ (SOJSTU:01). Identifying the short period of time the student sees before she had to commence studies and integrate into the new learning and host country environments and adjust accordingly. There was a suggestion that the immediacy of the requirements of adjustment to studying through a different culture of learning and living in a new cultural environment would put the students in a stressful situation (time pressure on adjustment was a common theme in the data).
The short turn around between orientation and classes were also found to be a motivation not to take up ongoing orientation. Sojourn student 03 identifies why the students do not participate in some of the university’s orientation programs/services both in terms of time pressure and culture.

‘I didn’t join much activity. I should join more maybe in the future, but there are so many assignments….. Like student university program provides these things and maybe they know, but they will not participate, maybe this is also the culture thing….. Chinese students they are shy and they will not talk to you actively and maybe talked to friends’ (SOJSTU:03).

This student identified that in her opinion, cultural differences, time constraints and shy personality of the Chinese students all contribute to the lack of participation in the orientation and assistance programs offered by the university, identifying Chinese students' solution is to talk to friends instead. The students’ solution by talking to (Chinese) friends in replacement of partaking in the university services/programs could derive from all the factors identified by the student. The student identifies the reasons why students cluster to solve such time problems. Overall the students offered the following reasons why they did not partake in the university services/programs, including, time constraints, language difficulties, lack of knowledge about the services/programs, culture and shyness.

There appears to be a link with self described shyness in this study and the cultural dimension of Assertiveness with the Chinese students come from a considerably less assertive society than Australia (Chokkar et al., 2007).

On a more positive note, sojourn student 04 also provided an evaluation of the usefulness of socio-cultural events held by the university at orientation that indicates that if students did take them up could provide more help in the adjustment.
‘You know university for me they not help me to learn how to interact to other people, but they make the opportunities for me a lot of opportunities and lets myself to experience like this kind of people or this kind of people, a lot of opportunities. It’s very useful for me because at first I have met people, different international students, I can talk to them and I can, you know, understand, try to learn what kind of cultures they have, so it’s opportunity so I attend every BBQ. Yeah, and it allowed me to make some friends’ (SOJSTU:04).

This student identifying the university did not teach her how to interact, what the university offered was cultural adjustment and integration “opportunities”, allowing her to make friends with international students other than Chinese students. Sojourn student 05 offered the following suggestion on improving their interaction quests with local students on arrival ‘you know for Chinese students, I think most of Chinese students are very shy and humble, so I think that the university could provide more opportunities to organize some events, invite the local students together to communicate because Chinese students actually it is a little bit hard to make some local friends’ (SOJSTU:05). Both the students identified the socio-cultural events are attended by other international students and not host nation students. In the absence of host nation students these events still support the sojourn students to adjust to their environment through assisting in interacting with fellow non Australian students. Sojourn student 05 went on to identify that he thought that the adjustment process is an individual pursuit ‘I don’t this very much help me to adjust. Because the ability of the university is limited, you cannot help every student from overseas, so you have to learn how to adjust by yourself’ (SOJSTU:05). The students’ thoughts were it was up to each student to take advantage of the assistance services and programs offered to the students by the university and be self-motivated in their own pursuits of interaction. He later identified that he knew of the informal interaction/ socio-
cultural events such as BBQ’s and multicultural events. Sojourn student 10 similarly identifying that he perceived that interaction was an individual quest and up to the individual to pursue it. ‘The interaction with other students – I don’t think I get any help from this one’ (SOJSTU:10), this student did not know about the informal socio-cultural events run by the university. Sojourn student 12 identified how he obtained help ‘Need help, I will talk to the reception. I think reception is really useful for me’ (SOJSTU:12) this student has identified that he preferred to ask for help in a one on one manner where he is not seen as needing help (public classes and events) once again being consistent with the Chinese students coming from a less assertive society where saving face and shyness is an issue. Other students found discomfort in attending some university run assistance services, sojourn student 13 when referring to the language training classes offered to all sojourn students at the university ‘In that language school only me is Chinese and their English is very good I think I cannot communicate with them, at that time I am very stressful’ (SOJSTU:13). The above comments identifies the notion of saving face and/or shyness, which is consistent with the cultural dimension of Assertiveness (Chokkar et al., 2007), where the Chinese society is a considerably less assertive society than Australia. Shyness is often used interchangeably with non-assertiveness and it has been proven empirically the two constructs are virtually indistinguishable (Paulhus et al., 2002). Sojourn student 03 identified if emails were sent out by the university to students written in Chinese advising them of orientation and services would be helpful. This suggests the problems the students were having with their English proficiency upon arrival to where it was suggested that the university communicate in another language to better communicate to the students the services and programs available for orientation. The findings have identified problems of time constraints, language difficulties, lack of knowledge about the services/programs; culture and shyness were offered as reasons why the students did not
attend ongoing orientation services and programs. Overall, there was limited knowledge about the services and programs offered as identified in the above table 2 (i.e. across the sample knowing about them all). Students were having difficulties with their English upon arrival and this may be an implication to why the students did not attend ongoing orientation classes. It was evident many students simply did not know what orientation services that are available. Those that did know about the ongoing services and attended found them helpful (Table 2).

One reason that emerged as a challenge from the outset (and emerged as a possible reason not to take part in university provided opportunities) was English proficiency. The level of language proficiency upon arrival is based on anticipatory adjustments by the students, including some form of training in English prior to the commencement of their studies. The university enrolled these students based on Australia’s Department of Immigration guidelines that issue student visas, which conditions include a pre-determined English proficiency score in IELTS. Language proficiency was a major theme throughout the data.

It was discussed in Chapter 2 that language skills were expected to be an important factor in the students initial and ongoing adjustment challenges - especially where training occurred prior to departure (Sutari & Burch, 2001).

It was apparent in the data that the university supports and courses were used to help with identified language problems. Ten students advised they had attended the language training centre at the university, eight found the language training centre was effective. Sojourn student 04 identifies the usefulness of the language training centre. Students that attended the centre were positive about its effectiveness in their adjustment process as evidenced by the following comment.
‘I have been there and they told me what kind of report you should write, if you want to write a report what it is. And like speaking, how to do the pronunciations, so for me here is most effective is to see what is excellent writing or oral speaking. Let me to learn this kind of speaking and writing, it’s the brilliant one’ (SOJSTU:04).

However, there were dissenting voices, sojourn student 09 did not find the language centre helpful ‘they just say enrol in the university I try to enrol one class like this, the language training program but I think it’s not so helpful’ (SOJSTU:09). Identifying the student found the classes unhelpful because of the students’ immediate requirement of English proficiency. English proficiency takes time and the students reported that they had an urgent requirement to become immediately proficient in English for communication, interaction requirements, class participation, researching, and writing up assignments in English.

The students found other avenues to placate the language difficulties such as clustering with other Chinese students, eliminating the need to interact with other non-Chinese students in English when possible. Clustering is consistent with Chokkar et al., (2007) findings that the Chinese society has a high level of In-Group Collectivism. Poor language proficiency and the resulting actions by the students are expressed in the following exemplar quote from sojourn student 02.

‘Sometimes if you are not so good at English the communication will become difficult and the conversation between Chinese and Australians the conversation will become boring if you don’t understand the language well. So I think it is an important aspect that why Chinese students always stick together is because of the language’ (SOJSTU:02).
Students that attended the language training centre reported varying degrees of usefulness, when the students were asked what improved their language skills the most, nine identified it was actually doing the assignments (reading and writing) and/or class participation (listening and asking questions). As identified by sojourn student 02, while reflecting on how the Centre for teaching and learning (CTL) had prepared him....

‘I think the first one are those assignments; you have to do it by yourself. That absolutely improves your writing. And for oral communication skills I think because with an Australian lecturer you have a lot of opportunities to interact with the lecturer which can improve your oral communication’ (SOJSTU:02).

These remarks by the student also signify the students' anticipatory adjustment in English was not sufficient, and identified his level of improvement was through experience.

The findings have identified without sufficient anticipatory adjustment in English, it is incumbent on the student to become proficient when in the host country and the university language classes become important in the students' English proficiency improvement. Language challenges combined with shyness and saving face issues were found to be managed through a coping mechanism labelled as clustering in this study. Coping mechanism in this study identifies how the students adjusted given their insufficient anticipatory adjustments and the reactions to the challenges experienced. The components of and reasons for clustering are threaded throughout the thesis.

4.3 Anticipatory adjustments and initial experience on arrival

Undertaking training is in part the responsibility of the individual expatriate manager (Howe-Walsh & Schyns 2010), although extant research on the level of pre-departure awareness training is limited. The following section reports on that data which allowed for the exploration of whether the students' anticipatory adjustments was sufficient for their
sojourn experience, by comparing their anticipatory adjustments and their initial adjustment experience upon arrival in Australia. The responses were categorized into the three main components of adjustment to their new environment - language, learning and culture.

4.3.1 Language expectation and initial experience

A correlation between English proficiency (and an understanding of what is required) and subsequent adjustment to the new culture would be expected based on the extant research (Sam 2001). However, in this data all the students expressed a concern about their language proficiency upon arrival (Table 3). Their poor anticipatory adjustment in English had a considerable impact on their ability to communicate with local students, stymieing interaction attempts and providing great difficulty in their initial learning endeavours.

All students would have had to pass the International English Language Training System (IELTS) exams or passed the English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) in Australia to receive a student visa to be accepted into the universities Post Graduate program. Initially the students were comforted by the fact that they had passed the IELTS exams or ELICOS. The following exemplar quotes reflect the findings relating to the (unrealistic) expectations and assessment of the student's language proficiency.

Sojourn student 01 expressed a representative view of the students of the importance of passing the IELTS exams, identifying that by passing the exams, she “stopped” learning English - *When I took the IELTS test it was really early time I got 5 or 6 it was easy and I got a mark with the first test so I just stop*’ (SOJSTU:01). This student passed the IELTS, which she believed provided unrealistic expectations of her required English proficiency standard to commence postgraduate studies. Sojourn student 06 also spoke about her
perceptions of passing the IELTS exams. ‘I passed the IELTS so I don’t need to go to the language centre to improve first’ (SOJSTU:06). This perception of passing the IELTS exams held the student in what she believed was good stead for her English proficiency required for the challenges of obtaining a post graduate degree in a second language, in a foreign country. This process of thinking where the students have passed the IELTS exams, and no further study was required was consistent throughout the interviews, where students spoke of the IELTS exams.

The comments received by the students identified they were not prepared for the language challenges facing them, sojourn student 07 identified ‘I only come here study language central (centre), in China never prepare my English’ (SOJSTU:07), the student had previously commented that she had learnt English through speaking English in her business endeavours in China ‘before my English ok no problem, the business from overseas for China’ (SOJSTU:07) and thought she was sufficiently prepared in English because of her English experience gained through business dealings.

It was evident across the interviews that the students had unrealistic reassurance gained from passing the IELTS or initial ELICOS to face the challenge of obtaining a Western degree through a second language. Students reported that this reassurance of their English language proficiency gave false expectations and comfort of what would be required for cultural adjustment and the learning endeavours they faced. This could be compounded by the students believing they had passed the exams so no further work was required, which (as established in Chapter 2) could be consistent with the Chinese culture of learning, of exam based assessment (little or no assignment based assessment) where success is defined as passing the exams. Which in the case of the IELTS exams, was detrimental to some students believing they did not need to attend any further English classes/training upon arrival. The following findings are the students’ initial language
experience at the university, to give insight to the students’ language adjustment experience.

The reported language challenges faced by the students when they commenced their studies in Australia are summarized in the following table. The table reports what students identified as their language challenges of adjustment upon arrival.

**Table 3 - Language Preparedness & Initial Adjustment: Summary of Data Coding**

This table identifies the biggest challenge the students faced on commencement of their studies and the resulting impact on adjustment to the student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student language experience upon arrival</th>
<th>Students mentioned</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language is the biggest challenge facing the students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reported areas of the impact of initial language challenges**

| Language challenge – general comments, study and interaction | 9 | 53 |
| Language is the biggest challenge facing the student – study only | 6 | 35 |
| Language is the biggest challenge facing the student – Interaction only | 2 | 12 |

All seventeen (100%) students advised language was their biggest challenge on commencement of their studies. Consistent with the literature, language proficiency (which is one common aspect of successful anticipatory adjustment cited in the literature (Bhaskar-Shirivas et al., 2005; Puck et al., 2008; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005) has been found to have a considerable impact on international students and their academic success. The students' responses varied on what the language challenge presented to them, as summarized in the above table. Of the seventeen students, nine students (53%) reported language effected all sectors of their initial adjustment process, six students (35%)
reported the language challenge effected only their initial study efforts and two students (12%) reported language only effected their interaction with non-Chinese students. To restate these responses, 88% of the students found language effected their initial study efforts and 65% of the students found language effected their interaction with non-Chinese students. The following are exemplar quotes of the students’ experiences of language adjustment upon arrival.

One student had passed the IELTS exams and was actually a tutor in English at a Chinese University and was very surprised by her lack of English proficiency upon arrival. Sojourn student 04 identified the following

‘One is the language. In China I used to be like a tutorial there used to be a teacher to teach the students in the university about English. It’s like the teaching assistant, but I teach them like let them make some listening some stuff, so make me a little confident about my English’ (SOJSTU:04).

This student had reasonable expectations that she would be proficient in English upon arrival. This was not the case, and went on further to describe the result of this surprise,

‘But I come here, lose the confidence. What confidence I have built in China because I used to be a teacher and they respect me and make me feel like my English very good but I come here....’ (SOJSTU:04).

The student was surprised at her required level of English proficiency upon arrival in Australia. This identifies English proficiency had a different interpretation when in China and did not transfer to actual requirements on commencing studies, and this presented an adjustment shock to the student.

Sojourn student 14 identified when speaking of language difficulties
‘I think it is the language because Chinese students always the language is not good and others I think it’s the culture because you know the difference between China and Australia like the living or the studying or the working it’s all a big difference’ (SOJSTU:14).

The student identifies language as a contributor to adjustment problems in an already unfamiliar environment of culture, studying and working (part time) in Australia. Specifically, this complication would have had a compounding effect on the students’ ability to interact with other students and learning. The following quotes and commentary are provided to assist in the understanding of the students’ language adjustment experiences in these areas.

Sojourn student 11, identified the following problem.

‘At the beginning was the language problem, it’s really hard to communication with students here and yeah I think that’s it. I think for me it’s the language, like the way how people here the way how they talk is different from how Chinese people talk…. there was some difficulties before, because in the past, I was so scared, well, let’s say shy to talk to people, not now, but I think that was because of the language problem….of course you have to improve your language’ (SOJSTU:11).

The student realised upon arrival, she needed to improve her language; identifying she thought it was her shyness (Assertiveness dimension (Chokkar et al., 2007)) preventing her speaking to others in English, as time went by and the student became more proficient in English she realised it was her English proficiency stopping her from interacting.

Sojourn student 05 also very explicitly identified study and interaction problems arising from his English proficiency in the first trimester.
For me, I think the biggest problem is the language. I think most of the Chinese students are facing this problem (study) and second one is the maybe you cannot involve the local social circle with the local experience (culture). Language it’s the basic, the basis because it’s the skill to, to communicate with other and it’s also the basis for your study, if you have good skills in your language everything will be simple easier, so I think language the most important’ (SOJSTU:05).

The student identified that language is the very core of learning and socio-cultural interaction. This student’s opinion reflects a common theme by the students that their anticipatory adjustments of language requirements were inadequate. However, as they became more proficient in the English language, they also realised that language was the pivotal point to their comfort in their new environment and studying through a new culture of learning. Sojourn student 05 then described a method used to ease this problem.

‘On how to become clear on this you have many methods to solve this you can talk with your friends you also can get the help from them, maybe your friends have this course before you can get some experience such as asking from them… Just your vocabulary or language skill is very limited and Chinese students and Australian students have totally different background, cultural, so it’s very hard to find the common topic to communicate’ (SOJSTU:05).

This student identified a common theme of the interviews; that being the challenge of adjustments were eased/solved by talking to Chinese peers rather than locals. This provided a remedial solution to a complex problem of language proficiency on arrival and the challenges it presented. Sojourn student 04 gave a very comprehensive overview of the general language difficulties faced by the student upon arrival.
‘So I come here, the first time I cannot even catch every words from the Australians because it is quite a little different. Because I have learnt my undergraduate degree is International Business and I learn the Master Degree of International Business (in China) and some knowledge I have learnt in these degrees so when I come here the problem is the language. If I figure out what the kind of knowledge, it is I will find I have learnt it, so it happen a lot because the language is a press for me’ (SOJSTU:04).

Sojourn student 04 was also surprised by her inadequacy of language proficiency upon arrival in Australia, especially given the role of English tutor at a Chinese University. The consequences for adjustment are significant as the student describes her loss of confidence in her language abilities. The student identified she has two prior degrees in business obtained in China and her understanding of the topics related to language and not the technical nature of what is taught. The student identifies and exemplifies the importance of language in the students’ quest for a Western degree. This student was well qualified and knew of the technical nature of what was being taught, except it was her language difficulty that was presenting a problem to her. This student stresses the language problem facing the students by isolating her learning problems with language. Sojourn student 03 identified her understanding of English in class was her biggest initial challenge and in fact, it was through class attendance that her comprehension became better.

‘At first it’s quite difficult, I don’t understand the class and I didn’t take the language course, that’s quite difficult for me at first. I can only understand 50%, but later since coming to the class, then I understand 70% and then 90% and now all understand’ (SOJSTU:03).
The student also identifies she did not attend the language classes at the university and chose to learn by experience.

Other students had difficulty in ‘Australian English’ Sojourn student 13 identifying ‘Maybe Australians have their local language, I can’t understand they speak very fast’ (SOJSTU:13). The student identifies the difficulty with the spoken word of Australians using colloquialisms and slang.

The findings identify all of the seventeen students interviewed realised on arrival that language was their biggest challenge facing them. This compounded the problems of adjustment to the new cultural environment, including interaction difficulties and attempted socio-cultural adjustment, the cultural distance between China and Australia, and Australia’s culture of learning. The students did not have adequate anticipatory adjustment pre-departure training in English which compounded the effect of the lack of anticipatory adjustments to equip themselves for the different culture of learning and cultural challenges upon arrival. On arrival the students identified their experience as a realisation they were ill equipped for the language challenges facing them. The students looked for alternate solutions to manage their problems of language proficiency given the time constraints to complete their degrees. Consistent with In-Group Collectivism (Chokkar et al., 2007) the students sought to solve their problems by clustering with other Chinese students, this acted as a coping mechanism in the adjustment process.

4.3.2 Learning expectation and initial experience

When the students were discussing their learning expectations prior to commencement of their studies in Australia, the following table summarizes their comments on what they expected on learning adjustment.
Table 4 – Learning adjustment expectations: Summary of Data Coding

This table summarises what the students knew about the two cultures of learning and their expectations of the teaching method they would encounter in Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning expectation</th>
<th>Students responded</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No pre-conceived knowledge of the different cultures of learning</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought the two cultures of learning would be the same</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knew of the difference</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning method expectations – based on no preconceptions (2 students noted 2 expectations)</th>
<th>Students' expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transmission of knowledge in text(s)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited interaction with lecturer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam based assessment as opposed to assignment/exam based assessment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Chinese sojourning students represent a group from a culturally distant country that has historically had a very different approach to learning (Li & Cutting, 2011). Rote learning has been contributed to the legacy of Confucianism, which has a prominent impact on the Chinese culture (Li & Cutting, 2011). Rote learning is the repetitious processes of learning about a topic, so the topic that can be repeated from memory without necessarily understand its meaning. There is research that presents evidence that memorisation, has been misconstrued from the Western perspective, and is more than rote learning (Tan, 2011). Tan (2011) identifies three stages of memorisation, memorise with little understanding, memorise to understand and understand and memorise.

In China the teacher is the expert on the text(s) using a transmission approach through an authoritarian teaching style; this is a dichotomy to Australian teaching methods (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Chinese students use a co-operative group orientated approach to study when in Australia (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). Chinese students learning styles are
explained to be in contrast to what they would experience in Australia – thus requiring adjustment (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011; Song-Turner & Willis, 2011). This may account for researchers finding that Chinese students tend not participate in class, lack a questioning approach which provides no indication of their understanding of the topic (to the lecturer), and writings which reproduces information without critical or independent thinking and the lack of autonomy in their study practices (Clark & Gieve, 2006). Potentially these findings by Clark and Grieve (2006) are based on Western ‘culture of learning’ and its expectations. The adjustment would be required due to the teaching styles at the university directing research based learning, as opposed to the transmission approach to learning in China. Australia is an individualist society where the educators encourage students to form their own opinion about the information provided or sourced through their own efforts, rather than reproducing information (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011). Adjusting to this way of thinking may provide culture shock relating to learning styles and teaching methods (Ratsall, 2008). The different teaching and learning styles are known as ‘cultures of learning’ (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006).

Similar to the findings in relation to language proficiency expectations, the most significant theme emerging in this section of the interview schedule was the absence of expectation of difference in cultures of learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Sixteen students (94%) identified, they did not know there was a difference in the cultures of learning between the two education systems prior to departure, sojourn student 01 articulating the problem better than most ‘Before I came I think studying in Australia won’t be difficult, won’t be that difficult, because we expect the teaching style would be similar’ (SOJSTU:01).

Fifteen students (88%) stated that they did not know there would be a difference and therefore, expected the culture of learning would be the same as in China. The more specific difference identified is captured well by sojourn student 8: ‘A lot of difference, what
I experience they focus more on yourself research. In China, we never do that before’ (SOJSTU:08). The student identifies he had never experienced self-research in China. The following quotes are also consistent with theme offered by the students of no knowledge of the culture of learning in Australia is different to China’s. In stark contrast to what was experienced in Australia, sojourn student 10 identified his learning expectations based on her experience in China.

In Chinese University the teacher will have a very formal introduction about how to study and what you need to study and so what’s the objective for each class…. the student always very busy every day they always repeat, repeat again what they learn from class. The teacher always arrange the different lecture to enhance the student….In China, for example for the final exam, we always try to memorise what we learn from the textbook….In China in the class students always quiet, very quiet, sometimes people say they are afraid to ask the question’ (SOJSTU:10).

This student identifies the classes are more formal in China, the lecturers teach how to study and what the lecturers objectives are of learning the prescribed text(s), memorisation tactics are promoted and there is limited interaction with the lectures. Other students also identified the teaching method is different in Australia where in China a transmission approach is used as identified by sojourn student 02 ‘In China, we are always told what you should do and what you should not do…. yes concentrates on process. Basically what teacher tells you what you should do’ (SOJSTU:02). Ten students (58%) in total identified the transmission method of teaching in China as being something that was very different and therefore, a critical adjustment challenge. Students also identified that the relationship with the lecturer in China was one of the senior – junior, sojourn student 05 identifies the relationship ‘I think in China every students think our lecturer, we should respect them and
keep a distance with them, but we still like answer questions or ask questions with them and want to get some method from our lecturer’ (SOJSTU:05).

The above comments by the students are similar to Jin & Cortazzi, (2006) findings where the Chinese learning style has led to Chinese students not having a questioning approach to learning and to perceive the learning process as reading the text and the lecturers’ teachings as gospel (usually related to the text). In China the teacher is the expert on the text(s) using a transmission approach through an authoritarian teaching style; this is a dichotomy to Australian teaching methods.

The finding identified in the absence of anticipatory adjustments, knowledge about of the different culture of learning in Australia, the student’s only knowledge of the cultures of learning is their own in China. This created a considerable adjustment challenge upon arrival.

The culture of learning adjustment at the university presented problems to the students. The learning challenges faced by the students when they commenced their studies in Australia, are summarized in the following table.

Table 5 - Learning adjustment challenges (identified at the outset and ongoing as discussed later in this chapter): Summary of Data Coding

This table summarises what the students identified as different to their culture of learning in China on commencement of their studies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of learning requirements</th>
<th>Students identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different culture of learning</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student comments on specific culture of learning differences</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interaction with lecturers is different and class participation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researched based learning</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment criteria</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Australian education system requires the students to form their own opinion about the information provided or sourced through their own efforts, rather than reproducing information (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011). Research has shown that Chinese sojourn students appreciate Australian pedagogical practices after they’ve been exposed to Australia’s culture of learning, the process is a function of time and the transition takes time and effort, given the sojourn students cultural and pedagogical backgrounds. The transition can only be done gradually, over a period of time’ (Song-Turner & Willis, 2011). In China the teacher is the expert on the text(s) using a transmission approach through an authoritarian teaching style; this is a dichotomy to Australian teaching methods (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). Chinese students also have behavioural differences such as saving face and the need to compromise in group situations (Chan, 1999). The above summary table 5 identifies the differences in culture of learning in Australia reported as causing the greatest adjustment challenges to the students on commencement of their studies. Surprisingly, the most significant theme emerging in this section of the interview schedule was the realisation there was a considerable difference in the culture of learning at all (Ramburuth & McCormac, 2001; Parris-Kid & Barnet, 2011). Sojourn student 02 provided an apt summary of the differences in the cultures of learning ‘I found that Australian or the Western education emphasized study on your own….In China, we are always told what you should do and what you should not do’ (SOJSTU:02). The students’ also immediately found their interaction with the lecturer was different; where they were required to participate in class discussions. The students were also not used to an education system where assignments can be an important component of their studies. This was best summarized by sojourn student 11 when comparing his experience in China ‘most of
subject we only have final exam and midterm exam we don’t have a lot of assignments’ (SOJSTU:11). This provided an unexpected workload for the students.

Some students reported it was their shyness and saving face prevented them from class participation. An exemplary quote from sojourn student 01 identifies the problem ‘the teacher just expects us to answer all the questions but on one hand we are very shy, and we are very afraid to make any mistakes too, feel embarrassing in front of the class’ (SOJSTU:01). The self-described shyness is consistent with Chokkar et al. (2007) findings of the Chinese being less assertive than Australians. Chokkar et al. (2007) describes the Assertiveness dimension as ‘the degree to which individuals in organisations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships’. The students also identified, they were not used to research based learning. Sojourn student 08 summarized the difficulty Chinese students faced with the new culture of learning in Australia very well, saying,…‘With facing the new dimension of study, self-research something like that, some things that we never experience before, totally new things for us’ (SOJSTU:08). The student identifies a lack of knowledge in the culture of learning and its requirements when he commenced studying. This alone presented a whole new experience never encountered before and was unexpected by the students. Sojourn student 17 gave details and comparisons of the two cultures of learning ‘...in China the education is totally different. In China lots of things the tutor will tell you how to do and show lots of things and you just follow to the teacher but in Australia it is totally different. Most of time you have to study by yourself’ (SOJSTU:17).

Sojourn student 12 identifies the different interaction with the lecturers and students in Australia ‘I think in Australia there are more interactions with staff and fellow students. In China I just learn by myself and do some exercise, read some books’ (SOJSTU:12). The student was identifying the class participation by the students with the lecturers, where the
lecturer would be pursuing critical thinking and the students’ opinion, as opposed to what he was used to in China. The finding identified adjustment to Australia’s culture of learning is an immediate requirement faced by the student on commencement of their studies and is in stark contrast to the culture of learning in China and was unexpected. The new culture of learning bought unexpected challenges to the students. The sojourn students approach to how they adjusted after their initial experience is analysed in greater depth later in this chapter.

4.3.3 Culture expectation and initial experience

Table 6 – Anticipatory adjustments, knowledge of host environment: Summary of Data Coding

This table summarises what the students’ expectations were of the Australian culture prior to expatriating to Australia to study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student expectation</th>
<th>Students' responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical aspects of the country - weather, water, animals, countryside</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly, peaceful, harmonious environment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customs and traditions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal training in cultural adaptation (general)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No cultural expectations offered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students’ expectations and knowledge of the Australian culture and differences compared to their own culture were limited and therefore, the prospects of culture shock were higher. However, across the data it was apparent that the students’ efforts in making themselves aware of the Australian culture were minimal prior to departure, in part, consequent to their focus was to obtain a Western degree and the knowledge that they would not be allowed to stay in Australian beyond their studies. There are two possibilities
for the lack of the students’ pursuit of knowledge about Australia’s culture, the students’ goal was to get a Western degree and a general cultural adjustment was not a priority and/or they knew there was a large contingency of Chinese students at the university, which would reduce the cultural adjustment required (this is explained later with more data examples). While a majority reported having some knowledge of Australia, six students stated they had no knowledge about the culture in Australia prior to departure to Australia for their studies. Sojourn student 03 identified she did no anticipatory adjustment ‘I didn’t have any preparation, at first I was quite scared’ (SOJSTU:03). Seven students identified, they knew about some of the physical aspects of the country, sojourn student 06 identified her pre-departure knowledge pursuit was on the physical aspects of the city ‘I went online to find about what’s about this city everything about this’ (SOJSTU:06), and three students identified they knew the culture is friendly, peaceful or harmonious. Two students researched the customs and traditions of the country and one student had formal training in cultural adaptation. However, of note is that when reporting this knowledge they did not suggest it had a major positive or negative effect on their adjustment.

Time and language again emerged as a factor. Due to not being able to adjust immediately to the new culture, culture shock was evident as detailed by the following quotations of the students. Culture shock can be defined as ‘people who are suddenly introduced to a culture that is very different to their own’ (Church, 1982, p. 540). However, the major component reported by the sojourn students of initial cultural adjustments were communication difficulties using a second language. Eleven students in total reported language problems (Table 3) when attempting to interact with Australian and other non-Chinese. The students further identified language, and cultural aspects other than language, such as self-described shyness (a low level of assertiveness) of the Chinese society compared to the Australia (Chokkar et al., 2007) as providing communication
difficulties. English language proficiency provided major adjustment problems again and
was a major problem for overall adjustment. The following quotes are representative of the
students’ problems adjusting to the new society in relation to communication. Sojourn
student 03 identifies the general problems with language and how it relates to
communicating with host country nationals.

‘Sometimes if you are not so good at English the communication will become
difficult and the conversation between Chinese and Australians the conversation
will become boring if you don’t understand the language well…. and usually
Australian people are talking very fast, that makes even more difficult’
(SOJSTU:03).

Sojourn student 03 identifies the language problem contributes to interaction with the local
students, and her understanding of Australians when talking to them was stymied because
of Australians and what appeared to her as Australians speaking very fast, this is a sign of
lack of proficiency in the daily use of the English language and provided a language based
contribution to culture shock, which presented interaction problems. Sojourn student 03
also identifies a response to culture shock and why the Chinese students cluster to ease
the stress caused by adjustment to living in a second language.

‘So I think it is an important aspect that why Chinese students always stick together
is because of the language. Like you will not communicate more and
communication and understanding between the local people and Chinese people.
But I think this can overcome if you keep talking to them. You will find much more
get used to their culture, language and society if you keep trying’ (SOJSTU:03).

Sojourn student 03 identifies in her opinion, why the Chinese students cluster because of
the commonality of language they share and they experience the same communication
and adjustment problems. She then identified, that by trying to interact, this will provide a form of adjustment success over time. Sojourn student 02 identifying what contributed to his interaction problems, leading him to think Australians portrayed an ethnocentric attitude towards him:

“When I got to Australia I found fellow students, especially in Master Degree they just care about their own business. Basically, they are no interested in what you are thinking about. They don’t want to listen to you, especially those Western students; they might have something like ethnocentric attitude towards you, towards Asian people. You feel you are a stranger’ (SOJSTU:02).

Sojourn student 02 identifies that he felt that Western students did not want to interact with him, identifying the isolation he felt, identifying the result of culture shock.

Sojourn student 10 also reported a direct culture shock upon arrival:

‘First – live here I think, country sick for the first three months, always get country sick. The second one is cultural difference, cultural shock...Australia is west system about family, relationship, social relationship their harmony, they are very relaxed, China is very busy China big population, very hard worker, do everything so quick and fast....You know Australian culture and Chinese cultures a huge difference how to get involved in the society is most important for student’ (SOJSTU:10).

This student articulated very clearly the culture shock felt and outlined the core reasons being the different cultures of the two countries, also identifying to eliminate or reduce this the culture shock was to become involved in the Australian society.
The findings identify the cultural adjustment of the students upon arrival was stymied because of the lack of English proficiency, time to adjust and perceived indifference to themselves by Australian and other students. These factors contributed to immediate culture shock.

4.3.4 Findings summary of anticipatory adjustment, and initial experience

The first section of this study was to explore if/how anticipatory adjustments by the students held them in good stead on arrival and is consistent with the overall purpose of this study – understanding the student perceptions and adjustment processes when attending a university in Australia.

The study had found there was not a sufficient anticipatory adjustment in language and poor knowledge of the differences the culture of learning and other cultural differences offered in Australia and consequently all these elements contributed to culture shock. Upon arrival the students did not have the time or opportunity to go through the honeymoon period of the adjustment process as outlined by the U curve theory discussed in Chapter 2 because of the immediate pressures of study requirements. The adjustment to Australia’s culture which includes the culture of learning was problematical to the students, due to their poor language proficiency and other communication problems such lack of assertiveness. Language proficiency was the origin of interaction difficulties with other students in English - both Australian and other international students. Culture shock occurred in the students upon realisation of the vastly different cultural environment they were in, presenting interaction difficulties. The student’s language proficiency caused interaction problems when trying to interact in English, stymied class participation early in their degrees. This study has found language; learning and cultural adjustment problems were inextricably intertwined in the sojourn students’ immediate cultural adjustment
challenges and were the main elements of culture shock on arrival. The students clustered with fellow Chinese students to ease adjustment problems.

4.4 Ongoing interaction and socio-cultural adjustment

Acculturation can be seen as the changes occurring after initial and subsequent contact between individuals/groups of different cultural backgrounds in a continuous and firsthand manner (Sam, 2006; Rudmin, 2003). For the purpose of this research acculturation will be defined as the individual's ability to identify, appreciate or practice with two different cultures (Rudmin, 2003), and while acculturation is not directly measured, it can be considered a factor in the adjustment process.

Australia is culturally plural; the Chinese student is faced with interacting with individuals who developed in many cultural contexts - mainstream culture of Australia and many minority cultures whose individuals developed from a variety of cultural contexts (Berry, 1997). As discussed in Chapter 2, the literature identified four categories of acculturation, assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. Within these categories, integration has been found to be the most successful in the adjustment process, followed by assimilation, separation and marginalization strategies for adjustment (Berry, 1997). The greater the cultural distance the more difficult the cross-cultural adjustment (Sam, 2001; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005).

There was an expectation that some form of acculturation to the host culture would occur given the necessity of day to day involvement in the new environment for living and studying. Again, the interviewees report that their level of anticipatory adjustment in language presented problems when the students tried to meet the adjustment challenges of interaction and socio-cultural adjustment (daily use of the English language compounded these problems). The following quotes are representing views of the Chinese
students’ adjustment process after their initial culture shock. Sojourn student 04 presented her overview of the adjustment processes explaining the sojourn students formed two groups; the first group interacted to a limited degree and makes some form of socio-cultural adjustment. The second group does not attempt any form of integration. The second group…

‘....hang out with Chinese students not met the other international students and do the group assignment with the Chinese peoples and they discuss in Chinese, no English and it just let the one who can write well write the assignment. They just try to get certification here and make all their life here is the same as in China. They speak Chinese, hang out with Chinese students, do the programs with the Chinese students, all the stuffs they just try to pass the exam and get the certification’ (SOJSTU:04).

Sojourn student 04 identified the goal orientation of the students’ which limited more general interaction attempts, which they considered secondary to their objectives while in Australia. This second group did not want to acculturate or interact beyond their university program, where there was little attempt for socio-cultural adjustment. The second group of students answered the problems of culture shock by clustering ‘and make all their life here is the same as in China’. The culture shock emanated from poor language proficiency and subsequent interaction difficulties. Sojourn student 04 identified the students ‘just give up’. This indicates the students ‘retreated’ to a known environment established by them. The first group pursued a limited form of integrated acculturation and the second group separation acculturation, where the minority culture is favoured and no further acculturation is attempted. In both instances language continued to be noted as a major contributor to interaction and socio-cultural adjustment problems, and the students coping mechanism were to cluster. The following quotes are representative of the students’
difficulty in the interaction quests and the results of their endeavours. Sojourn student 08 identifies the language difficulty Chinese students have in their interaction quest.

‘I think students from China I think it is okay, we can discuss in the home language, Chinese Mandarin, with the local students some things are very short we can’t talk for any length using that language. Ideas comes up in mind, but I can’t get it out’ (SOJSTU:08).

Sojourn student 08 identifying the English barrier stymies prolonged conversations and would provide an inhibitor to interaction and minimising the possibility to make host nation friends, which could be the basis for limiting acculturation. Sojourn student 05 identifies language alone prevents him from interacting with locals. ‘For me, I think the biggest problem is the language. I think most of the Chinese students are facing this problem and second one is the maybe you cannot involve the local social circle with the local experience’ (SOJSTU:05). The student draws a direct link with language and students’ ability to get involved with host nation students, the result being a barrier to acculturation.

There were other examples of students making a more conscious effort, which they in turn reported as having a positive impact on adjustment. Sojourn student 03 identified it was through her efforts to interact with locals assisted with interaction.

‘I think one important thing is that you need to have courage to interact with the people and you should not just stick with Chinese people and if you have the courage of not afraid of making mistakes, it’s okay, I think Australian people are quite friendly really… I find it’s quite nice the Australian people are friendly and as time goes by I love Australia more’ (SOJSTU:03).

The student identifies she pursued the interaction with locals instead of interacting with other Chinese students only, this resulted in finding Australians are friendly and through
her own endeavours and acculturation efforts found affection for the country. The student attributed her level of acculturation to her personality.

‘At first I was shy to find this is not going to work, but maybe I am the person that optimistic and outgoing, this make it easy for me to get involved to the society here and communicate with the people here. Yeah, and it’s definitely you will meet some difficulty here, but you just have faith in yourself to overcome this and it will pass through’ (SOJSTU:03).

The data also indicated a role for the university in general adjustment process through creating opportunities for interaction. Sojourn student 04 identified how university service assisted in interaction and socio-cultural adjustment.

‘You know university for me they not help me to learn how to interact to other people, but they make the opportunities for me a lot of opportunities and lets myself to experience like this kind of people or this kind of people, a lot of opportunities. It’s very useful for me because at first I have met people, different international students… so it’s opportunity so I attend every BBQ. Yeah, and it allowed me to make some friends’ (SOJSTU:04).

This student identifying the university did not teach her how to interact however the university offered cultural adjustment and integration “opportunities” which facilitated interaction and enabled her to make friends with international students other than Chinese students. As identified previously in the university assistance section (Table 2) six of the students were aware of the BBQ’s provided by the university to assist in interaction and socio-cultural adjustment. Sojourn students 03 and 04 were the only students to identify they were motivated to interact with other non-Chinese students and goal oriented to
achieve this task, identifying their individual adjustment skill and motivations – the qualities required to start and foster relationships with host nationals (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985).

*Informal groups:* The findings also identify Chinese students formed an informal group, perhaps reflecting their cultural heritage, consistent with the Chinese cultural dimensions discussed throughout this chapter. Sojourn student 12 remarks are reflective of the value of these groups in terms of interaction stress (or lack of) ‘*I think because there are so many Chinese students here so there is no problem for the interaction*’ (SOJSTU:12). Identifying, because of the large contingency of Chinese students at the university when asked about interacting with students, the response was to identify Chinese students, not mention interaction with host nation or other international students.

**4.4.1 Findings summary of ongoing interaction and socio-cultural adjustment**

The research purpose was to explore the perceptions and the adjustment process of the sojourn Chinese students. After the initial exposure to their new cultural environment the students were surprised at the difference, identifying anticipatory adjustments were not sufficient and culture shock ensued. These findings relate to the adjustment processes the students encompass to facilitate their ongoing interaction and socio-cultural adjustment. As an overall interpretation of the findings of interaction and socio-cultural adjustment, the Chinese students’ level of acculturation is limited by what they consider enough acculturation required to obtain their degree. This reactive decision was the result of unexpected cultural adjustment problems, mainly stemming from language and communication difficulties, resulting in the students clustering as a coping mechanism. It was evident across that data the students divided into two groups; those that did not want to acculturate beyond what was required to function on their programs of study or found the task too difficult given their focus is on obtaining their degree and those that did what to acculturate in a limited form to being in Australia.
The research has found the Chinese students’ level of general interaction and socio-cultural pursuits with host nation students became minor to their goal of obtaining a Western degree and adjusting to the university environment. The large contingency of Chinese students at the university limited the necessity for integration and acculturation to be actively perused given the relatively short period of time the students were in Australia.

4.5 Ongoing learning adjustment; Difference in culture of learning

Consistent with the research purpose, the following are elements of the different culture of learning in China and Australia identified by the students as central to their ongoing adjustment experience and challenges. Earlier in this chapter the data were presented to the understanding/expectations students had prior to departure as it was posited in Chapter 2 to have an impact on initial adjustment. The following section looks more broadly at the adjustment challenges of the new culture of learning when undertaking their programs of study. Not surprisingly, adjustment challenges relating to learning in a new country were a major theme throughout the data. Also, while not specifically a culture of learning difference, language has learning culture implications (Kato, 2001). Language difficulties in a second language continued to be a problem with the students. Seven students reported language as being the major stressor for their adjustment to studying (see later in this chapter - Reported stressors at the time of the interviews, Table 8).

Table 7 - Adjustment challenges of the new culture of learning: Summary of Data Coding

This table identifies what the students had experienced in Australia and the learning difference accounted compared to China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of learning requirements</th>
<th>Students identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Different culture of learning</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sixteen students identified there was a difference in the culture of learning between Australia and China. Based on the discussion of extant literature in Chapter 2 it is expected that Chinese students do not have a questioning approach to learning and perceive the learning process as reading the text and the lecturers’ teachings as gospel. It was also discussed how this was in stark contrast to what they would experience in Australia, where the educators encourage students to form their own opinion about the information provided or sourced through their own efforts, rather than reproducing information (Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011). In line with expectations, the study has identified the students in this sample were faced with different cultures of learning (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006; Parris-Kidd & Barnett, 2011) and they uniformly reported this as a major adjustment challenge. The students identified, they learned about the components of the different cultures of learning with experience in Australia. The following quotes are representative of the theme of the difference in the culture of learning experienced by the students. Sojourn student 01 identifies the difference in the culture of learning about China and Australia.

‘Before I came I think studying in Australia won’t be difficult, won’t be that difficult, because we expect the teaching style would be similar but they are very different. So the lecturer here expects us to do all the work and we expect the lecturer to do all the work’ (SOJSTU:01).
The student identifies she had no knowledge the cultures of learning would be different, specifically identified by this quote ‘the lecturer expects us to do all the work (in Australia) and we expect the lecturer to do all the work’ (in China). This student is identifying the very core of the difference in the cultures of learning, lecturer transmission learning V’s student centred and self-directed learning. Sojourn student 06 identifies the importance of class participation as a major adjustment challenge for Chinese taking continual assessments. Something he is not familiar with having studied in China…

‘Because we have problem we have so many questions… we need to ask more questions all the time because we need to make clear, but in China because we don’t have so much assignment, we just follow the teachers what they say not so much interaction with the lecturers’ (SOJSTU:06).

This study identified the lecturers in Australia expect and want class interaction, guiding them towards self-research and inquisitive minds as opposed to the transmission approach to teaching of required knowledge he experienced in China. The study also identified the reactive learning taught in China and the proactive learning requirement at the Australian University and the subsequent difference in lecturer interaction. Students also identified, they were reactive in class and identified the reasons why. Sojourn student 01 reported…

‘I think studying in Australia, the big challenge is we get (in China) used to take everything from the word the lecturers said, we very reactive, not proactive at all because we get used to that it’s the teaching style… teaching style is different and Chinese are really reactive of studying’ (SOJSTU:01).

The above student identifies the reactive process of learning in China, where the lecturers use a transmission approach, as opposed to the proactive requirements of this university.
This student further identifies the reason why she is reactive in class as opposed to proactive ‘A lot of Australian students they just speak at the lecturer as their ideas come up and I think it’s kind of interaction because we are listening to them, so we’re reactive to that’ (SOJSTU:01). The student listened to what the local students asked in class and the lecturer’s responses, being reactive to the learning environment and not proactive in class contribution as would be preferred at the university. The student also identifies ‘the teacher just expects us to answer all the questions, but on one hand we are very shy, I think you knew that, and we are very afraid to make any mistakes too feel embarrassed in front of the class’ (SOJSTU:01). The students’ shyness/saving face and the effect on class participation were also noted by sojourn student 02 ‘In a lecture teachers will ask you some questions so you can choose to answer it. I know most Chinese students they are too shy’. Sojourn students 01 & 02 comments are consistent with Jin and Cortazzi (2006) findings who found Chinese students do not say anything that might cause discomfort to anyone, including themselves, so participation in classes can be stymied through not offering an alternate opinion, which is also consistent with Chokkar et al. (2007) cultural dimension of Assertiveness.

Sojourn student 15 further identifies other perspectives of the differences in teaching methods and learning goals between China and Australia that he reported as an important adjustment challenge… ‘In China teachers tend to teach students like ‘I tell and you listen’. But here in Australia teachers tend to teach you the knowledge with examples in real life and the most important things we understand, not to remember’ (SOJSTU:15). The student identifies the difference in the goals of the culture of learning between Australia and China ‘the most important things we understand, not to remember’.
4.5.1 Lecturer/Student relationship

The students also repeatedly identified the relationship with the lecturer in Australia is different when compared to China. Sojourn student 05 identifies the hierarchical nature of the lecturer/student relationship in China and the ‘open door’ policy of the lecturers at this university.

‘I think in China every student think our lecturer, we should respect them and keep a distance with them, but we still like answer questions or ask questions with them and want to get some method from our lecturer. But in Australia I perceive that the students with the lecturer are like friends, they are very different style in that they talk very free and make some jokes with each other but I think in China that’s a little bit serious’ (SOJSTU:05).

The student/lecturer relationship in Australia was unexpected by the students and not hierarchical as expected. Although this was reported as a positive it did create an adjustment challenges as it caused problems with class participation as they were not used to participating and offering their own opinion in class. Some students even reported that this was a stressor (Table 8) as they felt it may lead lecturers to think that the students are being lazy. Sojourn student 08 commented: ‘lecturers always thought the Chinese students were lazy and many excuses’ (SOJSTU:08).

Consistent with the hierarchal nature of student/lecturer relationship with China some students found it difficult to adjust to the interaction between student and lecturer in Australia. Sojourn student 07 identified the shock she had when realizing the relationship is different in the level of formality, commenting on what her lecturer said…
‘07 if I call you student are you happy call me ‘name’ I was surprised my god I can call your name, in China student never call teacher by their name. But here you can talk to the teacher, you can discuss with teacher more different here’ (SOJSTU:07).

The comment by the student is a direct reflection of the cultures of learning in Australia compared to China. The student had difficulty in grasping there is no hierarchy of the student/lecturer relationship in Australia, where the lecturers promote class interaction and a different opinion. Sojourn student 10 draws a direct comparison of the teaching methods in China and Australia.

‘In China in the class students always quiet, very quiet, sometimes people say they are afraid to ask the question, but in Australia the teacher always encourages students to ask questions if they have any problem with any definition like our questions. I think it is just different’ (SOJSTU:10).

Identifying class participation required by the lecturer while the student was used to the transmission approach to teaching and learning in China, where student class input is not required.

4.5.2 Learning methods

It was evident that the students did not know there was a different culture of learning in Australia to what they were used to. They found that the teaching methods and expectations of the lecturers considerably different to those in China. Students reported different learning objectives and techniques as an adjustment challenge. Sojourn student 16 identifies the different learning objectives between China and Australia. ‘I think in China, we learn more theory and here we combine the theory and relate them to the task, to the work exactly happen’ (SOJSTU:16), identifying in Australia the requirement is to
relate the theory into everyday business situations/problems combining concepts and theories through abstraction to solve problems.

Many other students emphasized group work (both formal, organized by lecturer and informal organized amongst Chinese peers) as an important positive factor in their adjustment to their new culture of learning. The use of informal group study was consistent with Chinese students' use a co-operative group orientated approach to study - Chinese students being known to be collaborative in their learning style (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). However, the formal group study provided experiences to the students that they would not have otherwise experienced because of clustering, but which they were positive about and which the reported helped interaction, language and general adjustment.

The following observations were made by students about formal group assignments and in instances the value to the students. Sojourn student 16 identified ‘when studying in Australia they’ve got some group works which get the people doing together. This we don’t have in China it’s arranged by the teacher for the students’ (SOJSTU:16). This student identified he had not experienced group assignments in China. Sojourn student 6 identified the usefulness of formal group assignments. ‘I think that assignment is most effective, improving written, and um oral communication skills I think in the group works because everybody need to speak express their own opinions so oral English most improved in group work’ (SOJSTU:06). Sojourn student 15 identified ‘Though group work we have to communicate others in English and after communication we have to write down the things we just discussed and to write our formal report to complete the assignment’ (SOJSTU:15). Sojourn students 06 & 15 identified they had to communicate in writing and oral (as well as aural) English to accomplish the assignment requirements. Sojourn student 07 identified.
‘...here we have group job the group you are with different cultural students we accept their opinion, it more multinational culture I think very good.... Group work together, even though students’ first time different opinion – I want to control you – you can’t control me, maybe first time in group maybe fail, but the second be better, the third time together share work very nice very friendly’ (SOJSTU:07).

This student identified the intercultural interaction that formal group assignments afforded her. Sojourn student 09 also commented on the formal group study identifying the practical value of group assignments ‘....divide into different groups and run a different company and all the students come from international and its great’ (SOJSTU:09). By placing students in formal study groups this forced them to interact in English and use a co-operative approach to their study pursuits with other non-Chinese students, which they found as ‘great’ and ‘very friendly’. It is interesting to note that no student spoke of being shy or not speaking in class because of saving face issues when doing group assignments. This could be related to the students having to do the assignment (i.e. being told to do it) so that interaction was compulsory.

By contrast, others did not take this opportunity to interact with non-Chinese. Sojourn student 01 identified that she chose to do a formal group study only with other Chinese students and her perceived benefits ‘Basically, all of them are Chinese people.... Because we use the same language and it becomes easier for us to incorporate’ (SOJSTU:01). In this situation many of the above benefits of dealing with other students from different cultures of learning are lost. This finding may be a trigger for lecturers to ensure that group study assignments are an intercultural mix of students when compiling groups for assignments.
4.5.3 Assessment criteria

Ten students identified the assessment criteria were different, and this was something they felt was central to their adjustment needs around cultures of learning. The following quotes are representative of the students’ observations about the different assessment criteria experienced which lead to adjustment challenges.

Sojourn student 11 commented that in China ‘most of the subject we only have a final exam and midterm exam, we don’t have a lot of assignments’ (SOJSTU:11). Identifying the assessment of performance in China is based on exams, where in Australia assignments is an important component of assessing students’ performance. Similarly sojourn student 13 identified the difference of the cultures of learning ‘Like, now always study in Australia we have assessment and examination or final exam or something according to all the things do in the term but in China just according to the final exam. If you pass that’ (SOJSTU:13). The university expects the students to work continuously throughout the trimester; but the students reported that they were not prepared for the different assessment criteria in Australia. As sojourn student 16 summarizes ‘Before I come here….I was thinking play most of the time and then get very focused on the final exam and then pass exam. Actually, it’s not like that we have to learn all the time’ (SOJSTU:16). With the passing of time the student realised continuous study, research and assignments are important and not just the goal of passing exams as he was used to in China.

The students’ responses are a reflection of the culture of learning in China and it was a surprise to them that they had to continually study and research at the Australian University. This surprise factor could be eliminated if some mechanisms could be used to advise students prior to departure of the differences in assessment approaches.
4.5.4 Plagiarism and referencing

Plagiarism or referencing problems were spoken about by seven of the students in relation to adjust to learning challenges. The students identified, they knew they were not allowed to cut and paste/plagiarize from orientation and needed to reference correctly. The following two quotes identify their awareness and the results of plagiarism at the university. Sojourn student 02 gave the most comprehensive answer when discussing the major preconceptions about studying in Australia, where he had no notion of the university policy on plagiarism...

‘I found the major difference between Australia and Chinese standards are Australia or the Western system they emphasize academic integration (integrity)….. That plagiarism is not allowed…. I think the plagiarism is absolutely forbidden in Western education system’ (SOJSTU: 02).

Sojourn student 01 outlined the result of the students plagiarizing…

‘Another thing in assignment is reference because we do not do that in China, not at all. Chinese people love copying and pasting. I know a lot of my friends have had this kind of problem they called a foul, they were fouled and they have been failed in their assignments only because of the reference’ (SOJSTU:01).

The student identifies she was used to copying and pasting which is consistent with a transmission approach to teaching, and identified Chinese students studying at the university as even failing because of presenting work in assignments not referenced correctly.

4.5.5 Findings summary of ongoing learning adjustment

The research purpose was to find out perceptions and adjustment processes of the Chinese sojourn students in Australia. It has been found that the students engaged in little anticipatory adjustments on the culture of learning in Australia, this provided an element
that contributed to culture shock. This section provides details how the students reacted to this element of culture shock, in their quest for their degree.

Sixteen students found on commencement of their studies the culture of learning is different in Australia. The major differences reported by the students were the interactions with lecturers, teaching and learning methodology. Class participation is expected and the students are required to present their own ideas in class and debate the issues, as opposed to the transmission of knowledge approach used in China. The students did not realise the importance of continuous study and the importance of study requirements such as assignments on their final result, the students expressed concern of a high student workload they were not used to. Referencing was a problem as they were not used to this in China, and required major adjustment. The students also reported the difference in teaching methods, as the students did not know what to expect, but the expectations of the new learning environment became evident once they commenced their studies as identified by sojourner student 01... ‘Well we did not know before we came to Australia. But how we know when we went through several course and all the lecturers told us the same thing, told us the expectations’ (SOJSTU:01), this quote is particularly relevant as it identifies the student(s) learning of expectations when they commenced studies – only through actual experience of studying their initial courses of their degrees did they realise they had to adjust to a new culture of learning.

Fifteen students (9+6 students) expressed a language difficulty upon arrival, which caused difficulties in relating to their learning endeavours (Table 3), seven students reported learning through a second language was the major stressor for studying (Table 8).

This study has found that the students were ill prepared for the learning challenges facing them. This resulted in the students clustering to work on similar problems associated with
the new culture of learning offered and the problems associated with learning technical information in a second language. The students chose to cluster to collaboratively work on their learning adjustment problems. This appears to be an empathic process followed by the students to adjust to the new culture of learning by speaking and studying with other Chinese students who had the same problems.

4.6 Language adjustment and learning adjustment

Consistent with research purpose an emerging theme became evident, of a direct link between language learning and adjustment. In this section of the interviews related to how ongoing language adjustment was linked to learning adjustment. For example, sojourn student 07 identified actually doing the assignments assisted in their language improvement...

‘The reason is every day you read PPT you read text book you write the assignment; you need to check you get the vocabulary so quickly. At language central (the language centre) I don’t know my vocabulary is limited but it increases, so slowly’ (SOJSTU:07).

This student then explained at length she realised her English proficiency was very poor and had attended the language training centre at the university for three trimesters, but recognized her English proficiency was accelerated by actual experience of doing the assignments, where the students actually doing the assignment forced the student to focus on their English proficiency in context.

Sojourn student 9 also identified the relationship between language and study

‘.... every assignment you know is a language problem, maybe for example like the commas like you have to write down some it’s 1500 words maybe it’s very easy for
the local people to finish that maybe just one week but for the international students they have to spend maybe four weeks, they have to check the grammar, they have to search the information so that is the hardest’ (SOJSTU:09).

The student identified that adjustment to self-research was compounded by the students’ English proficiency in being able to identify the correct search words to find suitable journals in the assigned task, and the presentation of the final assignment related to language, which was an additional burden on their time. The lack of English proficiency presented a compounding effect on extending assignment completion time.

Sojourn student 11 identified ‘When I do assignments and sometimes I can’t even write some sort of essays by Chinese and now I have to write in English so it’s more hard’ (SOJSTU: 11). Explaining the assignments that need to be written in English would have been difficult in Chinese.

In summary, the findings identify the students’ written English proficiency was causing a considerable workload increase.

4.7 General adjustment

Consistent with the research purpose, in relation to our expectations of general adjustment (i.e. living in a new host country) the most prominent literature providing insights into what to expect came from the U-Curve theory presented in Chapter 2. The first stage of the adjustment process known as the honeymoon stage as previously identified was found to be nonexistent in this data set because of the immediacy of study requirements of a Western degree, upon arrival. This provided an immediate culture shock. This culture shock stemmed mainly from the unexpected lack of language proficiency and a lack of preparedness’ generally outlined in the data presented throughout this chapter. In light of
this trend in the data the U curve representation of the adjustment process for this sample morphs into the J curve representation of the adjustment process.

In terms of general adjustment the coping mechanism of clustering was consistently reported as effective in easing adjustment stress. As sojourn student 03 noted ‘I think it is an important aspect that why Chinese students always stick together’ (SOJSTU:03). The students perused a clustering to minimize ongoing general adjustment requirements as the students had structured a living environment similar to that of their home country. However, students did report some key stressors relating to their general adjustment.

4.8 Reported stressors

The following table summarizes what the students identified as stressful to them at the time of the interviews. Some students identified several stressful areas.

**Table 8 - Factors causing most adjustment related stress: Summary of Data Coding**

This table identifies what the students identified as causing them stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
<th>Students identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning method, study/assignments, culture of learning</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language difficulties associated with learning (subset of above) not cultural adjustment.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and transport</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural differences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eleven students (9+2 students, Table 3) identified language problems upon arrival, when attempting to interact with other students, which presented cultural interaction/acculturation problems. When reflecting on what stressed them the most, seven students identified language problems with studying (above Table 8), but integration and
socio-cultural adjustment problems resulting from language was not reported as a stressor. Therefore, language stress was most associated with the learning challenges discussed in detail. The research identified that only two students saw culture in general as a stressor. As identified by sojourn student 03 ‘at first I find the culture thing, even now some cultural thing. I don’t know how to explain, but the way of thinking, just a culture thing’ (SOJSTU:03). As identified the students clustered, minimising problems associated with living and studying in Australia. The following are examples of why the students cluster to minimize the problems they faced. Sojourn student 02 identified that language is a reason why the students cluster.

‘Sometimes if you are not so good at English the communication will become difficult and the conversation between Chinese and Australians, the conversation will become boring if you don’t understand the language well. So I think it is an important aspect that why Chinese students always stick together is because of the language’ (SOJSTU:02).

This student also thought that Western students portrayed an ethnocentric attitude towards him, which could stem from language difficulties, limiting the ability to interact. Sojourn student 10 identified the result of communication failures. ‘You know most Chinese students just prefer to stay home all day, every day almost, they fail to communicate with foreigner or local people. Yeah, they still live in the Chinese environment just in their confidence with their friends who in China’ (SOJSTU:10). The student identifies the students' confidence is bolstered by living with other Chinese students, providing a comfort whilst pursuing their quest of a Western degree. This is consistent with Winkleman (1994) observations that international students ‘manage culture shock without making major changes to their personality or pre-existing lifestyle’ (p. 123), and it is not necessary for the sojourn students give up their culture. The knowledge of the new cultural environment was
through a process of experience, where the universities ongoing social programs and services were not actively pursued or prioritized because of what the students considered/evaluated as not necessary, to accomplish the degree. The importance of an Australian degree in China is observed by sojourn student 10 ‘Qualifications of Australian University, if I go back to China if I say I studying in Australia it maybe get good reputation’ (SOJSTU:10). There were seven students reported cost of living provided an additional stress in Australia. Sojourn student 02 identifies the cost of living stressors ‘I think the most stressful thing for me and other Chinese students is the living costs, including travel and accommodation rental, those sorts of things. Some of them have to find some part time job to honour living’ (SOJSTU:02). The student identifies he and other students faced the stress of day to day living costs in Australia, identifying other Chinese students undertook part time employment to provide the ability to pay for the for the basic needs of living. These students had to commit to employment to assist with the basics of living and would provide a necessary, drain on their time and would provide an additional stress. Some students reported the cost of transport is expensive and questioned why they did not receive concessions like any other nations and host nationals, sojourn student 06 is provided as an example...

‘Transportation is super expensive for Chinese students, don’t have concession I do not understand why, yea some other country students have concessions, but Chinese don’t have’ (SOJSTU:06).

Other students were conscious of the exchange rate and the cost of living sojourn student 04 articulated the students’ awareness of exchange rate movement ‘the price, every time I buy the goods in the supermarket I will multiply till 6 the exchange rate’ (SOJSTU:04), and identifies the sensitivity of the exchange rates between Australia and China the students are aware of and exposed to.
4.9 Findings summary

The data presented in this chapter demonstrate that the **lack of anticipatory adjustment contributed to culture shock** by the students and provided problems to the students. Of considerable significance in the data was the finding that students thought they were more proficient in the English language than what was required leading to adjustment challenges. An **overestimation of language proficiency** relative to what was required in the program of study was a reoccurring theme when discussing various aspects of adjustment. The false expectations of their abilities in English proficiency provided most problems with their interaction quests thus stymieing quicker adjustment. It became evident it was the daily usage of English for class participation and socio-cultural interaction that presented the problem. English proficiency had an effect on the students’ initial introduction to a new culture of learning as well as broader social-cultural adjustment. It was evident in the data that there was acute awareness, problems related to the different cultures, including the culture of learning between China and Australia, confirming that anticipatory adjustments were insufficient for the challenges ahead.

Students were found to **cluster with other Chinese students to alleviate problems and self manage culture shock**, thus to gain comfort and support from people with the same cultural heritage. Because of the commonality of problems the Chinese students faced, they could approach the cultural challenge together, which is consistent with In-Group Collectivism (Chokkar et al., 2008). While it was found the university provided all the services and assistance programs expected in the literature. There was **poor utilization of the ongoing services provided by the university except for language learning assistance**. In conjunction with English difficulties the Chinese reported shyness (**or a low level of assertiveness**) as a reason for non-attendance to some of the ongoing programs. The students clustered to replace these services and assistance programs. This is
consistent with the cultural dimension of the Chinese society having a high level of In-Group Collectivism (Chokkar et al., 2007). The effect was there was poor utilization of the ongoing universities assistance, services and programs. Although it was identified that those that utilized the service and assistance programs found them effective.

The research identified the majority of the students did not to engage with any purpose with the host society after the initial culture shock. Involving themselves in a dedicated adjustment process with the host nation’s locals for interacting and living purposes was perceived as a secondary objective and beyond the focus of what they had come to Australia to achieve. This allowed the sojourn students to concentrate on their learning goal of achieving an Australian degree through a second language. The effect was the students found the path of least resistance in obtaining their degree focusing on the adjustment to the different culture of learning which was again found to be very poorly understood on arrival.

Adjusting to a different culture of learning was a major theme in the data. A lack of anticipatory adjustments was identified by the students in relation to what's expected around the differences in the cultures of learning - these differences were unexpected and only learnt through experience at the university. The language was also a major contributor to the student’s ongoing learning adjustment challenges such as researching for and writing assignments. Language also presented a problem with class participation, through not understanding the lecturer and speaking in class. It was identified that the class participation was also stymied because of shyness and saving face issues (less assertive), (Chokkar et al., 2007). Adjustment challenges around several of aspects of teaching, assessment, interaction with lecturers were identified. The data identified the value to the students of group assignments for interaction. This not only proved direct exposure to other students that had a different culture of learning background, it provided
interaction possibilities, not usually found because of the Chinese students clustering. In relation to general adjustment, it was evident in the data that students experienced culture shock upon arrival and a number of important stressors were identified. However, overall it can be concluded that the cause of the culture shock was the inability of the Chinese students to interact with members of the Australian society which were mainly Australian students. In the context of their learning interactions student’s reported as a challenge, however, in terms of general adjustment students socialized with other Chinese so that general adjustment challenges were limited. In light of this, the adjustment challenges relating to differences in culture of learning were even more significant. A detailed assessment of the significance of this and other findings is presented in the following chapter where the implications of these findings are considered in the broader context of our extant understanding of international sojourner adjustment.
Chapter 5: Discussions, Implications and Conclusions

Discussions & Implications

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 identifies and discusses what has emerged from the research data and analysis and what conclusions can be drawn relative to existing literature. Beyond the academic literature, the implications of the findings are discussed for governing bodies, third party service providers and universities. Finally, limitations of the study are discussed as a guide to further studies in this area.

The conceptual framework was drawn from the existing literature in relation to organizational practice that facilitated successful international mobility of expatriate managers. However, as the sojourn experience of international students differs greatly, this study explored the adjustment process in context-specific manner to explore idiosyncrasies of the international student experience. Pertinent academic literature that is specific to international students such as literature on different cultures of learning, language efficiency and the university's involvement with their sojourn experience has been included to frame the research in the context of the students' experience.

Postgraduate Chinese students were chosen for this study as a critical case of international student expatriation to Australia as they represent a group from a culturally distant country in the dimensions of Assertiveness and In-Group Collectivism (Chhokar et al., 2007), with what has historically been a very different approach to learning (Li & Cutting, 2011). This chapter presents a critical analysis of the student's adjustment processes starting from their pre-departure awareness/training of the factors that may impact their expatriate experience, their realisation of language and communication difficulties (Sam 2001) and their responses upon arrival. The utilization of the university
services/programs is analysed in relation to existing literature (Furnham, 2004; Rastall, 2006). The students’ adjustment process to a new socio-cultural environment and culture of learning is analysed in relation to existing literature. Finally, as there seems to be little known about the students’ own efforts in their sojourn success specifically their English language development in Australia and resulting transition to its cultural community (Xu, 2012); careful consideration is given to reflect on strategies employed by the students themselves.

5.2 Anticipatory adjustments and initial experience upon arrival.

The literature on expatriate managers was not conclusive on the impact of anticipatory adjustments. For example, Black & Mendenhall, (1990), found it had a positive impact and allowed the individual to adjust to the new cultural environment quicker and be effective in their role sooner. However Puck et al. (2008) found no significant advantages in general, interaction and workplace adjustment, although they found there was a significant impact of host country language competence and the expatriate managers’ adjustment. An efficient adjustment in this setting can be defined as the success of the expatriate manager to assimilate to the new host environment in both work and socio-cultural environments (Bhaskar-Shrinivas et al., 2005). Just as the high cost of expatriates as a form of global staffing motivates firms to understand the early adjustment to the new environment so that expatriate managers can become effective as soon as possible (Haslberger et al., 2013), the high value of international students to host universities warrants a careful consideration of how to prepare students in advance.

In the context of sojourn Chinese students anticipatory adjustments in preparation for their studies at an Australian university. A significant finding in this study in terms of anticipatory adjustments, was the students’ perceptions that their anticipatory adjustment in English would hold them in good stead upon arrival was overestimated. This compounded the lack
of anticipatory adjustments by the sojourn students in Australia’s culture and the university's culture of learning and resulted in immediate learning and interaction difficulties in English, these elements contributed to culture shock. The students progression in adjusting for these factors were stymied because of the immediate lack of proficiency in the English language (on a daily basis for interaction and studying). The English classes and training provided by the university and daily usage of the English language diluted this problem, as did the passage of time as the students became clear on the requirements of the Australian university’s culture of learning.

5.2.1 Language difficulties

As identified (Bhaskar-Shirivas et al., 2005; Puck et al., 2008; Waxin & Panaccio; 2005) language had a considerable impact on all levels of adjustment. Similarly Cui and Awa, (1992), Hammer et al. (1979), Kato (2001), Sam (2001), Takeuchi et al. (2002), Xu (2012) found language as an important factor for sojourner adjustment purposes and this current study certainly echoes these sentiments in the literature.

All the students (100%) as summarised in Table 3 found that the language was the biggest challenge facing them. Of these, 53% identified study and interaction problems, 35% identified study only and 12% identified interaction problems only. The difficulty the students had was being able to communicate in a proficient manner for interaction and study purposes. These problems can only be overcome through daily usage of the English language. The IELTS exams measure a level of proficiency in the English language, but cannot expose the students to daily usage requirements that was required of their program of study. The students identified language is the very core of learning and socio-cultural interaction and noted that this, especially in his first trimester, presented the greatest problem. In a telling example, it was even identified by a sojourn student who held an undergraduate degree in International Business and a Master’s degree in International
Business obtained in China – who suggested it was not the technical nature of what was being taught it was her language difficulties that cause most problems on arrival. While the finding that language created an initial culture shock broadly supports what might be predicted in the extant literature, the unrealistic expectations that students had in relational to their language proficiency on arrival was unexpected (the implications of this will be raised later in this chapter).

5.2.2 Culture difficulties

The Chinese students’ culture is a culturally distant society compared to Australia, especially in two dimensions of particular importance to their adjustment as international students, Assertiveness and In-Group Collectivism (Chokkar et al., 2007). The greater the cultural distance between the origin, culture and the host culture, generally the higher level of adjustment is required (Sam, 2001). Where high levels of cultural distance are prevalent, culture shock can occur, defined as being ‘suddenly introduced to a culture that is very different’ (Church, 1982, p. 540). Anticipatory adjustment would be expected to alleviate some of this ‘shock’.

In this study, students’ reported that their expectations and knowledge of the Australian culture and differences compared to their own culture were limited and little or no anticipatory adjustment is this regard was reported; the major component addressed by the students prior to leaving China was the physical aspects of the country.

Exasperating a lack of preparation, the majority of the students reported communication difficulties when attempting to interact with Australian and other non-Chinese students in English. This provided understanding and interpreting the new environment difficult. Research has shown there was a direct relationship with the level of interaction between the individuals and their environment and the environments reactions to the individuals’
actions (Haslberger et al., 2013). Communication difficulties made adjustments to the Australian society difficult. The students identified language, shyness and culture as providing the communication barriers. This is unsurprising as the students emanate from a less assertive society than Australia (Chokkar et al., 2007).

The literature identified the cultural adjustment process is encompassed by the U curve theory which predicates a honeymoon period, that was not evident in the data. The research has found the students received an immediate culture shock upon arrival, mainly due to their lack of anticipatory adjustments and inability to communicate with local students, which stems from their language proficiency compounded by their cultural background. Upon arrival in Australia the sojourn students had an immediate requirement to perform due to the intensity of the degree timetable. The sojourn students did not have the time or opportunity to go through the honeymoon period of the cultural adjustment process as outlined by the U curve theory.

5.2.3 Learning difficulties

The literature identified that societies can have very different thought processes (Nisbett, et al., 2001). This can stem from the different learning cultures. Jin & Cortazi (2006) identified there are different teaching and learning styles of societies and identified different learning expectations of cultures. Chinese students use a co-operative group orientated approach to study when in Australia, where Australian students use an individualistic approach, with the Chinese students being collaborative in their learning style (Ramburuth & McCormick, 2001). Independent learning and adjustment challenges in this regard were expected. However, if anticipatory adjustment of the Australian learning culture was evident this may have been eased.
As identified in the data presented in Chapter 4, table 4, the majority of the students (94%) did not know there was a difference in the cultures of learning, prior to departure, so there was in turn no effort to prepare in the regard. This presented a major adjustment challenge faced by the sojourn students. Again, while the literature identified that there was a difference in the cultures of learning between China and Australia it did not identify the lack of awareness of the differences, which proved such an important adjustment challenge for students in this study. This unrealistic expectation and lack of awareness led to an immediate learning adjustment problem that contributed to the students’ culture shock on arrival. With the absence of time to adjust to the new culture of learning and the host culture, language challenges were compounded; adjustment difficulties were inflated and the culture shock was amplified. This study raises the proposition that expectations might be better managed and anticipatory adjustments directed, by the many universities sourcing students through third-party providers and/or articulation partners or through their own recruitment processes. From a research perspective, investigations, which examine the impact of expectations on early performance and/or comparative studies on the experience of students who are exposed to some expectation setting intervention prior to departure, would be welcomed.

5.3 University assistance on arrival and ongoing

There was an expectation in the literature that it was incumbent on the institution to provide support and assistance to expatriate managers in their adjustment to their new environment post arrival (Aycan, 1997). This may include services to assist with issues such as local knowledge of the area, housing arrangements, facilities available such as banking, shopping and entertainment, health care and services offered by public authorities (Suutari & Burch, 2001). In the case of sojourn students, the literature suggested that this be extended to educational awareness programs - related to different
education systems, support systems to assist students in their needs, orientation and ongoing informal assistance with orientation, with well documented booklets of available support systems and assistance in acculturation (Furnham, 2004). It was also suggested in Chapter 2 that assisting students prepare and adjust is fundamental to the student’s success and by definition the success of the university (Winkelman, 1994). Where some anticipatory adjustments have not occurred prior to departure to the host country (in this case, such as language proficiency in English to an academic level and knowledge of a different learning system), these adjustments need to occur upon arrival (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010).

As identified in Chapter 4, knowledge and use of the services offered by the university was varied. Significantly, this study reveals that cultural barriers (saving face), culture shock and stress compounded by language problems were all factors for not utilizing the services. In light of this, there may be a take up of university supports converse to need – that is those students facing greatest adjustment challenges may be least likely to use the service provided to help with adjustment. As identified in table 2, other than initial orientation and language classes, the other services offered by the university had a percentage awareness rate of less than 36% yet those that used these services found them (except for mentoring) more than 83% effective. Ironically the services provided by the university aligned well with the adjustment needs identified by the students (such as language supports classes, workshops on writing and critical analysis); however, the student’s retrospective evaluation of their needs had led to missed opportunities.

The sojourn students also identified that they did not attend or seek out university provided programs and services designed to assist in language, socio-cultural adjustment and learning adjustment due to the students’ language difficulties, time constraints and difficulties with self described shyness/saving face. The elements identified by the students
provided a barrier to utilizing the universities ongoing orientation services. One implication of these findings for providers is that optional services designed to assist in student adjustment may be missing those in most need of such services and, therefore, compulsory attendance and participation in such services may be required.

5.4 Ongoing Interaction and socio-cultural adjustment

The Chinese student is faced with interacting with individuals who developed in many cultural contexts - mainstream culture of Australia and many minority cultures whose individuals developed from a variety of cultural contexts (Berry, 1997). An overarching meaning of acculturation can be seen as the changes occurring after initial and subsequent contact between individuals/groups of different cultural backgrounds in a continuous and firsthand manner (Sam, 2006; Rudmin, 2003). For the purpose of this research acculturation was defined as the individual’s/group's ability to identify, appreciate or practice with two different cultures (Rudmin, 2003). However, it was established that the ability to communicate well in the host country's language is a pre-cursor to developing acquaintances and developing interpersonal relationships with counterparts is central to acculturation (Hammer et al., 1979). It was also established that the greater the cultural distance the more difficult the cross-cultural adjustment (Sam, 2001; Waxin & Panaccio, 2005).

Once in Australia, there was an expectation that some form of acculturation to the host culture would occur based on the necessity of day to day involvement in the new environment and people for living and studying. However, as identified in Chapter 4 the students clustered to minimize general socio-cultural adjustment problems. The Chinese students' level of acculturation was limited by what they consider enough acculturation required to obtain their degree, i.e. they stayed together generally but interacted with others at the university. Based on the data in this study, this reactive decision was in part
the result of unexpected cultural adjustment problems, stemming from poor anticipatory adjustments and language and communication difficulties. The students reacted by clustering with Chinese peers socially to minimize socio-cultural adjustment. The level of general adjustment they were engaged in was reported as limited due to their focus on adjusting to what was required in their university lives and the ease with which they could socialise and live with the large contingency of Chinese students at the university. This is consistent with a high level of In-Group Collectivism expected in Chinese culture (Chokkar et al., 2007). It is also evident the students did not want to give up their identity or pre-existing lifestyle (Winklemean, 1994). In light of these findings researches on international student adjustment may need to focus less on the general culture experience, acculturation and adjustment and instead, recognise that the sojourn student experience requires a narrower form of acculturation for success. The findings in Chapter 4 reveal that the goal of the degree is forefront in student minds and set the boundaries of what adjustment they are interested in. Moreover, while, the existence of a large cohort of students from the same country may reduce the desire to engage in acculturation to the host environment, the benefit of the support provided outweighs the costs for many students. In light of this conclusion, providers who source a large cohort of students from one market may inadvertently provide a support to students. However, the negative implication is that necessary acculturation (or a variety of opportunities to interact with locals through English) may not be actively pursued as a consequence. Given the relatively short period of time the students were in Australia the students reported that they were less exposed to socio-cultural adjustment beyond the university. The value of a longer visa and/or academic program might be considered for future research on acculturation.
5.5 Ongoing Learning Adjustment

Based on this and other literature reviewed in Chapter 2 it was proposed that the learning adjustment challenges of the Chinese student is further exasperated by the notion of ‘saving face’ – in this context, it is better not to say anything that might cause discomfort to anyone, including themselves, so participation in classes can be stymied through not offering an alternate opinion (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). This is also consistent with the Chinese students being less assertive than Australian students (Chhoka et al., 2007).

As discussed earlier, the sojourn students reported they did not know there was a difference in the cultures of learning, and it took time for them to adjust to the required learning style of working independently, critical thinking and looking for different solutions and abstract thinking required by the university (Paris-Kid & Barnet, 2012). The sojourn students reported they found interaction with the lecturer was very different. In China the students were used to the transmission approach to teaching, where the students listen to the lecturers teachings (reactive) and interacting is not encouraged (Jin & Cortazzi, 2006). At this university the students found, interaction with the lecturer is encouraged as are the students' opinions sought (proactive) in class (Clark & Gieve, 2006). The sojourn students identified, they were not used to the expectation of the lecturers and the findings again raise important questions around expectations.

On a positive note, the students identified formal group assignments were useful for adjustment to cultures of learning, assisting with interaction with other students in English and providing an insight into the different cultures of learning the non-Chinese students had. This finding reiterates the importance of adjustment “by doing” and in-context. Despite being in what might be stressful context (in light of the challenges such as language and cultural challenges and the fact that these were graded group projects), students reported formal interactions as effective for adjusting to learning challenges.
Important practical implications in terms of program delivery include the composition of student groups; notwithstanding the potential for conflict with students view their learning experience and requirements from different perspectives.

Another significant, but not entirely unexpected findings relative to extant understanding were that the sojourn students relayed they were not used to continuous assessment, including researching for class participation and that the Western anti-plagiarism requirement was a major difference to what they were used to.

Consistent with the language theme throughout the data, language was also a significant factor in adjustment to learning challenges such as in class participation, through difficulties in understanding the lecturers and other students in class and researching and writing assignments. Because of lack of pre-departure experience in language and difference in the culture of learning the students had a twofold steep learning curve in Australia. This lack of knowledge about the different learning cultures provided the students with considerable task on realisation of the many new aspects of Australia’s culture of learning required of them.

5.6 General adjustment

At the outset, it was proposed that the sojourn students’ adjustment process is encapsulated in the U curve theory. The U-curve adjustment process is divided into four stages, the honeymoon stage, the culture shock stage, adjustment stage and the mastery stage (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). However, it was also noted that the level of motivation of an expatriate manager (in this study a student) in the adjustment process and willingness to participate in the process could be stymied because they are temporarily residing in the host country and therefore, less motivated to engage with the host society (Khawaja and Dempsey, 2007). Moreover, to achieve their goal of gaining a Western
degree and thus having a successful experience, general adjustment may not be totally necessary as the relationship between full adjustment/acculturation and performance has not been proven through studies (Lazarova & Thomas, 2012).

Chapter 4 identified the majority of students recognized communication difficulties immediately upon arrival when attempting to interact with other students, which presented societal interaction problems. The students had identified they clustered with other Chinese students as a coping mechanism and in part, eliminating acculturation/interaction problems. This is consistent with Chhokar et al. (2007), whom identify the Chinese have a high degree of In-Group Collectivism traits; this minimized general adjustment problems through forming their own environment.

The major anomaly in current literature indicated by the findings in this study is the first stage of the adjustment process known as the honeymoon stage as previously identified was nonexistent because of the immediacy of cultural adjustment requirements, including usage of the English language on a daily basis and a new culture of learning which provided immediate culture shock. There were indications that the remainder of the U curve theory stands in a skewed form where the adjustment to the new cultural environment is limited. However, comfort in the environment, increased because of peer-related clusters. This measured adjustment was based on their priorities i.e. the need to acculturate to the learning environment as a priority.

Through associating, studying and living with their own culture, students believed this reduced the impact of the cultural distance between the two countries (Hofstede, 1980), after their initial culture shock. Winkleman (1994) identified that international students may manage culture shock ‘without making major changes in their personality or pre-existing lifestyle’ (p. 123). This study supports this statement.
Finally, of significant practical significance for providers were the findings when students summarised their “stressors” based on their overall student experience. Reported stressors become an important factor in understanding the ongoing problems faced by the students. When discussing stress the majority of the students identified Australia’s culture of learning was a stressor of which language was a combined stressor, which related to learning through a second language at an academic level. When compared to initial cultural adjustment described on arrival, the majority of students reported communication difficulties when attempting to interact with Australian and other non-Chinese students.

**Conclusions**

This study has brought together a suitable framework extrapolated from existing literature on expatriate managers and international education to study sojourn students’ adjustment. This study draws together the literature on the different aspects of expatriate managers adjustment and particular adjustment problems faced by sojourn students and compared these with the Chinese student’s actual experience as a critical case example of the challenges faced by the international student market. The different challenges identified have been presented to identify the critical adjustment problems faced by the students and the coping mechanisms the students put into place to ease the challenges.

As expected based on extant research, language provided the major problems to the students on arrival and this remained as an important challenge in the adjustment process (Cui & Awa, 1992; Hammer et al., 1979; Kato, 2001; Sam, 2001; Takeuchi et al. 2002; Xu, 2012). The study demonstrated that students believed they had sufficient pre-departure knowledge in English relative to what was expected for their degree and faced an initial problematical trilogy of language, learning and interaction difficulties upon arrival. Language/communication difficulties had a significant impact on the sojourn students’ adjustment difficulties of interaction socio/cultural adjustment and adjustment to a new
culture of learning. However, as the students maintained their culture, values and identity (Winkleman, 1994) by clustering with other Chinese sojourn students after the initial culture shock, the major stressors were education related and not related to their general adjustment of living in Australia. The coping mechanism of living and socialising with peer nationals was used to reduce the need to bridge the cultural distance between the two countries. However, this could not overcome the adjustment challenges for studying purposes where listening and participating in class, researching and writing assignments in English are mandatory and unavoidable. Important implications for research arise from these conclusions.

5.7 Implications for future research

Zhou et al. (2008) identified further research is required to clarify teacher and student expectations and relationships (cultures of learning) of international student's sojourn to a culturally distant culture, specifically an English speaking country. This study has provided a further perceptive of students' understanding of Australia's culture of learning, prior to departure, initial experience and ongoing experience. And identified the sojourn students’ perceptions of the relationship with the lecturer in Australia being different, the students identified the difference in learning methods of lecturer transmission learning (China) V's student centred and self-directed learning (Australia) after commencement of their studies. It would be of interest to the academic community and universities alike to obtain through a longitudinal study, the teachers' expectations and perceptions of the students' adjustment process from the commencement of the sojourn students' studies to graduation. This could assist in identifying areas in the transition the students’ progress, from engaging with Australia’s culture of learning and language difficulties where University assistance could be appropriate. We echo Zhou’s call for further research as it was outside the scope of this research to study the expectations of the teachers (teachers interviewed).
Xu (2012) identified there was little known about the Chinese students' own efforts in their sojourn success related specifically to their English language development in Australia and resulting cultural transition, this study provides a further step in understanding this phenomenon and specifically provides insight into the expectation-gaps which first needs to be overcome. The expectation-gaps both in terms of language and differences in culture of learning are worthy of further research both in terms of studying expectation and adjustment, but also as a problem that can be potentially be addressed with anticipatory adjustment or post-arrival interventions. A related topic of research that may provide further insights into the relative adjustment challenges of students with different programs and in different universities would be research into the adjustment relative to the length of a degree. Students in this sample were from a post-graduate degree in management marketed as a program that can be completed in a comparatively short period of time. However, as time pressure, initial culture shock and the immediate need to adjust to the learning environment were all noted a major adjustment challenges, programs designed to include a ‘honeymoon’ period may result in a different adjustment process. This research had identified the honeymoon stage is non-existent for Chinese international students because of the immediacy of cultural exposure and performance requirements related to the immediate commencement of their studies. The remainder of the U curve would benefit from further studies as the indications of this study is the large cohort of fellow Chinese students provided a cultural environment similar to that in China where interaction with the host culture is not actively pursued. A longitudinal study would be suitable for this purpose. This study has identified the sources of the problems the sojourn students encountered, and their adjustment reaction as a starting point.

Consistent with understanding adjustment reaction, Winkelman (1994) identified 'many individuals (e.g. International students) may effectively manage culture shock without
making major changes in their personality or pre-existing lifestyle’ (p. 123). The implication of clustering, as identified in this study (or self managing culture shock) and its effect on the students' performance is unknown. Whilst this study has found possible reasons for the students clustering, a cause and effect study would be of benefit to uncover whether the under utilization of the university assistance services was because of the students clustering and would further assist in the understanding and management of cultural diversity at the universities (Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009).

Finally, the clearest implication of this study for future research into expatriates, international sojourners and the whole myriad of categories they may encompass internationally mobile people, is that one size does not fit all, idiosyncrasies matter and are worthy of distinct research agendas. This proposition was raised at the outset and validated in the data and conclusions. The unique motivations and challenges of different categories of internationally mobile workers, students and employees should motivate researchers to employ customised study designs and conceptual frameworks.

5.8 Practical and Management Implications

The findings of this study will contribute by enhancing our understanding of the sojourn experience of students and provide practical managerial insights into the adjustment challenges that need to be addressed for over 20% of the full fee-paying students who buy educational services in Australia (ASB, 2011).

Education export is the largest service exporter in Australia (ABS, 2013). The findings provide a better understanding of this group of international student's adjustment process, which can have implications to universities in Australia, government bodies directly and indirectly involved with international students studying in Australia.
The study identified grounds to propose additional English language support courses be added to academic programs and courses to assist the students in understanding the new culture of learning requirements in Australia. Based on the discussion provided earlier in this chapter, the courses should also be made compulsory so that they capture those that are most in need.

Cross cultural adjustment, can be seen as a pivotal point to the requirements of the students in their study endeavours where adjustment to the new culture of learning is paramount. By managing cultural diversity the role of the university can be seen as eliminating segregation rather than individual cultural groups within the student body (Sulkowski & Deakin, 2009). Formal group assignments provided a method where students from many cultural backgrounds come together to complete a task. The Chinese students enjoyed the task and gave them the opportunity to have firsthand experience with students from different cultures, including cultures of learning to achieve a goal together. From a course delivery perspective, these tasks are to be encouraged to provide opportunities for all students from culturally diverse societies where a mix of cultures (including culture of learning) is recommended. Moreover, despite the potential stress of forced interactions, students were positive about such context specific (learning focused) interaction.

Any and all efforts to reduce stressors should also be encouraged. To provide just one example, the students expense around transport. It would be efficient of the government to revise their policies on the concessions available for all international sojourn students. Especially when considering education export is Australia’s major service export (ABS, 2013).
Finally, having identified the critical adjustment challenges from the students’ perspectives, universities need to reflect on the managerial and pedagogical constraints of their institutions’ ability to address them. Language proficiency of international students is often assessed and verified at the level of the department of immigration (though IELTS and other means) and the differences in cultures of learning and cross-cultural characteristics of many international students (i.e. not just Chinese) are deeply embedded and not something that providers have control over. However, more targeted interventions may be achievable based on insights from this study. Arguably, a different culture of learning is what the Chinese market seeks when coming to Australia. However, the lack of awareness of it reflected in the comments in this sample, raises the question – is it something that Western universities can use as a marketing point or just a major adjustment challenge that they need to manage?

The limitations of this study relate to the size of the study, making generalizations difficult and making the findings tentative. The sample frame was Chinese students studying at an Australian University providing a unique context of the participants having a different home language and different culture, including culture of learning to the host country. This makes generalizations difficult for different host countries/languages and/or different cultures. This was a small exploratory qualitative study, unlike statistical, scientific research methodology where a representative sample of the population is used to generalize.

The research participants were volunteers, which may in its self represent a bias – the students may have been more articulate in English or outgoing than others and/or wanted ‘to have their say’.

Despite the inherent methodological limitations of a small qualitative study of this kind, its exploratory design was necessary and has provided rare insights into the “customers”
perspective on critical adjustment challenges. In keeping with the Doctor of Business Administration thesis goals, these insights can inform the university and program managers who wish to tap into the lucrative business of the full-fee paying migrant student market and it can help those currently managing their international students’ adjustment to a level that maintains an educational service of repute and produces a graduate of international standing.
Attachment 1 – Research questions

Anticipatory adjustments and initial experience

a) What knowledge or experience of Australia and/or living/working/studying in other countries did you have before coming to Australia to study?

b) Did any of your previous educational or work experience help you to adjust to living and studying in Australia? If so, how?

c) What pre-departure preparation (training or research) did you undertake before you came to Australia to study? Did/how did this pre-departure preparation help you adjust specifically to;

   a. Living in Australia
   b. Studying in Australia
   c. Interacting with other students?

d) What preconceptions did you have about studying in Australia and have these changed since studying in Australia? How and why?

e) Were you clear (or on reflection accurate) about what would be expected of you when studying in Australia before you commenced your degree? If not, how did you become clear about the expectation standards, etc. required when studying in Australia?

f) When you first arrived in Australia, how did the university help you to adjust specifically to:

   a) Living in Australia
   b) Interacting with other students
   c) Studying in Australia
Interaction/socio-cultural adjustment

a) What (if anything) about being an international student studying in Australia has been the most stressful to you specifically relating to interacting with other students?

b) When you first arrived in Australia, how did the university help you to adjust specifically to interacting with other students?

c) What in your experience are the major communication challenges for international students studying through their second language?

Learning adjustment

a) What is your experience of difference, if any, between work values, expectations and standards when studying in Australia relative to your previous education in China?

b) What is your experience of difference, if any, between approaches to teaching and assessment when studying in Australia relative to your previous education in China?

c) What is your experience of difference, if any, of interactions with staff and fellow students when studying in Australia relative to your previous education in China?

d) In your experience, what activities are most effective in improving written and oral communication skills for students studying through their second language?

e) Reflection on any of the challenges you have identified, what interventions/activities would be most helpful for the university to provide for international students to adjust to studying in Australian?

f) What, in your opinion, are the most important things an international student should do to adjust to studying in Australia?
g) How effective are university interventions/induction/orientation in helping you to adjust to studying in Australia?

h) When you first arrived in Australia, how did the university help you to adjust specifically to studying in Australia?

i) What (if anything) about being an international student studying in Australia has been the most stressful to you specifically relating to studying in Australia.

**General Adjustment**

a) Since you have studied in Australia what activities have you personally undertook to help you overcome the challenges / stressors discussed so far?

b) What aspects of your personality made it easier or more difficult to adjust to living and studying in Australia?

c) In your experience, what are they key challenges of living and studying in Australia for international students from China?

d) What (if anything) about being an international student studying in Australia has been the most stressful to you specifically relating to living in Australia.
References


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